

Obituary

RICHARD CASPER RUDOLPH

(21 May 1909–9 April 2003)

Richard C. Rudolph was the founder of East Asian Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. He was one of the first generation of serious China scholars trained in the United States. A researcher of many diverse interests, he closely followed the progress of Chinese archaeology during the second half of the twentieth century.

Born in San Francisco on 21 May 1909 and fascinated by China ever since he was a child, Rudolph attended the University of California, Berkeley, where he obtained a B.S. in economics (1932) before switching into the then Department of Oriental Languages (M.A. 1936, Ph.D. 1942). His main teachers, the Mongolist Ferdinand Lessing (1881–1962) and the Sinologist Peter A. Boodberg (1903–72), were both immigrants who trained him in the grand European philological tradition. Thus, Rudolph learned not only Chinese and Japanese but also Mongolian and Manchu, as well as some Tibetan and Russian; that he knew most Western European languages was regarded as a matter of course. He worked with Lessing on his monumental *Mongolian-English Dictionary* (eventually published in 1960 by the University of California Press), and he authored *A Comprehensive Bibliography of Manchu Studies*, which was published in 1963 under the name of Denis Sinor (Rudolph's original manuscript, brought up to date by Hartmut Walravens, is still in preparation for publication more than sixty years after its compilation).

From 1937 to 1940, Rudolph worked at the University of Chicago as an instructor of Chinese under Herrlee G. Creel (1905–94), whom he assisted (with Chang Tsung-Ch'ien) in compiling the three-volume textbook *Literary Chinese by the Inductive Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938–52), which was much acclaimed for its innovative approach of simultaneously introducing the student to the cultural history as well as the language of classical China.

After Pearl Harbor, when knowledge of East Asian languages was suddenly at a premium, Rudolph was approached to lead the legendary Office of Strategic Services mission to Mongolia, but instead he ended up in Boulder, Colorado, where he headed the Chinese language section at the Language School of the U.S. Department of the Navy (1943–45). In 1946 he took up an appointment as assistant professor of Chinese Studies at the University of Toronto, where, after only one year, he was promoted to associate professor, serving concurrently as assistant keeper of Far Eastern Antiquities at the Royal Ontario Museum. In this capacity, he participated for the first time in archaeological excavations in southern Canada.

In 1947 Rudolph returned to California; declining the offer of a position at Berkeley, he chose to go to UCLA to start a new Department of Oriental Languages (now the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures). Promoted to the rank of

professor in 1952, he taught at UCLA until his retirement in 1976. He served as chair of his department for seventeen of his twenty-four years there (1947–62 and 1970–71). He often voiced his strong commitment to the University of California as a specifically public institution of higher learning.

Rudolph's first opportunity to visit East Asia came in 1948, when he went to China on a Fulbright fellowship. The country was then in the terminal stages of civil war. Refusing to comply with an evacuation order from the U.S. embassy, Rudolph braved many dangers in traveling across the country by air, always just one step ahead of the advancing People's Liberation Army. He left Guangzhou for Hong Kong in the early summer of 1949. During his eight months in China, he became acquainted with some of the leading scholars in archaeology, notably the Harvard-trained archaeologist Feng Hanji (1899–1977), conducted a survey of Han rock-cut tombs in the Min valley of Sichuan, and excavated a late-Ming-dynasty official's tomb at Xining, Qinghai. This was the last archaeological fieldwork conducted by a foreign researcher in Republican China. In Sichuan, Rudolph acquired a valuable collection of rubbings of Han tomb reliefs, some of which he later published in a volume coauthored with the eminent linguist and paleographer, Wen You (1901–85): *Han Tomb Art of West China: A Collection of First- and Second-Century Reliefs* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951). Unfortunately, most of these materials were stolen from his office at UCLA in 1970, forcing Rudolph to abandon the book manuscript on which he had been working for over two decades and which, if completed, would have been a definitive, philologically grounded treatment of the funerary iconography of Han-dynasty Sichuan. The report on his excavations in Xining was published as an article in *Ars Orientalis* 1(1954).

Mainland China remained closed for the remainder of Rudolph's career, but he avidly took advantage of further opportunities to spend time in East Asia in order to pursue research, strengthen scholarly ties, and build his collection of rare books, maps, paintings, and calligraphy. He spent a year in Japan (1953) on a Guggenheim fellowship and two years in Taiwan (1959–61) with combined Guggenheim and Fulbright funding; several shorter sojourns followed during later years. In 1973 he visited mainland China one more time with a delegation of American specialists in Chinese art and archaeology. After his retirement from UCLA, he directed the University of California's Education Abroad Program in Hong Kong for two years (1977–79).

An understated, plain-spoken man who found intense enjoyment in his scholarly activity, Rudolph was anything but an empire builder by inclination. Even so, his work laid the foundation for a phenomenal growth of East Asian Studies at UCLA. From modest beginnings in 1947—with a staff of three (Rudolph and two of his former colleagues from the Navy Language School, Enshō Ashikaga and Y. C. Chu), 8 courses, and a total enrollment of fifty-two undergraduates—the department that he founded has now grown to twenty-five faculty, nearly 250 courses, and some two hundred undergraduate and graduate majors. In addition, East Asia-related scholarship is now pursued throughout the university. Rudolph made this florescence possible by single-handedly establishing a first-rate research library. When he started working there, UCLA's sole Chinese book was a telephone directory of Shanghai. His main goal during his 1948–49 sojourn in China was to acquire a standard collection of Chinese books, reference works, and collectanea. Due to wartime conditions, books could be bought cheaply, and with ten thousand dollars made available to him by then university librarian Robert Vosper, Rudolph was able to send back more than ten thousand books, including some fine old editions from the Ming and Qing

dynasties. On his way back to the U.S., he stopped in Japan to make additional purchases. In the half century since then, the library that he founded has grown into one of the premier East Asian research libraries in the United States; it now boasts holdings of over 450,000 volumes (including 250,000 in Chinese). Rudolph enriched it further by donating valuable editions and maps from his private collection. As a fitting recognition of his seminal contribution, UCLA's East Asian Library was named after him in 1981.

During his stay in China, Rudolph, like many travelers at the time, became friendly with members of the missionary community. He later persuaded the learned fathers of the *Societas Verbi Divini*, who had moved the priceless research library of their *Monumenta Serica* Institute from Beijing to Japan, to relocate it to Los Angeles, where, from 1962 to 1972, it was combined with UCLA's holdings while members of the institute taught courses in Rudolph's department. From 1963 on, Rudolph served for over three decades on the editorial board of *Monumenta Serica*.

Aside from his early forays into the study of Inner Asia, Rudolph's scholarly interests were centered upon the classical civilization of China. His Ph.D. dissertation, "Wu Tzū-hsü, His Life and Posthumous Cult: A Critical Study of *Shi Chi* 66" (published in condensed form in *Oriens Extremus* 9 [1962]), was concerned with historiography. In some sixty books and articles produced subsequently (see his bibliography in *Monumenta Serica* 34[1979–80], which was dedicated to him as a *Festschrift* on his seventieth birthday), he treated diverse topics on the interstices of material culture and textual research, such as printing and publishing, painting, maps, and, above all, excavated artifacts. Without direct access to archaeological finds, he made it his business to introduce Chinese publications about them to the English-speaking audience. Such a concern manifests itself in truly monumental form in the volume *Chinese Archaeological Abstracts* (*Monumenta Archaeologica*, no. 6, Los Angeles: Institute of Archaeology, UCLA, 1978), the outcome of a multiyear project sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies which Rudolph directed from 1968 to 1973.

As a teacher, Rudolph was serious, sincere, and thorough. In his lectures, he combined insights from a wide variety of disciplines, and he often brought original artifacts from his collection into class, providing what one of his former students recalls as "an extraordinarily rich experience." His spirit is still very much alive at UCLA.

Richard C. Rudolph died on 9 April 2003, having suffered from ill health for a number of years. He is survived by his wife of fifty-nine years, the former Mary Alice Potter. His three children all have followed in his footsteps by becoming, respectively, a professional archaeologist, a professor in the University of California system, and the holder of a Ph.D. in Chinese literature from UC Berkeley. He has five grandchildren.

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