

2010

China Beat is Heading to the Beach . . .

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. . . well, not exactly. But we *are* taking a short vacation, to focus on wrapping up the academic year here at UC Irvine. We'll be back online June 6 (though we will keep up our [Twitter](#) feed during the break, so follow us today!). Before we go, a few links we'd like to share:

- Check out UC Berkeley's [YouTube channel](#) for videos from the "Moderne and Modernity: Visual Narratives of Interwar Shanghai" conference that was held in early March. Presentations available online include Joan Judge (speaking about magazine cover girls in the early 20th century), Renee Chow (discussing a timely topic, the destruction of *shikumen* housing), and Michael Knight (on Shanghai Deco).
- The *Wall Street Journal's* "China Real Time Report" blog has [this piece](#) by Andrew Browne about how recent Red Shirt protests in Thailand are resonating in China, and why Chinese leaders might fear something similar could happen in their own country:

So could China go the same way as Thailand? That's certainly the nightmare that keeps Chinese leaders awake at night, although the Chinese state is unlikely to fracture so easily.

Even though the percentage of the Chinese population living in poverty is much higher than in Thailand, rural Chinese have largely benefited from economic growth. That's been a big factor underpinning social stability in China. Like [former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra] when he was in power, President Hu Jintao has been wooing the rural populations with a program of expanded healthcare coverage and fiscal giveaways.

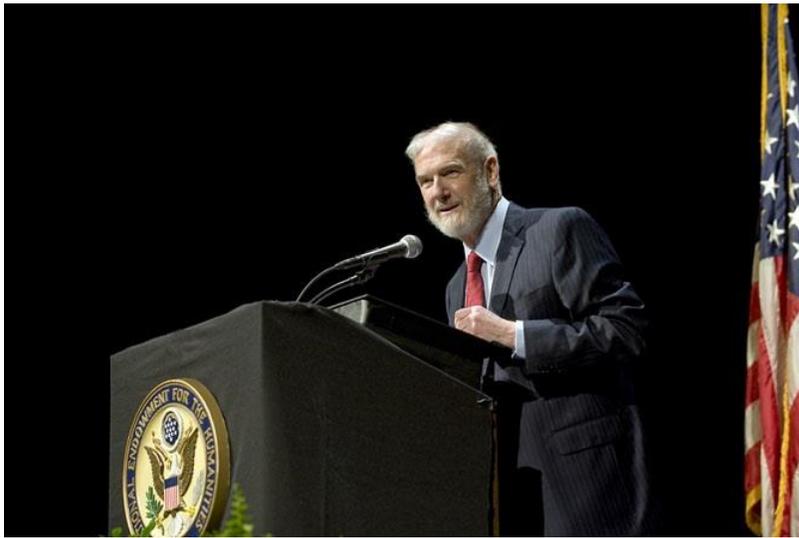
Of course, in China the Communist Party brooks no political challenge. As Chinese leaders survey the color revolutions in countries of the former Soviet Union, and now the Red Shirt rebellion in Thailand, the lesson they take away is that nothing must be allowed to compromise the Party's monopoly on power. In response to challenges great or small, the Party must clamp down hard.

- We've recently heard about the China-themed, English-language literary journal *Terracotta Typewriter*; the Spring 2010 issue is available in PDF format [here](#) (hat tip to [China Law Blog](#) for the link). In addition to poems and short stories, there's also a long interview with Peter Hessler, covering questions about his writing process, some of his favorite books about China, and cooking Lanzhou *la mian*.
- Historian Jonathan Spence delivered the National Endowment for the Humanities' 2010 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities last Thursday evening in Washington, D.C., speaking about "When Minds Met: China and the West in the Seventeenth Century." *Inside Higher Ed* has [a feature](#) about Spence's appearance; [full text of the address](#) is available at the NEH website. An excerpt from Spence's talk:

It is a commonplace that the sources that underpin our concept of the humanities, as a focus for thought, are expected to be broadly inclusive. But as a historian I have always been drawn to the apparently small-scale happenings in circumscribed settings, out of which we can tease a more expansive story. Thus I would like to start our search for the meeting of the minds not only in the later seventeenth century, but with a most unassertive source, an apparently simple letter of introduction written by a scholar in England, at Oxford University, dated July 26, 1687. Though the language of the letter is rather formal, even neutral in tone, if we read it carefully we notice that the range of topics covered in a short space is unusual, and can serve as a useful guide to the kinds of issues that in the seventeenth century served to bring people of different ages, races, and backgrounds into a common dialogue.

The writer of this late July letter in 1687 was a historian and linguist named Thomas Hyde, fifty-one years old at the time, a scholar of wide interests, who conducted his researches in a variety of "Oriental" languages, including Persian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac. . . .

The man on whose behalf Thomas Hyde was writing his letter of introduction was a Chinese traveler, called Shen Fuzong, who had arrived in England that March. Shen Fuzong had been born and raised in central China, where his father was a physician, and educated in Chinese by his parents, who were both practicing Christians. At the same time he had been taught Latin (both written and spoken), by Jesuit missionaries stationed in China. Now in his late thirties, Shen had been invited by one of his teachers, the Flemish Jesuit Father Couplet, to join him in what turned out to be an adventurous and protracted journey by land and sea, which took the two men through Southeast Asia and around the Cape of Good Hope to an eventual safe landing in the Netherlands. From there they journeyed to Flanders, Paris, Rome, and Florence, and then returned to Paris again in 1686. After close to a year back in Paris, working on cataloguing Chinese books in the royal library of King Louis XIV, and helping French scholars with problems of translation and exegesis, Shen had left France and come to England in the spring of 1687. England, at that time, was the way-station for ships voyaging to Portugal, and Shen hoped to travel to Portugal so that, while there, he could complete his training for the priesthood, before returning to China to take up full time pastoral work.



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