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## **Memories of T. H. Tsien**

**Like many others**, I was greatly influenced by Professor Tsien's leadership, extraordinary scholarship, humanity and example for the rest of us in the field. He was my faculty advisor at U-Chicago, guiding me in 1967-70 on both my Masters' thesis and later my dissertation. He also gave me my first library job in what was then called the Far Eastern Library. He influenced my move to the University of Maryland for work on my dissertation, and inspired me to establish the East Asia Collection there around what is now known as the Gordon Prange Collection. Later, when I moved to Yale, I had the good fortune to work with colleagues who also had been his students.

Although I lost contact with him after his retirement, Prof. Tsien (or, "the Old Man", as some of us affectionately referred to him) remained in my memory and thoughts. His was a unique life. There will not be another like him.

Jack Siggins  
University Librarian Emeritus  
George Washington University

I had the chance and honor to meet with Dr. Tsien in the summer of 2007 during my first visit to the University of Chicago. I was then a fresh doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh who was fascinated by Chinese book history and print culture. At that time, I knew about Dr. Tsien's marvelous scholarship through reading his works on printing and paper included in Joseph Needham's series and his *Written on Bamboo and Silk*. His name was certainly awe-inspiring to me. I did not know where I got the courage to write to him before my trip, wishing that I could see him in person. But meanwhile, I felt there was no hope that he would finally agree to meet with me. First, he was 97 years old then. Second, he was such a renowned scholar in my field, and I was just a nobody grad student. However to my surprise, he said yes to my request, and he even drove by himself to the campus. We had a lovely conversation together with his nephew Mr. Qian Xiaowen at a Greek restaurant close by. Until today, I still vividly remember everything in this meeting. Dr. Tsien gave me a lot of insightful suggestions in studying book history and pointed me to many useful resources. He also shared with me his own intellectual adventure in this field. What a generous scholar!

I chose book history and print culture as my dissertation topic, and then I fulfilled my dream to become a Chinese Studies Librarian. As a pioneer in Chinese book history and East Asian Librarianship, Dr. Tsien's academic and

professional achievements influenced me and, I believe, a lot of younger generation scholar-librarians, profoundly.

At the end of our meeting, Dr. Tsien gave me a copy of the Chinese translation of his book *Written on Bamboo and Silk* and signed it for me. I have been keeping this souvenir on my desk, and reading it often. Whenever seeing his handwriting on the title page, I think of this unforgettable meeting with him years ago. He will be fondly remembered and greatly missed.

Liangyu Fu  
Chinese Studies Librarian  
University of Michigan

### **1985 CALA Distinguished Service Award**

**Dr. Tsuen-hsuei Tsien**  
**Curator Emeritus, East Asian Library, University of Chicago**  
**Professor Emeritus, Graduate Library School, University of Chicago**  
**The 1985 CALA Distinguished Service Award Recipient**

Dr. Tsuen-hsuei Tsien studied at the Nanjing University majoring in history from 1928-1932. After graduation he served as Assistant Librarian of the National Jiaotong University in Shanghai, 1932-1937 and was Head of the Nanjing and Shanghai offices of the National library of Beiping, 1937-1947. Dr. Tsien joined the University of Chicago in 1947 and received his master's degree in 1952 and his Ph.D. degree in 1957. He became the first Curator of its East Asian Library, 1949-1978 and Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations and in the Graduate Library School, 1964-1979. During his 32 years at the University of Chicago, Dr. Tsien helped build the East Asian Collection into one of the nation's leading centers of East Asian literature, holding about 530,000 volumes in Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan. After retirement, he was named Professor Emeritus in the Department and in the Graduate Library School, as well as Curator Emeritus of the East Asian Library.

Chinese American librarians in East Asian libraries often faced a pressing problem of national resource development and bibliographical control. Early

efforts began with Dr. Tsien's 1957 analytical survey of the growth of East Asian collections in the United States and Canada since 1930. The survey, which was repeated at 5-year intervals, contained information on libraries' holdings, current status of acquisitions and sources of financial support. The survey was then replaced by an annual statistical compilation conducted by the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL). Numerous bibliographies have been written to aid scholars in locating needed information. Among the most significant reference tools is Dr. Tsien's ***East Asian Collections in America***, 1965.

Professor Tsien served in various capacities in national and international associations and was the recipient of many grants and awards. Upon retiring from the University of Chicago in 1979, Dr. Tsien continued to work tirelessly in additional areas of his chosen field. He served as a fellow of the Joseph Needham Research Institute in Cambridge, England; chaired a section of the third International Conference on the History of Chinese Science in Peking; and continued to publish. Other honors include distinguished service awards from the Council on East Asian Libraries and the Chinese American Librarians Association, a 1996 Professional Achievement Citation from the University of Chicago Alumni Association and being named to the Chicago Senior Citizens Hall of Fame. In recognition of his distinguished achievements a Festschrift in honor of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday was published in Beijing and Taipei. When the National Library of China marked its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1999 Dr. Tsien couldn't go to the celebration in person. So library officials from Beijing traveled to Chicago to present the University of Chicago professor emeritus with a Distinguished Service Award, bestowed for saving 30,000 volumes of rare Chinese books during the height of World War II. For this extremely difficult but successful task, he was also cited by the Chinese Government in 1943.

Before and during World War II, Dr. Tsien worked at the National Library's Shanghai office. Fearing the 30,000 rare volumes, some of which dated to the tenth century, would be destroyed, the Chinese government and the U.S. State Department tried to move them to the U.S. for safekeeping but had failed because the Shanghai harbor and customs were under Japanese control. Dr. Tsien risked his life to initiate a plan to ship the books safely to the United States for safekeeping and microfilming.

Dr. Tsien wrote and published more than 100 books and articles on Chinese culture and the history of books and printing in China, including *Written on Bamboo and Silk: The Beginnings of Chinese Books and Inscriptions*, 1962

and Paper and Printing, 1985. He also contributed an invited article in the UNESCO Courier, which was published in 15 different languages in 1972.

Dr. Tsien has been an exemplary role model for Chinese American librarians. He has been one of the most outstanding and influential librarians of his time. The Award Committee has selected Dr. Tsuen-hsuei Tsien as the 1985 CALA Distinguished Service Award recipient based on his inspiration to Chinese American librarians, his dedication to CALA and his continuous efforts in advancing Chinese American librarianship. Dr. Tsien exhibited a strong leadership role, management style and mentorship during his long tenure at the University of Chicago and during a fruitful and productive post-retirement period. His distinguished achievements include seeing the importance of risking his life for a rare portion of China's national treasures and his expert level of knowledge and tireless vision, insight and promotion which led to the establishment of the East Asian Collection at the University of Chicago, one of the nation's leading centers of East Asian literature, with its holdings of over 530,000 volumes -- a formidable undertaking. Dr. Tsien's scholarship and significant contributions to the profession and literature have benefited librarians, scholars and library users both in the United States and globally.

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