

Frequent warning calls about the decline of pre-modern Chinese studies in Britain have sounded over the past decade and more. Among the soul-searching, though, few practical initiatives have sought to revive this large and important field of research. **On 24-28 March 2010** Cambridge was therefore delighted to host a workshop that addressed this problem. **It was the third in a series of five workshops that will run nationwide over two years, under the title ‘Research Training in Old Chinese.’** **The Cambridge workshop took as its thematic focus** history and historiography; the full range of the pre-modern Chinese past received attention.

**The picturesque surroundings of the Needham Research Institute, so resonant with historical significance for Chinese Studies in Britain, offered a fitting venue for the event.** Ten established scholars led discussions. Each gave a lecture on an area of their research interests: they pointed up the latest trends in scholarship – issues central to the field – and introduced the use of methodologies and tools relevant to present research problems. Each then guided a close analysis of texts that touched on the topic of their lecture. Twenty graduate and post-doctoral students of Chinese Studies participated; several others, with a range of China-related research interests, also listened in. The central focus in all this was the sinological community working in Britain, but the workshop benefitted greatly from the international backgrounds of its participants: the P.R.C., Taiwan, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Israel, Russia, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Italy, and the United States all received representation. Here was a sense that pre-modern Chinese Studies are now a truly worldwide endeavour. If anything, that underlined the value of the present workshop, and the need for Britain (and Cambridge, in particular) to establish its place in this international sinological community through the training of its emerging students and through the hosting of this type of scholarly symposium. The result of the balance between senior and junior, local and international was a series of stimulating discussions and rigorous text-reading sessions. Professional hierarchies were broken down as all participants grappled together with the problems of research at hand. The informal atmosphere also created a relaxed environment for social exchange after the working day. Participants made friendships that, it is hoped, will sustain the field in years to come. An extremely positive response from all involved suggests that the workshop achieved its aims in stimulating the study of the Chinese past and in setting up the conditions for future development of the field, both in Britain and internationally.

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