

Taiwan Lecture in Leipzig University

– Professor Dr. Paul R. Katz’s on Cross-Strait Religious Interaction

Following the lecture in Oxford, the Center for Chinese Studies of National Central Library (R.O.C. Taiwan) hosted the second Taiwan Lecture on Chinese Studies in 2015 on June 22. The Lecture this time took place in Bibliotheca Albertina, Leipzig, in collaboration with the Institute of East Asian Studies of Leipzig University. Dr. Philip Clart, the Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies, took the role of the lecture moderator and delivered an introducing remark, and Ms. Sabine Weng, the Director of the Division of Education of the Taiwan Representative Office in Germany also addressed a brief welcoming speech.

National Central Library (R.O.C. Taiwan) invited Professor Paul R. Katz to be the speaker of the Lecture in Leipzig, and the lecture topic is titled “An Unbreakable Thread? Preliminary Observations on Cross-Strait Religious Interaction during the Modern Era.” Professor Paul R. Katz graduated with PhD from the Department of East Asian Studies in Princeton University and is currently the Distinguished Research Fellow from the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica. His Research fields cover social and religious history of China, social and religious history of Taiwan, and the history of Daoism. Professor Katz currently also holds the position of the Director of the Research Program Office of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (CCKF). Indeed, he is one of the greatest and most prestigious scholars of Sinology right now and deserves more than much attention and respect.

In the lecture, Professor Katz illustrated the synergy between religious traditions in China and Taiwan during the Japanese colonial and Post-war eras. As Professor Katz indicates, extensive contacts took place between specialists and worshippers on both sides of the Taiwan Strait during the Japanese colonial period, in contrast to much conventional assumption that religious ties between China and Taiwan were severely disrupted. For the Post-war period, Professor Katz explained various complex factors that have shaped Cross-Strait religious interaction since the late 1980s, especially in terms of pilgrimages and Buddhist organizations. Apart from the

ways in which Cross-Strait links shaped the development of organized religious movements such as Buddhism and Daoism, Professor Katz also considered their impact on communal religious traditions as seen in pilgrimage networks for popular deities like Mazu (媽祖), the Great Emperor who Protects Life (Baosheng dadi 保生大帝), and the Royal Lords (wangye 王爺). Another key topic in the Lecture involves the interaction between Chinese and Taiwanese sectarian traditions, both in terms of religious leaders and scriptures such as morality books (shanshu 善書). As Professor Katz concludes, Taiwan's place in the transnational religious networks encompasses both sides of the Taiwan Strait and involves many humanitarian aspects, including philanthropy, education, as well as mass media; it is without doubt that Taiwan is a very important and independent country.

The Taiwan Lecture this time exemplifies Professor Katz's very profound knowledge in religious studies, and it is not a coincidence to host such an enlightening lecture in the Institute of East Asian Studies of Leipzig University, for which the Cross-Strait religious relations is a focus of study. Many prestigious scholars of Sinology also participated in the Lecture with utmost enthusiasm, including Dr. Adam Yuet Chau from University of Cambridge, Professor Robert Campany from Vanderbilt University, Dr. Martin Hofmann, and Mr. Andreas Berndt from Leipzig University. The latter two scholars had received research grants from Center for Chinese Studies before. The issue of "Cross-Strait Religious Interaction" is so interesting that people cannot help but raise many insightful questions, which were all brilliantly answered by Professor Katz.

After the lecture, Ms. Jane Liao from the Center for Chinese Studies, National Central Library, played the video-clip "Introducing Resources for Chinese Studies in Taiwan" to the audience. The video clip not only introduces the Center for Chinese Studies but also several research grants offered by Taiwan government, such as "MOFA Taiwan Fellowship" and "Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies." The audience rushed to the brochures without delay in the hope of getting their share of fortune.

The cosponsor this time – Leipzig University – is one of the multiple collaborators of the overseas TRCCS; more importantly, Leipzig University has been

our most vital partner in Europe. Since 2012, the National Central Library in Taiwan has continuously established numerous TRCCS in collaboration with top universities and prestigious academic institutions around the world, and the total number is more than a dozen by now. The establishment of TRCCS aims to promote the academic research achievements as well as publications in Taiwan and to strengthen academic relationships with international sinology communities in the hope of boosting international research exchanges in Taiwan and Chinese Studies.



Professor Katz delivering his lecture



Dr. Philip Clart, the Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies, took the role of the lecture moderator.



Ms. Sabine Weng, the Director of the Division of Education of the Taiwan Representative Office in Germany, delivered a brief welcoming speech.



The audience was much fascinated by this brilliant lecture



The Group Photo