

IS THE PAST A FOREIGN COUNTRY?

Yan Li: Chineseness (*zhong-guoren de guominxing* 中国人的国民性) in politics is manifested in the fact that up to now ordinary people are still waiting for a virtuous official. We are more willing to trust good officials than good laws. This is a very particular phenomenon that has been a part of Chineseness for thousands of years. When people appeal to higher officials, they're hoping for a virtuous official who is able to solve their problems for them. They aren't appealing to the law, which indicates that the concept of law is very weak.

Rose Tang: But the number of people bringing cases to court is increasing. Civil cases, in particular, have overcrowded court dockets. People go to court over almost anything: relocation, the withholding of pay to migrant workers . . . Today the concept of the rule of law is very strong amongst ordinary people. Particularly after the case of Sun Zhigang,¹ there has been a huge change. Amongst the people as a whole, the concept of rule of law is very strong. There are some migrant workers, rural people, who have very little basic education but teach themselves law and then utilize the language and rhetoric of the government itself. These cases of appealing for help and using legalese are increasing. So there is a little hope.

Peter Kwong: But this is still within a limited range. If a case involves politics or policies, then it's out of the question.

Yan Li: And if it involves officials, it's also out of the question.

Rose Tang: The people are still very cautious. They won't touch those issues.

The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics proudly celebrated Chinese civilization. But how much real continuity is there in China's culture and history? Are there enduring aspects of "Chineseness" that slow the advance of human rights? And, given that the Communist Party reviled tradition and "the four olds" in its Maoist heyday, what does the current rekindling of interest in the "Confucian" past signify? A diverse panel convened at the HRIC office in New York on July 22, 2008. The following is an edited translation of the discussion, which was conducted in Chinese.

Gao Wenqian: This topic is huge. "Chineseness"—you can't find it in the English-Chinese dictionary, it's a made-up word. Of course, it is a concept that refers to a sense of identification, a national sense of identity. But there are many different angles, standards, and divisions. Right now, this piece of land that looks like a rooster or a maple leaf, this piece of yellow land that is China can be defined geographically. You can also define China historically. It has 5,000 years of history, 5,000 years of civilization. This is something in which many

Chinese people take pride. America has 200 years [of history], that's equivalent to one chapter in a very thin book; China's book would be very thick. So, history has become a source of identification. There is [also] cultural identification. There are a lot of Chinese people. Even if they don't live in mainland China but in Malaysia, in Singapore, they still speak Chinese and they identify themselves as being of Chinese descent. So from a cultural and linguistic viewpoint, there is a sense of identification. And then there is the issue of citizenship. Your passport, is it a Chinese, American, Singapore, or Hong Kong passport? Finally, there is political identification. Politically, do you identify mainland China as being the People's Republic of China? Is identifying with the land of China the same as identifying with its so-called social system? Here, we can see that nailing down a concept of China is very confusing. When talking about the Chinese people and how they became Chinese, people have different starting points and different standards.

Peter Kwong: Our concept of "Chineseness" basically comes from how we are taught. There are two basic perspectives on what makes a person Chinese. Some Chinese people identify themselves by their family (*jia* 家), and the place where they are from (*jiaxiang* 家乡). No

matter how you put it, I'm a Shanghai person, you're a Guangdong person. No matter what, my family is the most important. I must take care of my own family first. At the turn of the new [20th] century, however, this way of thinking began to be considered selfish. From the time we were kids, we were told that China was so weak because we took a family-centric viewpoint. And, in order to make progress, we had to stop this mentality. This wasn't just the Communist Party; when I was young, the KMT [Nationalist Party] also said this. Why did we have to get rid of this thinking? Because China had suffered many years of invasion. For us Chinese, this sense of historical retaliation is very important. We think that we have the greatest culture, but we must rise up. Taiwanese possess this desire to retaliate, as do overseas Chinese people. Why do overseas Chinese get picked on by foreigners? Because China isn't strong. Familial loyalty is never far from our minds. Even officials still take care of their own children above all else. So, I think that this is the essential struggle within the issue of Chineseness.

Rose Tang: I've been thinking, why does the [Chinese] word "country" (*guojia* 国家) combine the words "nation" (*guo* 国) and "family" (*jia* 家)? In China, ruling a country is just like ruling a family; ruling a family is like ruling a country. It's top-down. The elder generation, the grandparents, manage the parents, and the parents manage you. It's not equal or democratic. It has always been this way. When it comes to politics and the nation, the emperors or national leaders rule over the ordinary people. It's still this sort of top-down hierarchy.

This power structure is the same as that of a feudal clan. The national power structure and the family power structure are still like this even today. It's a little better now. Some of the Chinese media have written articles saying people have to teach their children how to interact as equals. They can't just tell them to be good, to just be

obedient. When we were young we were always told to be obedient, and listen to our parents, teachers, and the Party. We were asked to take on a subservient, slave-like relationship.



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Going back to the topic of education: from my personal experience in elementary and middle school, when I read Chinese history textbooks, I thought I couldn't be tricked, not at that age at least. But they brainwashed us so strangely. Each chapter in our textbook covered a different dynasty, and for each dynasty there was a very specific map of China's territory. We learned that China was its biggest during the Yuan Dynasty [1271–1368 CE] and then it got smaller and smaller: Haishenwei² was signed away, and then Hong Kong. This was meant to cultivate our sense of nationalism and patriotism. But at the time I wondered to myself, was the Yuan Dynasty China? Was the Qing Dynasty China? [During those times] we were slaves. Those were other people's countries. We brag the most about the Yuan Dynasty, but was the Yuan Dynasty really ours? What, really, was China? I asked our teachers and they said, "Of course this is China! Where today can you find Mongols and Manchus? We assimilated them. They came to rule us but in the end we assimilated them."



family

Peter Kwong: This is very important, this idea that the Yuan and Qing Dynasty rulers were assimilated by us. It reflects the mindset that no matter if it's the Tang Dynasty or the Yuan Dynasty, China always had a system, and that this system would always be victorious. But after the invasion of America and Europe, we were no longer able to consider our system eternally victorious. So, we have made these claims like, "the territory we had in the Yuan Dynasty is still ours," but today now that we have been bullied by Europe and America, we have to realize that "Chinese" is a dynamic identity. It is not static.

Gao Wenqian: This also touches on history and culture. In Chinese culture, the most basic, most essential guiding principles were the “Three Cardinal Guides and Five Constant Virtues” (*san gang wu chang* 三纲五常): officials must obey the emperor (*jun wei chen gang* 君为臣纲), sons must obey their fathers (*fu wei zi gang* 父为子纲), and wives must obey their husbands (*fu wei qi gang* 夫为妻纲). This is one of the most basic set of principles. Another is the concept of “great unity” (*da yi tong* 大一统). This concept is actually at work in the innermost part of Chinese people. [China] must be big, it must be united, and only in this way can the country become great.

Peter Kwong: However, the ancient kingdoms and the modern country of China today are completely different. The interests and scope of the ancient dynasties were very small. As long as you paid taxes and were not in opposition, you were fine. Everything else you did yourself. Today’s society is different. The government wants to participate in everything.

Yi Ping: Yes, this is true. China’s geographical domain is very large, but the society is small. A village is a few hundred people, society is only that size.

Peter Kwong: Right, [overseas] China-towns are like this too.

Yi Ping: They all manage themselves. [They are] autonomous and have nothing to do with the government. Before it was true that officials’ power extended down only as far as the county seat, and below that there was no government.

Rose Tang: This is small government: the government doesn’t manage too much and lets things run their own course. But the Communist Party manages everything. Neighborhood committees, this kind of thing . . . In America, my biggest realization has been that the neighborhood committees here are totally different from ours [in China]. The neighborhood committees

here claim their own rights over the buildings and the street, and they take initiative with protection, civic leagues, neighborhood activities. When I talk to my parents in China about these neighborhood committees, I have to spend half the day explaining it, because it’s such a completely different concept. China’s neighborhood committees have a system for registering permanent residents, and they keep a personal dossier [on citizens]; these are very restrictive in a frightening way.

Gao Wenqian: After the Communist Party took power in 1949, they destroyed 2,000 years of village traditions, including the tradition of local autonomy. From top to bottom, they controlled things, right down to the individual. They took away every social function that had existed before and changed it into an omnipotent, totalitarian society. For rural people, this meant that if you were born in a particular village, you could never leave it. These conditions show that there’s an essential difference between traditional Chinese society and the post-1949 communist society. The household registration system (*huji zhidu* 户籍制度) allows the government to manage you all the way to your deathbed. Of course, since the reform and opening of 1979, the developing trend is that this [system] is slowly eroding. But, rural people are still second-class citizens. When they go into the city, farmers-turned-migrant workers have to do the dirtiest work. Education for their children, housing, and so forth are very big problems. On the other hand, I think that civil society is slowly expanding. Although this expansion is very slow, I think that sooner or later it will inevitably go down this road.

Rose Tang: I think the key is the development of civil society. In the aftermath of the earthquake, we saw and realized the strength of civil society.

Peter Kwong: While there has been some change, it is



citizen

still the case that if the public is dissatisfied about something, there isn't a system in place to solve the problem. People let it stew inside until they can't hold it in any longer, and in the end they resort to violence. Then, it turns into . . .

Yi Ping: It turns into a Weng'an incident.³

Peter Kwong: Now, violence is erupting in too many places. Things have to change. These violent uprisings are not normal. The authorities used to say, "If you don't obey us, we'll come find you," but now there are simply too many problems. This is a challenge for the government to address. One of the reasons behind Hu Jintao's rise was that when Jiang Zemin was in power, he overlooked these issues. They were hoping Hu Jintao could fix these problems, but he didn't have any answers either.

Rose Tang: The scope of this problem is too broad and it exists on too many levels. Before, it was only migrant workers, farmers, or laid-off workers. Now, every social class is being affected. Everyone is being affected by repression or corruption. No matter where you go, you see signs of injustice. People don't think of government officials as Bao Qingtians.⁴ Instead, they place their hope on journalists to act as Bao Qingtians. This dependence on journalists to act as virtuous officials and resolve wrongs is a tragedy for society, and furthermore, journalists can't even report on most of these issues. I know many very daring Chinese investigative reporters who, if they are determined to report something in their own locality, have to hide their family members. I know one reporter who carries around a police baton so that he will be prepared to fight anyone who might give him trouble. This Beijing reporter says that he receives dozens of pleas for help over the phone almost every day. But if he is able to report even one of these stories a month, that's pretty good. The media is slowly gaining some freedom, but it is also subject to many restrictions. The only hope for ordinary people

is this one little channel that the opening up of the media provides. Young reporters especially are extremely brave and skilled. Also, they know a lot about the world because they go online and use various methods to see blocked websites. They understand how it is, but they are also very unhappy. They are like teapots that have no way of pouring out tea. They are almost ready to explode. The whole thing is like a volcano. There are small eruptions here and there. Nobody knows when the whole mountain will explode.

Sharon Hom: Looking back over China's history, is there a tendency to promote intellectual orthodoxy or discourage plurality of opinion? Does China's cultural and historical heritage suppress diversity?

Gao Wenqian: China is a one-party state. It has to stifle dissenting voices, shut out anyone it doesn't like, and strike down civil society groups. This reality has been passed down through history. [In] the Spring and Autumn [Zhou Dynasty] and Warring States periods, there were the contending "Hundred Schools of Thought,"⁵ and the country was divided into many small kingdoms, kind of like Europe today. Even a provincial city could be a kingdom. But after the Qin Dynasty, China was unified. During the Han Dynasty, there was a very clear policy of wiping out the "Hundred Schools" and only allowing people to learn Confucianism. Having many different schools of thought was no longer allowed, scholars were only allowed to study Confucius and Mencius. If you studied them well, you could serve as a government official. If you didn't study them well, you could go farm, but you wouldn't have any way of moving upwards in society. This mentality was passed down even to the time that authoritarianism established by the Party in 1949. Of course, much of the authoritarian system came from the Soviet Union, but the traits were already in our own history and culture, and that is why it was so easy for [the Soviet ways] to fit

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in. Mao famously said during the Cultural Revolution that he was a combination of Marx and Qinshihuang. Mao said it himself. Marx represents the things brought over from the Soviet Union, Qin Shihuang represents the wide-ranging influence of China's own despotism which dates back from when it first became a country.

Rose Tang: Why is it that the study of traditional Chinese culture has been renewed? How does studying Confucius count as studying traditional culture? What about Lao Zhuang?⁶ Liezi?⁷ Why do all the other philosophers get ignored? Under the current definition, studying traditional culture means only studying Confucianism.

Gao Wenqian: Almost a hundred years ago, during the May Fourth Movement, they were already speaking of overturning Confucianism. During the Cultural Revolution, they wanted to completely destroy Qufu⁸ in Shandong. At the time, Tan Houlan⁹ brought people and destroyed Confucius's tomb and his ancestral temple. So why is it that Confucianism is emerging again now? First of all, I think it's because Communism in its original incarnation is completely bankrupt. The party used to depend on ideology. (Unlike how it now depends on violence and mobsters—that came later.) They used ideology to make you censor yourself. So at the time, the people didn't dare think too much about anything. Communism as an ideology went bankrupt, after the Cultural Revolution, people didn't believe in it anymore. This left an empty space in people's thinking. Then a lot of different types of thinking emerged amongst the people; for example Falun Gong, or [ideas] from the West, these things all came in. The government had to think of a way to keep a hold on the people. So in 1995, Jiang Zemin introduced the idea of "governing the country based on morals" (*yi de zhi guo* 以德治国). By this, he meant bringing back Confucius and Mencius. Of course, many of the people promoting the study of traditional Chinese culture are professors at top universities, but behind the scenes the government is propping them up. They give them a lot of resources, allow them to go on CCTV and give lectures. Why is this topic so hot? Because the things that used to be there are no

longer there. Since Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening the people have turned to material goods and money. As a result, the morals we used to have are now lost.

People are killing others, swindling them . . .

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Rose Tang: But you shouldn't underestimate the people. The eyes of the people are sharp. They won't necessarily believe whatever the Party promotes. Yu Dan, Liu Qiuyu, Yi Zhongtian, these people who are advocating the study of ancient Chinese civilization. . . . [I heard] Yu Dan¹⁰ recently went to Xiamen, Fujian, to publicize her book, and she was totally unable to sell tickets; no one wanted to go hear her speak. I think this is very interesting.

Those of us in the field of media sometimes get quite worried that perhaps this is the start of a new age of brainwashing. But I don't think it's necessarily so.

Sharon Hom: So you're saying that the public may not be on the same page as intellectuals?

Rose Tang: The people are not so easy to trick now, they're really not.

Peter Kwong: We used to identify someone by whether or not they were "red" (*hong* 红), not by their profession. But now 70 to 80 percent of the Central Committee have a college background. Three people on the Politburo have PhDs. The number of people with PhDs [in the government] is higher than in America. They think that since these officials have PhDs they must be qualified for their positions. If you're a graduate of Fudan, Peking University, you are qualified. These are all ideas from before: revering Confucian scholars. It's not just that they're promoting [Confucianism]. In many ways they are really putting it into action.

Rose Tang: Universities and academia have totally been bought. If you want foundation grants or whatever, you can't butt heads with the government. You have to keep up friendly relations with them.

Sharon Hom: Yan Li, Yi Ping, do you think that intellec-

tuals have totally been bought up by the government, or do you think there is still a small independent voice, for example, among artists?

Yan Li: It would be great if independent intellectuals could occasionally make their voices heard. In the past few years, a few have emerged. For example, recently Ai Weiwei has spoken up several times. He posts his thoughts all over the web, and as soon as he posts anything his words are spread everywhere. [But] in the past, during the dynasties, as soon as an independent intellectual emerged, if he wasn't killed immediately, then he was left to starve. Our society lacks the independent intellectual spirit. Either people join an already existing group or they accept support. We often talk of the government allowing those who oppose them to join their ranks. This is in our culture.

Rose Tang: Why does the Chinese literati have no backbone? Every time I go to China, I long to find some good contemporary literature. There are books everywhere, but you can't find a single one that's good. I ask my Chinese friends who like literature and art or who work in those fields to recommend a few books, but they can't find anything.

Yan Li: There are many reasons for this. First, there is the censorship system. Second, serious works don't make money. The publishers want to come out with things that are more popular. As a result, there's no serious literature. Another very particular phenomenon is that all of the novelists have joined the Writer's Association.¹¹ A lot of the post-1980 generation writers have joined. The problem is that an independent intellectual won't join any of these organizations.

Rose Tang: It's better in the art world. You don't have to join the Artists' Association. It used to be much stricter.

Yan Li: Art is one place where the Party has allowed for an opening. In China's contemporary culture, only art is run privately. . . . [Art] is not as direct as language and words.

Gao Wenqian: Why are there so few serious [written] works now? The reason is very complicated. First of all, it has to do with how fast-paced society is now. People don't have as much time as they did before; readers want things fast. The concept of "spending ten years to polish a sword" (*shinian mo yijian* 十年磨一剑) doesn't exist. People want to read very short stories. As for writers, they are in a very difficult predicament. They can't write anything that is profound and criticizes reality. You can't touch Tiananmen, you can't touch the Cultural Revolution, you can't touch the Anti-Rightist Movement, and you can't touch Falun Gong. Second, they themselves need to make a living. They have to cater to the speed of the market, the baseness of it, and popular demand. It is very difficult for them to make a decision that lies somewhere between these two.

Sharon Hom: Then where is the impetus for change? Is it in the market economy, the next generation, urbanization, new technology like the internet, or increased contact with the outside world? Which do you think is more influential? Are there other possibilities? Where is the hope?

Yi Ping: The key is freedom of publication.

Rose Tang: I don't think it's just a problem of censorship and freedom. The problem is that the spirits of writers and artists have been worn away. Many of them are led by the trends of the market.

They only think about becoming famous and making money. Their hearts are not at peace. As we said before, the pace of society is too fast, but the other thing is that their spirits are confused. It's an overall degeneration. It's a tragedy of civilization. I've heard about our 5,000 years of civilization since I was young, from classical texts to Lu Xun¹² in modern literature, but today there is nothing good. It's terrible. There is nothing. Where is China's civilization?

Sharon Hom: Where does reform come from then? We want to help promote progress and change at HRIC. We don't have the luxury of being pessimists.



change

Peter Kwong: I think there is a very important reason for optimism. From the Chinese government’s point of view, they see themselves as a dynasty. We have had 13 dynasties, and some of those dynasties were divided into “former” and “latter” time periods. Some dynasties were long, some were short. If we feel now that the system is imperfect, that it has many flaws, that it is in decline, and so forth, the most important thing is to ask, “what kind of pressure are the people putting on it?” If there is more space, and free speech is allowed to emerge, this creates a kind of weakness in the system; it also creates a kind of pressure. Will the Chinese government be able to change? They themselves know that the current system has huge problems. The optimism lies in the fact that dynasties must always fall.

Gao Wenqian: There is a Chinese saying, “you should take a two-pronged approach” (*shuang guan qi xia* 双管齐下). On the one hand you need to push the system. At the same time, you also need to push forward the economy, culture, society, and the humanities. If you push on all fronts, then eventually you may have a little progress, but it’s an extremely long process.

Rose Tang: In line with that comment, I think it’s important to ask: To whom are we catering? In my opinion, the next generation is the most important. Young people now go online, and they think things are free, things aren’t bad, China is pretty good. They criticize America and Bush, and they think the government is very open, that the army is very powerful. During the earthquake everyone was quite happy with the system, and then the Olympics. . . .

Yan Li: The post-1980, post-1990 youth, they think that society has been good to them.

Rose Tang: They think everything is great. They are the ones who have been most profoundly brainwashed. I

think this is a focal point. How do we enlighten this generation? I am in contact with some young people on the Internet. There is a minority that really knows who Wei Jingsheng¹³ is. This is very gratifying to me. I didn’t learn about Wei Jingsheng until after I moved abroad after 1989. But now there is a group of this kind of people. And then there are also people who are doing volunteer work in NGOs. They might not have gone abroad. They might not have much of an understanding of democracy or human rights. They have a self-initiated sense of justice because there really is too much injustice. I’ve been to a lot of places and after I reported some of these, I really felt that I didn’t want to do this work any longer. There is too much injustice. As a journalist, there was nothing I could do to help these people. I felt very powerless.

But in recent years, since 2003, everywhere in China from the Northeast to the Northwest, Sichuan, Yunnan, NGOs have emerged. Some were started by migrant workers; some are environmental groups started by students. Negotiating salaries, resisting relocation, there are many kinds. They’re all self-initiated, but they lack a guiding ideology. As a journalist, I’ll have a meal with them and chat, but there’s only so much I can say. There are some things that I can’t bring up because I don’t want to get them in trouble. But they can see everything online. When I bring something up with them, they’ve already seen it on the Internet. But the majority of people, I think, have been brainwashed, even students who have studied abroad. The Wang Qianyuan incident¹⁴ has strongly demonstrated that. But she has also given us some hope. She is so young, but so brave.

Peter Kwong: In my opinion, there is a lot of talk about the so-called nationalism of these overseas Chi-



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nese. But I think this will gradually change on its own. For example, I came from Taiwan. Once I encountered the American government's view of Taiwan, once you encounter these things then you know, and you begin to change. If objective news about society can enter China, then this will force Chinese people to face reality, and to open up.

Rose Tang: Right now there is a fake opening up. You're not allowed to open your mind.

Peter Kwong: With what has been happening with the Olympics, you can talk about how bad the foreigners are. But slowly they will start asking questions. As more news is allowed to enter, and as more people go abroad, there will be a kind of natural struggle.

Sharon Hom: But doesn't what you say just reflect the Washington consensus? That things will naturally become more open with the entrance of more news, more contact with the outside world? That change is inevitable and will happen on its own? But it might not actually happen that way. Even if those in China are able to encounter more diverse types of information, will it really reach the public? Not everyone goes online. And the ones who go online are usually educated and male and urban.

Rose Tang: Also the majority of people who go online are just chatting or playing games.

Gao Wenqian: I think we need to be more tolerant, more embracing of the post-1980 and post-1990 generation. I am from the generation that was brought up during the Cultural Revolution. When we were young, we all "drank wolf's milk" (*he langnai* 喝狼奶). In other words, we bought into the Party culture. We all used to believe in Mao Zedong, we believed in him fanatically. But afterwards, we were the ones who rebelled against this system. So from my own personal experience, when looking at these young people, I think we shouldn't lose hope. The paths of young people inevitably change direction. The most important thing is that you give them the facts: both truth and falsity. Open up information and let them compare for themselves, let them use their minds to contemplate this comparison. They'll come to their own conclusions.

CONTRIBUTORS

Gao Wenqian, a scholar in the contemporary history of China, has over 14 years' editorial experience and is currently the Senior Policy Advisor and Editor-in-Chief of Chinese Publications at HRIC. In China, he was an Associate Research Fellow and Deputy Editor-in-Chief at the Communist Party's Research Center on Party Literature. In the United States, he was a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, the East Asia Institute at Columbia University, and the Fairbank Center at Harvard University. His research areas include the Sino-U.S. relationship and Chinese foreign policy of the 1970s. He is the author of *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary*.

Peter Kwong (PhD Columbia University) is Professor of Asian American Studies and Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College, as well as Professor of Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is best known for his work on Chinese Americans and on modern Chinese politics. He is the author of *Chinese America: The Untold Story of America's Oldest New Community* and *Chinese Americans: An Immigrant Experience*, co-authored with his wife, Chinese historian Dusanika Miscevic, among other works. Dr. Kwong recently returned from Sichuan, where he was working on a documentary piece on the earthquake aftermath.

Rose Tang has been reporting on China since 1996. She was a visiting professor of journalism and fellow at Princeton University in 2007. Born and raised in Sichuan, she worked in Hong Kong and Australia as a journalist for 15 years. She was named the "Best Local Journalist" by the Society of Publishers in Asia in 2005, and won a gold medal in New York in 1997 for a radio documentary. She worked for *The Standard*, CNN and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. She is currently writing a book on China.

Yan Li is a Chinese avant-garde poet, novelist, and painter. He was born in Beijing in 1954 and in his formative years he became associated with the Stars Group of artists and writers, noted for their abstraction and surrealism, and the Misty Poets, who gained recognition in the late 1970s for their subversion of social realism through reliance on emotion and personal imagery. In the mid-1980s, he moved to New York where he founded the magazine *First Line* (Yi Hang), which collected the writings of many contemporary Chinese poets and translated American poetry. His work has been translated into French, English, Italian, Swedish, Korean, and German.

Yi Ping is Editor of HRIC's monthly online journal *Ren Yu Ren Quan*. He is also a poet and an active member of Chinese PEN. He graduated from the Chinese Department at Beijing Teachers College. After teaching Chinese literature and language for 11 years at Beijing Foreign Trade School and for six years at Mickeiwicz University in Poland, he came to New York as a visiting scholar in the Asian Studies Department at Cornell University from 2001 to 2003.

Notes

1. Sun Zhigang (孙志刚) was a young college graduate beaten to death in 2003 by police in Guangzhou. He had been taken into custody for failing to carry his temporary living permit and identity card with him. Public outrage and calls for a special investigation led by Chinese lawyers triggered the most significant police reform since the founding of the P.R.C.
2. Haishenwei (海参崴) is now a city in Russia called Vladivostok.
3. On June 28, 2008, up to 30,000 people in Weng'an (瓮安) County, Guizhou Province, stormed government buildings in reaction to what many saw as official mishandling of an investigation into the alleged murder of a teenage girl.
4. Bao Qingtian (包青天) was a Song Dynasty official whose legendary devotion to justice and virtue has made him a popular symbol of the “pure official” up to the present day.
5. The Hundred Schools of Thought (*baijia zhengming* 百家争鸣) extended from 770 to 221 BC. Regarded as the golden age of Chinese philosophy, this period saw the creation of China's most influential schools of thought, including Confucianism, Taoism, Mohism, and Legalism.
6. Lao Zhuang (老庄) refers to Laozi (老子) and Zhuangzi (庄子), the two thinkers commonly attributed with writing the essential texts of Taoism during the Warring States Period.
7. Liezi (列子), believed to have lived during the Warring States Period, wrote the Taoist book *Liezi*.
8. Qufu (曲阜) is the birthplace of Confucius.
9. Tan Houlan (谭厚兰) was the famous leader of the Jinggangshan Regiment from Beijing Normal University who in 1966 led a group to Qufu to destroy Confucian relics.
10. Yu Dan (于丹) is a professor at Beijing Normal University whose lecture series on the *Analects* and *Zhuangzi* has been a bestseller in China.
11. The Chinese Writers' Association (*zhongguo zuojia xiehui* 中国作家协会), established in 1953, is led by the CPC. Its self-professed purpose is to organize writers to “study the guiding policies of the party.” It awards literary prizes, publishes journals, runs a press, and operates several literary institutes.
12. Lu Xun (鲁迅) was a prominent writer and intellectual in the early 20th century. He is widely considered to be the founder of modern Chinese literature.
13. Wei Jingsheng (魏京生) is a democracy activist who played a prominent role in the “Democracy Wall” movement of 1978.
14. Wang Qianyuan (王千源), an undergraduate at Duke University, was vilified by other Chinese students after she tried to encourage dialogue between Tibetan demonstrators and pro-Beijing demonstrators in April 2008.