

Work Report of the Confucius Institute at Geneva University January-December, 2015

Focusing on the principles of promoting Chinese traditional culture, developing cultural exchange between Switzerland and China, and helping to establish a modern China, the Confucius Institute at the University of Geneva has redoubled its efforts, organizing 33 cultural events in 2015, receiving extensive recognition and very positive reception.

1. Chinese teaching

From the start, the Confucius Institute actively developed activities on Chinese culture and Chinese language teaching. It now has five classes on Chinese Culture and four Chinese language classes. The teaching standards have been high since the beginning, and the number of students increased every year. There are now about one hundred students registered. The classes are incorporated within the University's ECTS credit system. On September 2014, together with the University's continuing education, we started implementing Chinese classes targeting general public as well as a series of public lectures about Chinese Culture. This is the most straightforward way for the Institute to connect with the local community. We believe that we will be able to open a second beginners classes in 2016. The Institute also actively helped students of the University of Geneva in applying to Hanban's scholarships for summer school and long-term programs. By this means, the Institute contributed in fostering cultural exchange on both sides.

This year, the Confucius Institute opened the first Chinese language intensive courses during the summer school, which took place for four weeks.

In addition, for the first time we opened a Chinese beginner class at the Global Studies Institute, they are also incorporated within the University's ECTS credit system.

2. Main cultural events in 2015

On February 21st, the Confucius Institute organized for the first time the event "China in One Day". The purpose of this day was to introduce China to Swiss people through a series of lectures, in order to raise their interest in China.

On February 24th, the Confucius Institute organized the fourth lecture of its continuing education program, given by Marie-Pierre Dillenseger, on the subject of feng shui. She began studying feng shui from 1997,

insisting in particular on understanding and explaining the deep relationships between people and time and space in feng shui.

On February 26th, the Confucius Institute organized a Chinese New Year reception. Geneva University's rector Jean-Dominique Vassalli attended the reception.

On March 17th, the Confucius Institute organized the fifth lecture of its continuing education program, entitled "Chinese people in Switzerland : an atypical population ?" As the first person to study Chinese immigrants in Switzerland, Marylène Lieber, associate professor in the Social studies faculty at Geneva University, introduced to the audience the results of her research done in 2012.

On March 19th was organized a lecture about "Space technology : China & Switzerland". Zhang Jinxiu from Harbin Institute of Technology, Prof. Claude Nicollier and Volker Gass, both from EPFL, participated in the lecture.

On March 20th, the vice-rector of Renmin University Prof. Yi Zhihong participated in the workshop entitled "City and University". This conference was initiated by Geneva University, hosted by the Global Studies Institute, inviting a dozen of Chinese and Western mayors and rectors. Cities like Chicago, Milan, Prague, Barcelona, Edinburgh, Rome, Sao Paulo, Zurich, Dakar, London and Beijing have sent their representatives. Prof. Yi Zhihong from Renmin University, as the only University representative from Beijing, gave a keynote speech.

On March 26th, Geneva University held a "Spring Party", this year's theme being China. This "Spring party" was held to celebrate the 450th anniversary of Geneva University, this evening party has been organized for six years now. For this event, the Confucius Institute created a poster and a video, helped with organization and planning, selected a caterer, and gave other advices and suggestions.

On April 21st, the Confucius Institute organized the sixth lecture of its continuing education program. Prof. Samuel Guex from Asian Studies department at the Faculty of Humanities gave an excellent lecture to almost 50 people about "The weight of History in East-Asia relationships".

On May 6th, the Confucius Institute invited Wang Honwei, associate professor at Henan University Academy of Fine Arts to give a lecture about "Chinese contemporary painting". He first introduced the materials, techniques and execution of traditionnal painting, then showed famous paintings of various historical periods. Furthermore, he presented contemporary ink painting, explaining the relationships between the reasons for its formation, the materials required for experimental ink

painting, as well as materials and artists. Finally, Wang Hongwei introduced the work of contemporary China's famous ink painting artists and their characteristics, such as Liu Zijian, Zhang Yu, Shi Guo, Daozi, Xu Bing, Wang Tiande, Hu Youben, Liang Quan, Gu Wenda, Li Xiaoxuan, he also presented his own paintings.

On May 12th, the Confucius Institute organized a lecture about “Yijing : the book of changes”, given by Dr. Jorg Schumacher.

On June 12th and 13th, the Confucius Institute held the fourth Chinese language teacher training. The theme of this training was : “Oral exam : evaluation techniques of spoken Chinese competence”. A total of 23 Chinese language teachers took part to this training. Both teacher at Beijing Language and Culture University, Zhai Yan gave two lectures entitled “Chinese oral skills evaluation standards” and “Analysis and preparation of the types of questions in oral examination” ; Guo Xiumin talked about “Functions and training of the examiner for oral examinations” and “Method and practice of OPI in the oral examination of Chinese language”.

On June 20th, the Confucius Institute held the second “China in one day”. Nearly 40 people attended the event.

On June 25th, the Confucius Institute held a summer reception, Basile Zimmermann took this opportunity to introduce this past year events to the guests, and thanked our collaborators from University and elsewhere.

On August 24th, at the beautiful Villa Rive-Belle, the Confucius Institute organized an alumni evening for French-speaking Swiss that already went to China to study. More than 40 people attended the party. The event was supported by the Chinese embassy in Switzerland, Geneva University Alumni Association, Geneva University Department of East-Asian studies, Switzerland-China Association, Swissnex and other institutions. Ms. Xi Ru, Chinese Embassy cultural counsellor, Ms. Niu Xiangzhen, secretary, and Mr. Pascal Praplan, president of Geneva University Alumni Association attended the event.

On September 14th, Basile Zimmermann was invited to a special dinner with Vice-Premier LIU Yandong in Brussels, in order to exchange viewpoints about cultural and educational exchanges between China and Europe.

On September 26th, for the second celebration of Confucius Institute Day, the Confucius Institute organized two lectures : the first, “Tang poetry recitation” by the honorary curator of Dalian library and famous calligrapher Mr. Zhang Benyi. After discussing various aspects of ancient Chinese prosody, Prof. Zhang Benyi received applause from specialists and the public present that day for his analysis of ancient Chinese poems,

as well as the recitation of verses according to a Chinese tradition dating back several millenia.

The second was Prof. Liu Houbin, dean of the School of History at Renmin University, with a lecture about “Looking for Lu Sheng : a dream and its realistic portrayal of the Tang dynasty”, describing the ideal life of a person living in Tang dynasty, as well as the path through social classes. He showed the audience a picture of people from the beginning of the flourishing Tang with confidence, ideals and hopes, then he explained the background of the establishment of the early Tang and the new structure of social mobility.

In the afternoon, the second Swiss calligraphy competition took place, more than thirty calligraphy enthusiasts coming from all over Switzerland performed with ink and brushes on the same stage, showing the results of their study of Chinese calligraphy. Zhang Benyi, Bruno Riva, member of the European Calligraphy Association, and Wang Fei, from the Chinese department at Geneva University, served as competition judges. The more than thirty people enrolled in this competition had many years of being calligraphy enthusiasts. According to the rules, they executed ancient poems of Yan Zhenqing in regular script, such as “Spring dawn” and “Climbing stork tower”. After an intense competition, four special prizes were given, five first prizes, ten second prizes, and some encouragement prizes.

On October 14th-15th, the Confucius Institute at Geneva University organized a workshop about « Flash fiction in China and elsewhere ». The people who participated to this workshop were : Chinese writer Mr. Ling Dingnian, Prof. Watanabe Haruo from Kokugakuin University, Chinese writer from Holland Mrs. Chilianzi, Chinese writer from Switzerland Mr. Zhu Wenhui, Prof. Nicolas Zufferey from the East-Asian Studies department at Geneva University, and researcher in Chinese flash fiction from the Confucius Institute at Geneva University Mrs. Letitia Flück.

On October 20th, the Confucius Institute invited the Chinese composer Wen Deqing, professor and deputy-director of the Composition department at Shanghai Conservatory of Music, to give a lecture entitled « The sources of inspiration of Chinese contemporary music ».

On October 27th, Prof. Basile Zimmermann, director of the Confucius Institute at Geneva University gave a lecture entitled « Technology and culture : Electronic music equipment and computer encodings in China ».

In November, Prof. Basile Zimmermann gave conferences at Harvard University, and Cornell University.

On November 13rd, Dr Matteo Tarantino presented the CHIPOMAP

project at the annual conference of the Society for the Social Studies of Science in Denver.

On November 17th, Lucia Candelise gave the conference on Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine in Europe at UNIGE.

On November 25th, Prof. Zimmermann and Dr Tarantino presented the research projects of the IC at the Digital Humanities workshop of the University of Geneva.

From 18th – 31st December, 32 students (including 2 teachers) in Winter camp of the IC at Geneva University spent 2 weeks in Beijing and Shanghai. This is the part of program that Premier LI Keqiang invited 100 Swiss college students to visit China, which is sponsored by Hanban. In Beijing, students visited Hanban Headquarter, and famous sites. They also joined the Chinese class and calligraphy class, and took the YCT and HSK test. They also spent a day with the students from affiliated school of Renmin University of China.

Every month, the Confucius Institute holds an interdisciplinary doctoral seminar with 19 PhD students registered.

We also organize a monthly translation seminar.

3. Research projects

The University of Geneva has now three major research projects. Prof. Zimmermann is in charge of two of them (“Redesigning the Concept of Culture” and “Analysis of the China Electronic Pollution Map”). In the former project, he explores a new concept of culture and the definition of what Chinese culture is. In mid-November, he gave a lecture entitled “Waves and Forms: A Framework for the Materialities of the Digital” at Cornell University, and one lecture entitled “The future of New Sinology: The Present of Everyday Things” at the Fairbank Center at Harvard University. In the latter project, he analyzes how humanities scholars approach the influence of contemporary technology (focusing on the China Electronic Pollution Map) on society. Dr. Matteo Tarantino is currently in China working on this project. In March, Prof Zimmermann and Dr. Tarantino also took part in the Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference in Chicago. They organized a panel with four speakers and a discussant on the topic of "Making Sense of Pollution: Understandings of Environmental Degradation in Contemporary China". Prof. Zimmermann was chair, and Dr Tarantino gave a presentation on "Mapping Local, Acting Global: Environmental Understandings in the China Pollution Map".

Prof. Zhao Xiurong is in charge of the research “Studies of suicide : China and the West in the early modern times”. In this project, she is trying to understand the different understanding of suicide in China and the West, and the fact that this unique social phenomenon is reflecting social problems of this time. On September 30, she gave a lecture at the Queen Mary University of London about “Two points about Studies on Suicide”.

In 2016, these three projects will be carried on.

4. Institutional Improvement

Since its establishment, the Confucius Institute at the University of Geneva holds a yearly board meeting. The rector of the University of Geneva presides the meeting, which deliberates on the activities and the budget of the Confucius Institute. Since 2010, the Rector, as well as the vice-rector of the University of Geneva, have always taken part in the director council.

The institutional structure of the IC has already taken shape. Every Thursday we hold a staff meeting, the Institute’s financing is fully transparent, and all the documents are available on a special synchronized platform (Dropbox), so that every employee has access to the financial situation. Every employee registers his/her work time on Google Calendar, so everyone has access to his/her colleague’s schedule. The daily tasks are registered on Evernote. All the administrative files are dealt with electronically.