**writing/书写(Shū Xiě)**

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| Final Remarks | Roland Marti, Qiu Zhijie | 19 Jul 2022 |

Roland Marti: The presentation of the European and the Chinese attitude towards writing made it clear that wheras in the Chinese conception writing is both an art and a tool and historically has sacred significance, for Europeans it is essentially a tool with only marginal artistic and even less sacred additional meaning. The different structure of the respective writing systems (essentially phonographic in Europe with a very limited inventory of signs, but basically logographic in China with a great number of signs) has a considerable influence on the process of learning: whereas pupils in Europe are supposed to master writing in elementary school, it takes much longer in China and might even be considered to be a life-long process. Thus writing is more central and more pervasive in Chinese culture than it is in Europe. The differences are also quite clear in the attitude towards calligraphy: it is an art highly esteemed in China but rather marginal in Europe. (A partial exception is the Cyrillic script in Europe that retains a certain symbolic value for supposedly having been created by heavenly inspiration, and consequently proper handwriting is more important in cultures using Cyrillic.)

In the Chinese cultural understanding the history of writing and of the individual signs is important, and the etymology of concepts is often based on the original meaning of the respective sign. European cultures see letters only as mere representatives of sounds (even though historical orthographies as in French or English obscure the direct relationship between letters and sounds) and are thus not interested in the history of individual letters.

Typical for writing in a Chinese-European context is also a clear asymmetry. The users of the Chinese writing system almost inevitably acquire some knowledge of the dominant European writing system, viz. the Latin alphabet, and can at least decipher a text written in it. Europeans, on the other hand, generally know very little about Chinese writing and are unable to read texts written in it.

To sum up: the concept of writing does not lend itself to serious misunderstandings in a European-Chinese context. The situation is better described as one of different attitudes towards writing itself.

Qiu Zhijie: It is quite interesting that almost all the Chinese scholars in this China-Europe Forum, in elucidating different concepts, have approached glyph and character meaning according to the Oracle Bone Script and the Description and Interpretation of Chinese Characters (Shuowen Jiezi), the core role and sacred status that the Chinese character-writing system acts in culture, as well as the religious and artistic potential it harbors, the controversies and intense emotions it has inspired in the course of modernity, are all comparatively distinct from the European notion of writing. The dialogue with European scholars on this topic is more of a comparison.