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A brief overview of Chinese and Confucian studies in Australia

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Abstract

Bond University's Associate Professor Rosita Dellios, who is a founding member of the *Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*, is the Australian correspondent for the newly launched, Chinese-language, *Newsletter of International Confucian Studies*. The *Newsletter*, which will be published as a quarterly, has correspondents from around the world. It is co-edited by the Beijing-based International Confucian Association and Beijing Foreign Studies University's National Research Centre of Overseas Sinology. A Chinese language version of the following overview will appear in the first issue.

Keywords

research, news, institutions, Sinology

A Brief Overview of Chinese and Confucian Studies in Australia

by Rosita Dellios

Bond University's Associate Professor Rosita Dellios, who is a founding member of the *Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies*, is the Australian correspondent for the newly launched, Chinese-language, *Newsletter of International Confucian Studies*. The *Newsletter*, which will be published as a quarterly, has correspondents from around the world. It is co-edited by the Beijing-based International Confucian Association and Beijing Foreign Studies University's National Research Centre of Overseas Sinology. A Chinese language version of the following overview will appear in the first issue.

The *Newsletter* is targeted to reflect and convey research progress, the latest news, and the latest thinking in Confucian (and related topics) from abroad to a Chinese domestic audience. For further details or contributions to the *Newsletter*, feel free to email Rosita Dellios (rdellios@bond.edu.au).

Professional Association

The *Chinese Studies Association of Australia* (CSAA, <http://www.csaa.org.au/>) was established in 1991 as the professional association for China specialists whose disciplinary expertise includes anthropology, economics, geography, history, language, law, linguistics, political science, sociology, literature and other aspects of Chinese society and culture. It convenes a major biennial conference (the next one being in 2015, see 'Conferences', below), and publishes the *Chinese Studies Newsletter* to inform members of current research, new publications, new appointments, forthcoming conferences and workshops, and campus news. The CSAA advises on the teaching of the Chinese language and culture in the Australian education system and also advises government on research funding requirements. In short, the Association seeks to be influential in shaping policy on Chinese Studies in Australia.

Research Institutions

The Australian National University (ANU), in Canberra, Australia's capital city, has a long track record in China Studies. More than 50 China specialists teach and conduct research, often through the various centres and institutes within ANU. These include the *Contemporary China Centre* which began in 1970 as a research facility concerned with scholarly social science analysis of post-1949 China. In 2010, the Centre merged with the Department of Political & Social Change (PSC). It publishes one of the leading international journals on contemporary China, *The China Journal* (<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/journals/journal/tcj.html>). The *Australian Centre on China in the World* (中华全球研究中心 / 中華全球研究中心, <http://ciw.anu.edu.au/>) is another notable research institution, with a special interest in advancing an understanding of China on a global scale. All of this activity comes under an

umbrella institute, the ANU China Institute (<http://chinainstitute.anu.edu.au/>) which covers all ANU staff and students, across all disciplines, engaged in Chinese studies – not only the PRC mainland, but also Hong Kong SAR, Taiwan, and even the Chinese diaspora.

The largest institution dedicated to China Studies is not in the capital city but in Sydney. The University of Sydney's *China Studies Centre*¹ was established in 2011 as a multidisciplinary centre with 130 academics. According to its website, the China Studies Centre seeks to 'contribute to Australia-China cooperation and relations in business development, public health and social change'. Press coverage of the Centre when it opened stated that the China Studies Centre was intended to 'eventually match the University of Sydney's US Studies Centre in scope and influence'.² Moreover, the vice-chancellor Michael Spence told *The Australian* newspaper: 'What we are doing is looking at the details of Chinese life and hoping we can make a contribution in some small way to development of solutions to the problems that China faces. This centre will not just have an important academic role but a crucial role, like our US Studies Centre, of providing public and government education.'³

The University of Technology in Sydney (UTS) also has a China centre focused on contemporary studies. The *China Research Centre* (<http://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/china-research-centre>) was established in 2008 and describes itself as comprising 'Core and Associate Members with disciplinary backgrounds in Politics, International Studies, Sociology, History, Geography, Anthropology, Media Studies, Linguistics, Business and IT and Law'.

UTS is home to a second institution which represents the most recent addition to Australia's China research efforts. The *Australia-China Relations Institute*⁴ is a think tank established in December 2013 through a A\$1.8 million donation made by a PRC businessman, Mr Xiangmo Huang, Founder and Chairman of the Yuhu Group. The think tank's director is Australia's former foreign minister, Bob Carr.

In the city of Melbourne, La Trobe University's *Centre for Chinese Studies* (<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/china-centre/about>) was set up in 2007 as a tripartite initiative of Peking University, Beijing Foreign Studies University and La Trobe University. It aims to advance China related studies and foster in Australia greater understanding of China and Chinese culture.

The University of Melbourne's *Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies*⁵ describes itself as 'promoting an Australian approach in the study of contemporary China' and as being 'a source of research-based information on China, Chinese societies and Chinese economies in

¹ 中国研究中心, http://sydney.edu.au/china_studies_centre/

² Michael Sainsbury, 'University of Sydney to open largest Chinese studies centre', *The Australian*, 26 Oct. 2011, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/archive/higher-education/university-of-sydney-to-open-largest-chinese-studies-centre/story-fnama19w-1226176716510> (accessed 21.10.14).

³ Ibid.

⁴ See <http://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/australia-china-relations-institute>

⁵ See <http://chinastudies.unimelb.edu.au/>

the 21st century'. It is well-resourced by an excellent Chinese collection available at the University's Bailieu Library.

Institutions which have 'China' in their name, as the above show, are not the only ones that study China and its various disciplinary facets. Moreover, they are not always the obvious places to find research on Confucian studies. There are numerous university departments, centres and institutes that do this under other wider categories, such as Asian Studies or East-West style institutes.

For example, Bond University's *Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies* (CEWCES, <http://bond.edu.au/cewces> and <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cewces/>) was established in 1993 within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and now (within the new Faculty of Society and Design) represents a 21st century framework for 'East-West' interactions, providing insights into cultural and political systems, foreign policy, strategic culture, public diplomacy and new patterns of sustainability and development framed by cultural and social networks. Much of its research is China-focused. Two publications that are almost a decade apart show the continuity of themes but also change occasioned by China's rapid rise. The first is a 2004 edited volume by senior Centre staff, *Toward a Global Community: New Perspectives on Confucian Humanism*,⁶ which carries the theme of a global community enriched by Confucian wisdom; while the 2013 book, *China's Quest for Global Order: From Peaceful Rise to Harmonious World*,⁷ continues the theme but highlights China's difficult and sometimes contested role in seeking to realise such aspirations through its 21st century renaissance. The Centre's Bulletin, *The Culture Mandala*⁸ publishes articles on a range of East-West topics, including Confucianism. In its latest issue (December 2014), a Bond University tutor and researcher, Samad Aftab, addresses the question Confucius' relevance to 21st Century China.

While Confucianism is also studied and researched in university philosophy, Chinese and Asian studies departments, the most widely recognised centres for Confucianism are the ubiquitous Confucius Institutes (CIs). These are established at 11 Australian universities, namely, the University of New South Wales (UNSW), the University of Newcastle, the University of Sydney, the University of Melbourne, the University of Queensland, the Queensland University of Technology, the University of Adelaide, the University of Western Australia, Charles Darwin University, Griffith University (for tourism), and RMIT University (for Chinese medicine). The Confucius Institutes, which typically teach Chinese language and culture in foreign countries through stakeholder engagement, have a reputation of not being particularly scholarly. To quote a 2012 study on Australia's CIs: '... it seems very much that CIs currently don't do any proper academic teaching or research, mainly due to

⁶ Martin Lu, Rosita Dellios and R. James Ferguson, *Toward A Global Community: New Perspectives on Confucian Humanism*, Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies (Gold Coast, Australia: Bond University and International Confucian Association, 2004).

⁷ Rosita Dellios and R. James Ferguson, *China's Quest for Global Order: From Peaceful Rise to Harmonious World* (Lanham Md: Lexington, 2013).

⁸ See <http://epublications.bond.edu.au/cm>

human resources and budget limitations.’⁹ But this is changing with Hanban’s¹⁰ promotion of the ‘New Sinology and China Studies Research Scheme’ that seeks to sponsor ‘academics with a strong background in Sinology and China Studies from all over the world to conduct research on traditional and contemporary China to shape a new generation of sinologists’.¹¹

At the forefront of what it terms a ‘new wave of Sinology’ (rather than the ANU’s preferred term, ‘New Sinology’, see Barmé below) is the Confucius Institute of the UNSW which sponsored a conference on ‘Rethinking China, Confucianism and the World from the late Qing Dynasty’. The conference was funded by the Confucius Institute Headquarters and Hanban. According to a November 2013 report, it ‘represented an important milestone in the development of the global Confucius Institute movement as a 21st century scholarly community for stimulating rigorous academic debate on Sinology.’¹² The conference resulted in a special edition of the refereed journal *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China*,¹³ with Associate Professor Jon Eugene von Kowallis as a guest editor.

Confucian Studies Scholars

There are a number of Confucian and related studies scholars in Australia. In this issue six are profiled. But first, mention needs to be made of a highly distinguished sinologist in Australia’s intellectual life, the late Pierre Ryckmans (28 September 1935 – 11 August 2014). Also known by his *nom de plume* Simon Leys, Ryckmans was a Belgian-Australian sinologist and translator whose many works included a translation of the *Analects of Confucius* (1997). He taught Chinese literature at the ANU (where he supervised the honours thesis of a future Australian Prime Minister – the Mandarin-fluent Kevin Rudd), and was Professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Sydney. He was influential in shaping the development of Australian sinologists, including some of the following.

⁹ Falk Hartig, ‘Cultural diplomacy with Chinese characteristics: The case of Confucius Institutes in Australia’, *Communication, Politics & Culture*, Vol. 45 (2012), p. 268, <http://mams.rmit.edu.au/bd8e4ha8e4t8z.pdf> (accessed 23.10.14).

¹⁰ Hanban (Chinese: 汉办) refers to the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (NOCFL). See Hanban website: <http://english.hanban.org/>

¹¹ Hanban, ‘Recommendations on Confucius Institute Development and Planning (Draft)’, Confucius Institute Headquarters, Beijing, 2011, p. 5, quoted in Hartig, p. 269. As Geremie R Barmé explains: ‘The ‘New Sinology Plan’ 新汉学计划 mooted the provision of bursaries for overseas doctoral scholars (博士生奖学金项目旨在通过来华学习、中外合作培养等方式, 资助具有中国研究学术基础的各国优秀青年来华深造, 培养青年汉学家和中国学研究方面的高端人才, 推动对传统和当代中国的跨学科研究.) These plans were further explored in a dedicated panel on ‘‘New Sinology’’: Trends and Prospects’ (‘新汉学’的趋势与展望) and the ‘Forum for Young Sinologists and the Promotion of the “China Study Plan”’ (‘青年汉学家论坛暨’新汉学国际研修计划’推介会) at the Third ‘Sinology and the World Today’ conference, Beijing, 3-5 November 2012 . . . Ge Jianxiong 葛剑雄 of Fudan University expressed concern about the unfolding non-language teaching role of Confucius Institutes and the political dimensions of their brief.’ (‘On New Sinology’, *Chinese Studies Association of Australia Newsletter*, Issue No. 31, May 2005, http://ciw.anu.edu.au/new_sinology/index.php, accessed 23.10.14).

¹² See <http://confuciusinstitute.unsw.edu.au/news/confucius-institute-driving-new-wave-sinology/>.

¹³ Vol. 7, Issue 3, 2013.

John Makeham is Professor of Chinese Studies, School of Culture, History & Language at the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. His research interests as listed at the ANU researchers website (<https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/makeham-jt>) are: ‘Chinese intellectual history, especially the intellectual history of Chinese philosophy. He has a particular interest in Confucian philosophy and, in more recent years, the influence of Sinitic Buddhist philosophy on Confucian philosophy. He is currently involved in two collaborative projects: (1) translating key Chinese and Tibetan commentaries on Dignaaga's *Aalambana-pariikshaa* (Investigation of the Object), a text that played an influential role in the modern revival of Yogacara Buddhist philosophy in China and Tibet; (2) examining the Buddhist roots of Neo-Confucian philosophy.’

Dr Shirley Chan (陳慧) is Head of Chinese Studies, Department of International Studies and a member of the Macquarie University Ancient Cultures Research Centre. She did her PhD on Confucianism at the University of Sydney (where Pierre Ryckmans was one of her professors in Classical Chinese and Chinese History). She joined Chinese Studies at Macquarie University in 2002 and researches in traditional Chinese culture, Chinese philosophy, Chinese textual studies and intellectual history, and the excavated Chu bamboo manuscripts dated to the fourth century BCE. Her numerous publications are listed in her university staff page.¹⁴

Jeffrey Riegel is Professor and Head of the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Sydney and Louis B. Agassiz Professor Emeritus of Chinese at the University of California, Berkeley. His numerous publications on various aspects of Chinese thought, literature, and archaeology, can be found on his staff profile.¹⁵

Karyn Lai is Associate Professor of Philosophy, School of History and Philosophy, in the University of New South Wales. Her primary research area is in early (pre-Qin) Confucian and Daoist philosophies. Her books include *Learning from Chinese Philosophies* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2006) and *Introduction to Chinese Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008). She co-edits the Chinese Comparative Philosophy section of the journal, *Philosophy Compass*, published by Blackwell. Further details may be found on her university's staff website: <https://hal.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/people/karyn-lai/>

The following two scholars are not specifically identifiable as Confucian studies experts, but they are steeped in an intellectual tradition that entails a deep understanding of Confucian thought.

Geremie R. Barmé is a research professor at ANU and director of the *Australian Centre on China in the World*. A student of ‘such towering academic figures’ as Liu Ts’un-yan 柳存仁,

¹⁴ <https://www.mq.edu.au/about-us/faculties-and-departments/faculty-of-arts/departments-of-international-studies/staff/staff-chinese-studies/dr-shirley-chan/>

¹⁵ See <http://sydney.edu.au/arts/slc/staff/profiles/jeffrey.riegel.php>

and Pierre Ryckmans,¹⁶ he is a high profile Australian China specialist and prolific writer who coined the term ‘New Sinology’ in 2005¹⁷ to describe a more integrative study of China. It is one marked by a ‘robust engagement with . . . a Sinophone world in all of its complexity, be it local, regional or global’ and affirms ‘strong scholastic underpinnings in both the classical and modern Chinese language and studies, at the same time as encouraging an ecumenical attitude in relation to a rich variety of approaches and disciplines, whether they be mainly empirical or more theoretically inflected’.¹⁸ Such breadth and depth is evident in Barmé’s own scholarly identity as ‘an historian, cultural critic, filmmaker, translator and web-journal editor who works on Chinese cultural and intellectual history from the early modern period (1600s) to the present.’¹⁹

Jon Eugene von Kowallis is Associate Professor and Head of the Chinese Studies Program in the School of Languages and Linguistics at UNSW. His publications may be found on <https://research.unsw.edu.au/people/associate-professor-jon-eugene-von-kowallis/publications>. He is currently working on an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery project, on the early work of Lu Xun (1881-1936), the founder of modern Chinese literature. This project will contribute to a better understanding of China’s language transformation, intellectual history, and cultural trends.

Conferences

The *Chinese Studies Association of Australia* conference of 2015 will be held in Adelaide, July 5-9, as part of the *International Convention of Asian Scholars Ninth Biennial Conference* (ICAS9) in conjunction with *International Institute of Asian Studies* based in Leiden, The Netherlands. This cooperation will result in the biggest Asian Studies conference ever to be held in Australia, affording attendees an opportunity to meet China scholars from China and elsewhere around the world. For more on this event, see <http://www.icas.asia/>

‘Reading the Old in the Light of the Newly Discovered: Chinese Philosophy and Ancient Chinese Texts’ (先秦兩漢出土文獻與中國哲學國際研討會) is the title of an international symposium, organized by *Chinese Studies*, Department of International Studies (Languages and Cultures), Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, on 9-11 December 2014 (contact person: Dr Shirley Chan, shirley.chan@mq.edu.au). Selected papers on this topic of scholarly importance – traditional Chinese thought in the newly recovered ancient texts – will be reviewed and published after the symposium.

¹⁶ Geremie R Barmé, ‘Doubtless at Forty 四十不惑’, *The China Story*, Australian Centre on China in the World, 1 Dec. 2012, <http://www.thechinastory.org/2012/12/doubtless-at-forty> (accessed 24.10.14).

¹⁷ Geremie R Barmé, ‘On New Sinology’, *Chinese Studies Association of Australia Newsletter* Issue No. 31, May 2005, http://ciw.anu.edu.au/new_sinology/index.php (accessed 23.10.14).

¹⁸ Barmé, ‘On New Sinology’.

¹⁹ See http://ciw.anu.edu.au/people/curriculum_vitae/geremie_barme.php.