Hu Shih Memorial Hall

Hu Shih (1891-1962)

Hu Shih was born on December 17, 1891. His early education, took place in his hometown, Jixi, located in the south of Anhui Province. When he was thirteen years old, he went to Shanghai and received a modern education. In 1910, he succeeded in passing the examination for a Boxer Indemnity Scholarship to study in the United States. Consequently, he was able to attend Cornell University from 1910-15, where he received his B.A., and Columbia University from 1915-17, where he earned his Ph.D.

Upon his return to China in 1917, Hu Shih joined the faculty of National Peking University and was given the title, Professor of the History of Chinese Philosophy. From 1932 to 1937 he served concurrently as Professor of Chinese Literature and as Dean of the College of Humanities. After World War II, Hu became University President (1946-48). During his time in Beijing, Hu was also deeply involved in various publishing activities: formulating a publishing plan for the Commercial Press (Shanghai), editing magazines, publishing articles in various newspapers, and serving as chairman of the Translation and Editing Committee under the auspices of the China Foundation for Promotion of Education and Culture. He also contributed to China’s modern development by serving as a wartime ambassador to the United States from 1938 to 1942, and as president of Academia Sinica in Taiwan from 1958 to 1962.

Dr. Hu is best known as the founder of the Chinese Literary Renaissance—a movement that strove to end the tradition of writing in classical Chinese by adopting the Chinese vernacular language for new works of literature and for educating China’s youth. This movement, started by Dr. Hu when he was a student at Cornell and then Columbia, soon received nationwide support and eventually proved to be quite successful. Since 1921, all textbooks have been written in the vernacular, and a new Chinese vernacular literature has become one of the principal markers of modern Chinese culture. Dr. Hu’s efforts in promoting the reformation of Chinese literature strongly shaped the development of modern Chinese culture and society, while his work in introducing the scholarship of John Dewey had a profound effect on Chinese thought and education during the May 4th Movement.

Dr. Hu was the first Chinese poet to write and publish a volume of poems composed entirely in the vernacular (1920). He was also the first scholar to use vernacular Chinese to write a history of Chinese philosophy, and won renown as the first scholar to apply scientific methods of historical research and textual criticism to the study of traditional Chinese novels and the writing of exegeses such as the Shui-ching chu (Commentary on the Classic of Waterways). He published many books and articles in Chinese. See for instance, his An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy (1919), as well as, the following two books, The Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China (1922), and History of Vernacular Literature (1928), among others. Many of Hu’s writings have recently been re-issued in Taiwan and mainland China, including the following works published by Academia Sinica’s Hu Shih Memorial Hall: Hu Shih’s Hand-Written Manuscripts (10 volumes; 1966-1970), Hu Shih’s Collected Works (37 volumes; 1986), and Hu Shih’s Diaries (18 volumes; 1989). In 1984 Linking Publishing Company published, A Chronological Biography of Hu Shih (10 volumes), which contains many of Hu’s writings.
Hu Shih Memorial Hall

The Hu Shih Memorial Hall located on the Nankang campus was originally the residence where Dr. Hu Shih lived from 1958 to 1962, during his tenure as the president of Academia Sinica. In Taiwan, Dr. Hu worked not only to further the academic development of Academia Sinica’s research institutes, he also founded the National Council on Science Development, and worked tirelessly to advance scholarship and train first-rate scholars and scientists. In addition, he joined the struggle for freedom of speech, thereby demonstrating his long-term philosophical and personal commitment to championing the cause of liberty.

Following his death in 1962, Academia Sinica formed a “Hu Shih Memorial Hall Management Committee.” The Memorial Hall was formally established on December tenth of that year. On August 5, 1964, the Management Committee decided to allocate NT$200,000 from a fund donated by Mr. C.V. Starr to set up an exhibition room on the right side of the Hall; this was formally established on the third anniversary of Dr. Hu Shih’s death in 1965. Academia Sinica and the Taipei City Government also cooperated to construct the Hu Shih Park near the site of his grave, work that was completed in February 1974.

In January 1998, the Memorial Hall became formally affiliated with the Institute of Modern History. Since then, the exhibition room has been renovated and continues to hold interesting regular and topical exhibitions. The Memorial Hall reopened to the public on December 17, 2001 (the 110th anniversary of Dr. Hu Shih’s birth). The occasion was further marked by the publication of Selected Correspondence between Hu Shih and Lei Chen.

~Visitor Information~

Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 09:00—17:00
(Closed on national holidays)
Admission: Free
Guided tours can be arranged with advance notice (in Chinese only)

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