

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS TSE-TSUNG CHOW

Beyond the University of Wisconsin's confines, Professor Tse-tsung Chow was world renowned for his studies of traditional and modern Chinese literature and Chinese history. On campus he was respected both for his scholarship and his mentoring of young faculty. Those who didn't know Professor Tse-tsung Chow may have sometimes been puzzled by this multi-faceted man. A prodigious poet, at ease writing classical Chinese verse (something like writing poetry in Latin) as well as working in modern English meter, his verse sang of wine and its pleasures, yet he seldom drank anything stronger than hot water. Although he was soft-spoken, he held strong convictions and, when convinced he was right, could not be swayed (ask any of the deans he worked with!). This power perhaps came from Professor Chow's fondness for the famed hot peppers of his home province; he would often eat them with meals much as one munches on a pickle.

Born in rural Hunan (Qiyang County) on 7 January 1916, "Chow Kung," as he was known to both colleagues and students, enjoyed a traditional education in the Chinese classics, beginning in his family. His father, Chow P'eng-chu [Zhou Pengzhu], was an activist in the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and a classical poet. Professor Chow inherited these interests from his father. He was concerned with helping his country, which had only rejected the imperial system in 1912, to build a strong, democratic government. Thus he majored in political science at Central University (Chungking), receiving his BA in 1942. Chungking in wartime hosted many of China's authors and scholars, and Professor Chow was active in intellectual circles, serving as editor of several publications. Four years of service in the Nationalist Government followed. He served as a director in the powerful Central Secretariat Office under Chen Bulei and was a secretary and speech writer for Chiang Kai-shek himself. When the Nationalists were forced to move to Taiwan, Professor Chow left for the U.S. in early May 1948. He entered the graduate program in political science at the University of Michigan and received the M.A. (1950) and Ph.D. (1955) degrees from that university with a dissertation on local city planning.

Beginning in 1954 Tse-tsung Chow began a decade-long sojourn as a visiting scholar at Columbia and Harvard Universities. It was during this period that he came to know many of the founding fathers of Chinese studies in the United States and wrote his magnum opus, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), a work which still sets the standards for early 20th-century Chinese intellectual history.

In 1963 Professor Chow came from Harvard to join the faculty of the fledgling Department of East Asian Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin. He was instrumental in designing the entire curriculum for the study of Chinese language and literature in Madison. Promoted to full professor in 1966, that same year he received a Guggenheim Fellowship. From 1973-1979 he chaired the Department of East Asian Languages and Literature, but in essence he directed the program during the 1960s and 1970s. After stepping down as chair in 1979, he spent significant parts of the next decade as a visiting professor at Stanford University, the National University of Singapore, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The courses he taught over the years ranged from modern Chinese history to paleography. He was a well-known calligrapher, and his courses in Chinese calligraphy drew large enrollments. Although he always cut a trim figure, he had tremendously skilled, powerful hands, developed as a painter and a carver of stone seals. Throughout his career at the University of Wisconsin, he never tired of responding to requests from residents of the state to date a work of art, to explain a line of ancient Chinese poetry, or to discuss contemporary intellectual life in China. He directed over twenty dissertations, and his students teach at many major universities today.

(continued)

Expanding on contacts he made while working for the government in China and his decade of research in Ivy League schools, Professor Tse-tsung Chow seemed to know every important scholar or literary figure in Chinese studies in the U.S. and abroad. His correspondence with scholars and writers in many literatures was legion. He gave countless lectures at all the major East Asian departments in the U.S. and organized and chaired the very first conference on the famous novel *Honglou meng* (Dream of the Red Chamber), held on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus in 1981. To his younger colleagues, Chow Kung was a ready, patient mentor. We enjoyed working with him and thrived under his influence.

In 1994, aged 78, he retired to continue his publishing and writing. Three years later Chow Kung received a Doctor of Letters, *honoris causa*, from Hong Kong Baptist University. Late in life Professor Chow alternated his time between Madison and California, where his children resettled.

Besides *The May Fourth Movement*, Professor Chow published two other important books in English: *A Research Guide to The May Fourth Movement; Intellectual Revolution in Modern China, 1915-1924* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963); and *Wen-lin; Studies in the Chinese Humanities* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968). He also penned a great number of works in Chinese. His collected verse has been published as *Tse-tsung Chow's Poems in Classical Chinese*, edited by a former student at the University of Wisconsin, Zhi Chen, and published by the Hong Kong Baptist University in 2006.

Professor Chow passed away on 7 May 2007. He is survived by his wife, Nancy Wu, his daughters Lena and Genie, his grandson, Jesse, and his granddaughter, Ariana. Although he had not been in good health in recent years and was over ninety years old, his colleagues always remarked that he seemed not to age. This was perhaps attributable to his ability to transcend epochs in his scholarship and writings. Professor Chow loved Madison, even in winter, as one of his classical Chinese poems, in his own English translation reveals:

Snow storm

the whole city asleep
Only I am awake
Suddenly I feel
the river and hills are
at my doorstep
No moon, no stars
just snow
whirling wind and white
snow
continue to be heard

May he rest peacefully between the waters and the hills.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Zhi Chen

William H. Nienhauser, Jr., chair