

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY EXPEDITION TO  
HSÜANHUA (South Chahar)**

*PRELIMINARY REPORT*

by

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In last year's issue of *Monumenta Serica* (vol. XII, p. 236-242), a short report was given on a folkloristic and historical survey done by the author with his students under the sponsorship of the Catholic University, Peiping. The full report on this trip is found in *Monumenta Serica*, vol. XIII, p. 209—315, where also a few other papers are quoted which were based on the materials brought back last year; a few more have still to be written.

From the 8th of July till the 31st of August 1948 the writer again undertook fieldwork in the Chahar province. One companion of last year's trip, 李世瑜 Li Shih-yü, covered again the folkloristic side of the survey, while one other, 王輔世 Wang Fu-shih, undertook a first sampling of the local dialects.

The expedition covered an area east and southeast of the territory studied last year; it lies across the 115th degree E. longitude and reaches southward to 40° 30' N. latitude. One hundred fifteen localities were visited, covering an area of about 850 square kilometers (last year's figures were 93 localities and 1000 square kilometers).

1. Linguistics

Two systematic surveys were organised simultaneously. One, with a list of a dozen items only, was completely in the hands of Wang Fu-shih; the list contained mostly names of well known insects and was used in 64 localities. The maps based on this material will be used for the study of lexical variations over a small area; a number of important boundaries were discovered. The study of this material will be the subject of an independent report, in the shape of a thesis for the M.A. degree.

The second survey was part of a broader investigation which is being undertaken by the Bureau of Linguistic Geography of the

Catholic University. It is intended to cover the greater part of North China. A questionnaire of about 250 items was used in three different localities (Cz 318, Dv 85a and Dv 126c), separated by a distance of about 30 li (18 kms or 10 miles).

When one looks at the map, it is clear that a fourth point ought to have been chosen in the southeastern corner of the area to cover adequately the territory. But no willing subject could be found, as they all feared that some governmental investigation was on foot. The three other localities being not very far from Catholic Missions, it was sufficient to declare that our group "belonged" there, to allay the fears; the peasants perhaps thought we were cranks, but then harmless ones.

The military operations proceeding all around the area we explored explain the suspicions of the local people; we cannot expect a normal survey to be done as long as the civil war goes on.

The questionnaire used is admittedly too short, but it was shortened to keep within the limits of one day, of about six to seven hours questioning. Although we could not give more time to it in the present circumstances, we feel that this valuable experiment has brought out some of the shortcomings of our questionnaire, which now can be corrected. It has also completed our knowledge of the problem how to prevent our interrogations from turning into leading questions and to insure a clear and uniform answer.

The items investigated cover briefly the main sections of the peasants' life with the emphasis on objects and activities. We feel nevertheless that it is too early yet to publish our full questionnaire; further experience in the field is needed. We also took a series of photographs of rural implements.

To sum up, this year's linguistic investigation provided a positive preparation for a general linguistic survey, viz., a testing of the questionnaire, and the training in the field of a Chinese specialist.

## 2. History

The number of temples visited this year was notably smaller than last year, the average per village being only 4.2 temples as against 6.5 last year. The reason lies in the smaller size of the villages. This area contains a great number of shortlived settlements having only a few farms; they are called 伙房 *huo-fang*, "tenants' houses," and are put up by some landowners in the middle of their fields. Some of them have given rise to what are now small villages, others have disappeared and we could not even find their emplacement, although they were still indicated on the last government's map drawn in 1933.

We could not disregard those settlements, as many have temples, sometimes with characteristic cults. Therefore this year again we took note of every single temple in every locality, of its cults and of its monuments.

In the village temples we found this time half a dozen Buddhist pillars of an 11th—13th century style but they are poorly carved and devoid of interesting inscriptions. The city of Hsüanhua, which is known to be ancient, was the object of a detailed survey, which revealed a few Mongol dynasty (1280–1368) temples, but nothing older. We prepare a monograph with a plan giving the full details of all the 175 temples existing in this city.

The inscriptions scattered about the villages allow us to draw a few more boundaries of the 衛 *wei* system of administration—military circuits—in use from 1430 till 1696. We plan to publish this material, together with last year's materials on the same subject. In the immediate vicinity of the city of Hsüanhua the inscriptions do no longer, because of the local importance of the city, give the exact name of the *wei*, but say simply: "outside the western gate. . ." or "outside the northern gate. . .". But as happens often for cities, the local gazetteers give a detailed boundary of the two *wei* which divided the city at that time; they are, however, silent on the boundaries outside the city.

Of some archaeological value is a small stone Buddha dated 460 which we found in a small village. We took a rubbing of the poem carved on the back of the image.

### 3. Folklore

The folkloristic material gathered in 648 temples (473 village temples and 175 city temples) is again very abundant and presents typical features. Here are some provisory conclusions which could be drawn from a first study of the material:

A. Fifty-one distinct cults exist in the area (against 38 in Wanch'üan); several are represented only once or twice in the city of Hsüanhua.

B. Two cults which attracted our attention in Wanch'üan, namely those of 玄壇 *Hsüan-t'an* and of 五道 *Wu-tao* present important differences in the Hsüanhua area. The first is totally different: instead of being the cult of a Hail god, we found there a cult protecting against the influences of graveyards. In the case of the *Wu-tao*, although the cult is still very similar to that found in Wanch'üan, it seems to modify some of its outward appearances in the eastern half of the area. It is perhaps too early to hazard a

hypothesis and to see there a beginning of a geographical transition to the type of cult known in Hopei: 土地 *Tu-ti* and 三聖 *San-sheng*. If true, those findings may be important for the history of this most popular cult.

C. In Hsüanhua we found again the cult of 胡都 *Hu-tu*, more flourishing even than in Wanch'üan, but we remain as puzzled as before about its origin.

Typical for Hsüanhua are the cult of 大郎爺 *Ta-lang-yeh* and of 老郎爺 *San-lang-yeh*, which have a purely local origin, which we could track down. They are based on miraculous manifestations of a rain god which occurred in the last 30 years; the latter took possession of some itinerant sorcerer and spoke through his mouth; quite a few temples were put up in his honour as late as 1940.

A third cult which was new for us is that of the goddess of the eyes 眼光奶奶 *Yen-kuang nai-nai*; it has some features varying notably from this cult as it is known in Peiping.

#### 4. Varia

We have brought back 270 photographs, which comprise a complete set of all the distinct cults practised in the explored area.

The beautifully carved bricks found in many places in Wanch'üan are almost entirely lacking in Hsüanhua; we noticed here, however, the same profusion of roof decorations on the temples; we were lucky to find two which were dated—a little before and after 1700. Both Hsüanhua and Wanch'üan brickcarvers seem to depend on a local art tradition centered in Yühsien 蔚縣, about 100 kms to the southwest of Hsüanhua.