“学术研究中，机缘的作用实在不可低估”
——记柯文教授与《中国历史评论》的短暂相遇

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柯文（Paul A. Cohen）教授最近的离世，在学界引起了巨大反响。网络上也涌现出大量回忆与纪念文章，不仅高度评价了他的学术贡献，也特别强调了他的中国研究如何深刻地影响了西方乃至中国学界的中国史研究。阅读这些纪念文字，也让我回想起柯文教授与留美历史学会（CHUS）的刊物 The Chinese Historical Review（CHR,《中国历史评论》）之间一次交往，虽然短暂，但十分难忘。

2007 年，复刊后的 CHR 进入第三个年头，势头正猛，我们三位编辑（卢汉超、包安廉和我）怀抱雄心，始终在寻求高质量的原创稿件。汉超告诉我，他与几位同仁打算在当年亚洲研究学会（Association for Asian Studies）年会上组织一个专门讨论柯文教授著作的小组会议（panel），建议我们考虑将小组发言的文字稿作为一个专栏发表。该小组会的与谈人包括 Robert Bickers（毕可思）、Ryan Dunch（唐日安）、William C. Kirby（柯伟林）、Hanchao Lu（卢汉超）、Rudolf G. Wagner、Dong Wang（王栋）和 Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom（华志坚）等学者，都为北美和欧洲学界中国史研究的翘楚。他们每人针对柯文教授的一本著作（包括他正在写作的著作）进行深入点评，而柯文教授则在最后做出回应。

亚洲学会年会之后，各位发言人将文字稿寄来。我们三位编辑读过之后，都觉得质量不错，尤其喜欢柯文教授的回应，因此一致同意以“专栏”（Forum）的形式刊发。那年秋天的 CHR（Vol. 14, No. 2, Fall 2007）出版后，我们将样刊寄给各位作者。柯文教授收到期刊后，立即写来邮件，表示感谢，并希望额外购买十本，他说要寄给亲友，并表示对留美历史学会和 CHR 的支持。当时因为 CHR 还处在复刊和创业阶段，出版预算十分有限，带有“计划经济”色彩——即每期的印数严格依据订户数量，加印本不多。收到柯文教授邮件时，当期的加印刊已寄给作者或其他潜在订户。我写邮件给柯文教授，告知实情，请他谅解。因为没有能够满足他的愿望，我们一直感到遗憾，而老先生在写邮件时对 CHR 所表达的真诚支持和谦谦君子风度，至今仍令我难以忘怀。

当时我们没有料到，几年之后，CHR 会通过与英国 Maney 出版公司合作，开始进入国际学术期刊的网络。我们更没有想到，CHR 后来会通过与 Taylor & Francis 和其母公司 Routledge 的合作而进入更广阔的全球学术期刊网络，所有的过刊（包括 2007 年秋季号）会被数据化，作为电子期刊得以长期、永久的保存，使身处全球各地的学者便捷获取。回想技术革命给学术期刊发行带来的巨大变化，十分感慨，更觉在“前数据化时代”与柯文教授的短暂交往尤为珍贵。

作为对柯文教授的怀念与铭记，我将柯文教授在 2007 年秋季号 CHR 上发表的回应文章——Thoughts in Response——的原文粘贴在这里，并借用 ChatGPT5 将原文翻译为中文，以便更多中文读者能够阅读。

我相信，许多读者会对这篇文字产生兴趣，因为柯文教授在其中不仅回应了他人对自己著作的评价，也讲述了一些自己著作背后的故事，让人由此一窥他学问人生中的睿智、谦逊与幽默。

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附录 1：Paul A. Cohen, “Epilogue: Thoughts in Response,” *The Chinese Historical Review*, Vol.14, No. 2 (Fall 2007): 204-208.

EPILOGUE: THOUGHTS IN RESPONSE

Paul A. Cohen

UNLIKE so many of life's experiences, which are repetitive in nature, having a career's worth of writing (at least up to this point in time) thoughtfully scrutinized by a group of one's colleagues has to be counted as unique and special. It is an experience I have not had before and do not expect to have again. How does a person respond in such a situation?

The first thing that clearly needs to be done is to convey warm thanks to Bill Kirby, the moderator, for his generous (and hilariously funny) tribute at the original roundtable, and also to the panelists for their initial participation in the event and then for taking the time to write up their remarks. I am especially touched by Jeff Wasserstrom's part in all this, as it was he who first came up with the idea for the roundtable and then lined people up to take part in it. Back in March, Jeff also took note of the fact that 2007 just happened to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the appearance of my first published work, an article in Harvard's *Papers on China* in 1957. That is a lot of years. When he said this, my mind traveled back to an amusing incident that took place several years ago at the University of Hong Kong. I was waiting with Elizabeth Sinn for an elevator when we encountered a priest affiliated with the university who had done a doctorate relating to the history of Christianity in China. Elizabeth knew him and introduced us. Not long previously, she later told me, she had mentioned to him that I would soon be visiting Hong Kong, at which point a somewhat mystified expression crossed his face: clearly he thought Paul Cohen had long since gone up to heaven.

I want to share with you a few of the thoughts that occurred to me after first listening to and then reading the contributions to this symposium. Some of these thoughts directly address points made in the papers; others are more in the nature of ruminations that the papers prompted about what I will refer to as the "back story" of a scholar's life. I felt that Ryan Dunch did a splendid job of appraising my first book *China and Christianity*, accurately indicating the ways in which it parted company with previous works dealing with missionaries in China, but also not flinching from taking note of the respects in which it reflected the limits of its time. I was especially moved by Ryan's brief reference to Chen Zenghui and the debt he and I both owe to this fine scholar. After learning in the mid-1980s that Professor Chen was still alive—I was a little like the priest at the University of Hong Kong—I corresponded with him and told him that, had it not been for the bibliography he and Wu Shengde compiled (in 1941), which saved me literally

months of digging, I seriously doubted whether I would have done a dissertation on Chinese hostility to Christianity in the nineteenth century. Chance plays such a vital part in our scholarly undertakings.

Rudolf Wagner, in his comment on the Wang Tao book, supplies, among other things, a nice overview of post-Cohen scholarship on Wang, which has become a big industry. He also makes the important point that Wang was not all that singular, that there were dozens of other individuals like him, who early on had significant contact with the West and Westerners and supplied a human and social context for Wang. This is absolutely true, although the sources on most of these individuals are not nearly as abundant as those relating to Wang Tao. That is one reason, I guess, why I was attracted to Wang. He was a prolific writer. Another had to do with the environment in which scholarship is carried on. I encountered Wang Tao initially in Teng and Fairbank's classic work *China's Response to the West*, where he was one of the key figures dealt with. I found him fascinating and, after completing my first book, immediately started to sift through his writings. This is an example of a common phenomenon in the scholarly world: the influence that prior scholarship—and the choices made in it—often exerts on the choices made by later scholars.

Practical considerations also take an important part in the shaping of academic careers, as the president of the American Historical Association, Barbara Weinstein, observed in a recent issue of *Perspectives* (February 2007). This points to an additional reason for my being attracted to Wang Tao. Early in my career, when I was teaching at Amherst College, the nearest Chinese library was two hours away, so it was helpful to have a project that, once I had acquired a few core texts, did not (at least initially) necessitate frequent visits to library collections.

And then there is the part taken in our scholarly lives by sheer contingency. Lu Hanchao, in his illuminating comment on *Discovering History in China*—I especially love his tripartite Chinese idiomatic summation of major trends in the modern Chinese history field over the past half century—takes note of the influence the book has had among PRC historians. But this might never have come about had it not been for a fortuitous encounter I had more than twenty years ago with Lin Tongqi. Professor Lin, who had only recently arrived from China and whom I had not previously met, came to my office at the Fairbank Center in 1985, saying that he had read *Discovering History in China* and thought it should be made available to the Chinese historical profession. He said that he had already corresponded with the Zhonghua shuju, which was interested in bringing out a Chinese translation. His English was excellent—he had been teaching it in Beijing for several decades—and he said he would like to do the translation himself. Quite frankly, I found it difficult to take Lin's offer seriously, as virtually no American scholarly work on Chinese history had been translated as of that date. But Lin was confident that there was no obstacle to this happening, and so we began.

Our working method was close to ideal. He would translate a chapter, then give it to me to check against the original. I would then make a long list of corrections, queries, suggested alternative phrasings, and so on. We would then meet together for several hours to discuss each item on the list, and he would produce a revised draft of that chapter. What a learning experience that was for me! After the book's publication, any number of Chinese colleagues told me how lucky I was to have had Lin Tongqi as the translator. But my main point is that this providential accident—a good example of what in *History in Three Keys* I later referred to as "outcome blindness"—radically changed the history of a book that had been written initially for a Western (and particularly an American) readership. The Chinese translation appeared in July 1989, only weeks after June 4, and since then, quite apart from other translations into Chinese (Taiwan), Japanese, and Korean, the Zhonghua edition has been reprinted several times, most recently in an expanded version that includes as appendixes two of my later essays modifying and critiquing aspects of the argument in the original edition.

Robert Bickers's "19-year old hard taskmasters," in their critique of *History in Three Keys*, evince a degree of frustration with that book's tripartite breakdown of historical approaches; they would have preferred it if everything had been woven together. Ah, students, what would we do without them! Of course, they are right. But they are also wrong. I broke things down in this way for largely heuristic purposes. And, to be perfectly honest, I thought (and still think) it was the right thing to do. But Robert's students are also on the right track in their suggestion that good historians, when they write history, do not just reconstruct events; they also enliven their accounts with the experiences of the people involved. Often, moreover, they inadvertently introduce new myths, giving later generations of historians something to pick apart.

One thing that especially struck me in Robert's piece was his reference to the evoking of the 1857 siege of Lucknow by foreigners holed up in the legations in China in the summer of 1900. "History gave them tools," he writes, "for understanding their then present, and for rationalising their experiences. It offered solace too." Robert and I are on the same page here. In my forthcoming book on the impact of the Goujian story in twentieth-century China, a major theme is the instinctive tendency of peoples, in certain historical circumstances, to comb their pasts for stories that resonate with the present. "Cultures don't engage in this sort of activity with equal intensity at all times," I note. "Very often . . . they are prompted to do so in unresolved crisis situations, where one outcome (victory or survival, for example) is vastly to be preferred over another (defeat/extinction). In such situations, the right story presents a model of the world that incorporates either the proper spirit to be embraced or the desired resolution of the crisis or both. The Goujian story exemplifies both, inasmuch as Goujian, through his adoption of the *woxin changdan* spirit, was able to breathe new life into his state and triumph over his enemies." In much the same fashion, Robert tells us, the

"optimistic trajectory" of the Lucknow siege supplied real comfort to the besieged of 1900.

Although Lu Hanchao suggests that the China-centered approach to the history of China has become fairly mainstream among American China historians, it is only proper to point out that a number of scholars have expressed discomfort with this notion. This approach has unquestionably been the most controversial part of *Discovering History in China*. It relates to my fascination, from the beginning of my career right up to the present, with the polarity between insideness and outsideness and the many different shapes both of these perspectives can assume. Initially, I went too far in touting the advantages of insideness and the distortions and other problems resulting from the vantage point of the outsider. Michael Gasster and Lin Tongqi rightly criticized me for this, and eventually, as Hanchao notes at the end of his remarks, I came to accept their viewpoint. This shift was built into the argument in *History in Three Keys*, where a recurring theme is the tension between the historian's (the outsider's) understanding of what happened in the past and the understanding of the direct participant (the insider).

My forthcoming book on the Goujian story revisits the insider/outsider issue again, although from still other perspectives, as Wang Dong makes very clear in her insightful discussion. I should note, incidentally, that her comments, in contrast with those of the other symposium participants, are based on only portions of a still unfinished manuscript, as a result of which, unlike the others, she was not in a position to discuss the book's postpublication history. Another difference from the other works discussed is that, since no one has yet written in English on the place of the Goujian story in recent Chinese history, there was no secondary literature for her to test my book against.

Although I gather that Jeff Wasserstrom's assignment was to comment on *China Unbound*, he discusses that collection only briefly, devoting more space to other things. Indeed, what we have in Jeff's piece is something akin to "Wasserstrom unbound." But, more seriously, it is always interesting to see how colleagues assess your work, wondering a little nervously to what degree their assessment will tally with your own. Jeff scores high in this respect: I recognized myself in many of his aperçus. In regard to one of them—what he refers to as my open-mindedness and readiness to reconsider prior positions—I am reminded of a curious incident that occurred a few years ago in Guangzhou. I had given a talk at Zhongshan University based on the introduction to *China Unbound*, in which as Jeff notes I indulged in some self-criticism in reference to the "China-centered" approach. In the question and answer period following the talk, a student stood up and asked me how I could change my views in that way. To me, of course, it seemed perfectly natural that I should do this, for reasons that Jeff clearly spells out in his piece. But to the student, it seemed almost like a violation of my scholarly identity, perhaps even my integrity as a person. I tried to explain to her the difference between having a fixed position, never to be modified, and being

engaged in an on-going scholarly process, in which change was a recurrent and persistent feature—and why I rejected the former and was deeply committed to the latter. I think she understood, but I am not sure.

Let me conclude this overly long response by expressing once again my thanks to the participants in this symposium and, as well, to the editors of the *Chinese Historical Review* for agreeing to give it wider distribution. This has certainly been a high spot in my life as a historian. It has also been a deeply moving experience for me personally.