

Interview of Professor Juha Janhunen (楊虎嫩)

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Transcribed by Toivo Qiu (裘瀚雲)

J: We had a project on collecting personal stories about how I became a PhD and we did it together with a colleague here who is a lecturer in African studies. We did a book about personal stories on this topic, so, and this book is about Asian and African specialists, you know, at our university. But that book is mainly in Finnish. Some sections are in English, German, French or Swedish, but mainly in Finnish. So, in that personal story I also told my history in Finnish about my family backgrounds, but in any case, I think the most important thing for me to have become involved in academic work was my school background. Because I went to probably the best school in Finland, it's called Normallyceum. And almost everyone in this department used to be from that school, so, but nowadays it has become different, but when I started my career, many of my friends and professors were from that school, so we still have some people here from that school. Our old department secretary, Mr Halén, who's now retired, but comes here somewhat regularly, is from that school. And then there are brothers Parpola; one of them is an indologist and the other an assyriologist. And another one, who also had a chair on indology a few years back, was also from that school. Many people come from that school, so I think that school gives a good background for academic work. And then, maybe also in my personal case, my grandfather was interested in arts and exotic things, whereas my grandmother from my mother's side was Russian, so that's whence I got my Russian component in my education. And then, at school, of course, we studied many languages, but I was studying on the mathematical line at school, so I really didn't study very many languages at school, so only English, Swedish and Russian. But later, when I started at the university, everyone had also to take a Latin course, which I found very important, but nowadays, of course, no-one requires knowledge of Latin anymore. But I graduated from school a very long time ago, in 1970, and there were no such thing as Asian studies or East Asian Studies at this university, or anywhere in Finland at the time. But there were two subjects in which I was interested. One was Uralic studies; that is comparative linguistics of Finnish and the languages related thereto; and the other one was Altaic studies; that is the linguistic studies of Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic languages, also Korean and Japanese. So, I studied both of these subjects and I graduated with these subjects as my majors and in the course of these subjects I learnt many languages like Hungarian, Turkish and Mongol, but also in the programme of Altaic studies it was possible to study also East Asian languages, Korean and Japanese. And when I graduated, I went to Japan as an exchange student and I stayed there from 1977 to 1979. I studied there both Japanese and my main subject, which was Altaic studies. I was mainly studying with Professor Ikegami Jiro (池上二良) at the

Hokkaido university (北海道大學). He was mainly specialised in the Tungusic languages. And then, my own professor here, I had two of them, one of them was Aulis Johannes Joki, he was born in 1913 and he died in 1989, and the other one was Pentti Aalto, 1917 to I'm not quite sure, maybe 1994, we have to check it. They were both students of a very famous Finnish linguist, Gustav John Ramstedt. Have you ever heard of Ramstedt?

He was born in 1873 and he died in 1950. So he was a specialist in Asian languages. His main language was Mongolian and he went to Mongolia which at that time was part of the Manchu empire. And he studied Mongolian and published a lot on Mongolian, but also on Turkic languages; he did a lot of fieldwork on different languages. But then, when Finland became independent in 1917 he became the first Finnish ambassador or Chargé d'affaires in East Asia, so he was assigned to the three independent countries there were in Asia back then, so Japan, China and Thailand, or Siam, but his base was in Tokyo. So he learnt very quickly Japanese and then he started studying Korean which was not very well studied at that time. He learnt the language and he wrote a very good Korean grammar which was published in 1939 and was very much the only Korean grammar available in English at the time of the Korean War, so it was used by the American troops in Korea. But he was mainly interested in the history of the Korean language and he is considered to be the creator of the Altaic hypothesis, which is a hypothesis on the common genetic origin of the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic languages, and according to Ramstedt, also Korean, and according to some others, also Japanese. But later research has shown that there is no such family as Altaic, but it is still relevant to study these languages together because they have had many contacts during the course of thousands of years, and all of them originated in a very small geographic area somewhere in Southern Manchuria and Northern Korean peninsula. They then expanded from that region to different parts of Eurasia. Turkic languages expanded even as far as Turkey and Eastern Europe (There's even a small officially recognised Mishär Tatar minority here in Finland.). In Finland there's a tradition of studying these languages and their origins, but together with the languages we also studied the cultures of the peoples speaking the languages; their history and their traditions. So this is what Altaic studies are about. That has been a major field of study in Finland where it has also been considered to have been founded by people like Ramstedt. It was therefore natural for me to take this as my main subject together with Uralic studies; Uralic and Altaic studies are more or less the same thing, but Uralic studies focus on the more westerly languages which are related to Finnish¹, but these languages also extend very far East and in the 18th century there were still Uralic-speaking people living under the Manchu empire in Northern Mongolia, so it is a very [geographically] large language family, comprising languages like Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian, but also many small languages in Siberia. I actually did my PhD on the Samoyedic languages², which are languages distantly related to Finnish and which are spoken in a region spanning an area from Western to Eastern Siberia and from the Baikal to the Arctic Ocean and especially along the Yenisei river. So there is a group of languages which form a branch of the Uralic language family and formed the topic of my PhD.

¹ *There even was a Ural-Altaic hypothesis in the 20th century, but together with the Altaic hypothesis, it has been refuted by more recent research.*

² *Currently Nenets, Enets, Nganasan and Selkup are the remaining Samoyedic languages.*

It was my dream to go to Siberia to study languages on the Field, but during the Soviet period it was impossible for a foreigner to travel to Siberia. So, that's why I never got an opportunity to do field work in Siberia. So I visited Japan several times and studied the languages spoken in Northern Japan, more precisely Hokkaido, namely the Ainu language. But then, when China became more open, I did my first visit to China in 1986. I went by ship from Japan, from Shimonoseki (下關市) to Shanghai and thence I travelled to Hailar in Manchuria, in Northern Inner Mongolia. And then from there I went to the countryside to see the peoples living there, where there are many small minority groups, which are officially classified as Ewenke (鄂溫克族), or Ewenki, but actually there are many more languages spoken by them, so the official classification is totally erroneous. But from that time on I travelled every year to Manchuria, collected material and studied especially one language which was thought to be extinct but which I was able to find in Manchuria where it was still spoken even by small children. The language is called Khamnigan. In English it's written Khamnigan and in Chinese it's called Haminigan (哈米尼干) and the people who speak this language are classified as Ewenke but the language is actually Mongolic and related to Mongolian, but many of these people also have another language which is a dialect of Ewenki and is therefore a Tungusic language (and related to Manchu). Many of them are therefore bilingual. I can perhaps give you one of my books. I published three books on the languages by the Khamnigans and this is my second book. I'll give you a copy of this. This is about the Ewenki dialects spoken by the Khamnigans, also history, but I've also written a book on the Mongolic language spoken by these people.

C: Thank you!

J: I also then did some cooperation with Chinese partners. My main partner in China was the Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences (內蒙古社科院). I also cooperated with the so-called Siberian research institute in Harbin (西伯利亞研究所). And together with them in 1988 we made a very successful research trip to some minority groups in Heilongjiang province. So we visited some groups of the Oroqen, called Elunchun in Chinese (鄂倫春族). They are Tungusic-speakers as far as they retain their language and we also visited the so-called Fuyu Kyrgyz (富裕柯爾克孜) who are a very minor group in the county of Fuyu north of Qiqihar in the valley of the river Nenjiang. But there are also some other groups [there]; there are some Ewenkis in that region. In any case, I travelled to that region during several years and then I wrote and published some books thereof.

But then quite accidentally I had a classmate from school who was a folklorist and was studying epic poetry and he got an invitation to a conference in Lanzhou on the so-called Gesar or Kesar epic. It's a very famous Central Asian epic poem which is known to Tibetans and several groups of Mongols. It tells about medieval battles between Tibetans, Mongols and some other peoples and it's mainly oral folklore memorised by old people. It used to be told by old people, but nowadays there are a lot of publications thereof and printed versions of Gesar³. In China it is mainly studied as a Tibetan piece of literature; there's Gesar research institute in China, and there are very many publications and specialists thereof. So, I went with my schoolmate to Lanzhou to this conference since he happened to have money for travelling and then from there we went to Qinghai province and from that trip started my period of several years of travelling in Qinghai. Qinghai is interesting because it's the home of several small minority groups which speak Mongolic languages in a Tibetan environment. So, most of the rural population of Qinghai are Tibetans who speak dialects which are considered varieties of Amdo Tibetan. Amdo Tibetan is very different from Tibetan spoken in Lhasa, so they are [actually] two different languages like Cantonese and Pekingese, but

³ It must be mentioned here that the Epic of King Gesar appears in hundreds of forms and forms a vast national epic like the Greek Iliad and Odyssey and the Finnish Kalevala.

they use the same literary language like Chinese. So, they have Tibetan culture and know written Tibetan, but their language is Amdo Tibetan, although in some regions they have some other varieties of Tibetan which are even more different [from Standard Tibetan]. But inside this Amdo Tibetan region there also live other minorities and they speak different languages. There are several groups speaking Mongolic languages which are descendants of the traces of the Mongol armies which went there in the 14th century and their languages have been studied relatively little, so we didn't have a very good understanding about what languages there are and how they are classified. So, I went there and started studying these languages and visited all the [ethnic] groups and got an understanding of them. I also edited in 2003 a book about the Mongolic languages and wrote a chapter, not only by myself, but also with other researchers. There's one chapter about each of these Mongolic languages [in the book]. So, nowadays we have a good picture of these languages. There are also some varieties of Chinese which are very different from Standard Chinese, although they are based on Mandarin, more precisely on North-Western Mandarin. North-Western Mandarin is the group of Mandarin dialect spoken in Gansu-Qinghai-area. North-Western Mandarin itself is divided into several dialects like Lanzhou and Xining, but then there are even smaller varieties which are even more different from Standard Chinese and one of them is Wutun spoken in three villages and together with my students and one native speaker we wrote the grammar of this Wutun language. So, it was the first grammar, but now I have a doctoral student who will soon publish her PhD thesis about a deeper study of this local language. It's spoken by about 4000 people and they think they are and are nowadays officially classified as Tibetans; they look like Tibetans and behave like Tibetans and they have Tibetan culture and use Tibetan as their written language, but their home language is a kind of Chinese very strongly influenced by Tibetan. So, we used to have an example... So, if we have a Chinese sentence like "This is my book.", so in Chinese we would say "Zhè shì wǒ de shū. / 这是我的书。", but in Wutun we say "Je ngude huaiga haili.". So, the word order is different and there are elements which reflect Tibetan grammar and there are cultural words from Tibetan, for example the word for book is "huaiga" which is a Tibetan word. So, the language was considered to be a case of mixed language, but it's not really a mixed language, it's Chinese, the basic vocabulary is all Chinese and the grammatical elements are Chinese, but they are used in a Tibetan way, so it's a case of strong language interaction, a very interesting case.

So, we have also had Tibetan doctoral students from that region here. So, we have very good cooperation with this Qinghai region and we also have a group of doctoral students here in Finland with whom I was involved in studying this region. We had an academic project and got some financing from the Finnish Research Council (Suomen Akatemia) and we had several visiting students and one of them..., two of them graduated with a PhD; one of them wrote this, he's Wu Qi, he's from Qinghai province. He's a cultural Tibetan and his language is Tibetan, but he's officially Mongolian. So, there is a small county in Qinghai province called Henan (河南蒙古族自治县 / ཧེན་ཤར་རྫོང་གི་མངའ་སྡེ་) in which lives a group of Mongols who are actually Tibetanised but are still classified as Mongols, Henan Mongols. So, a few dozen people still remember their Mongolian language, but the rest of them speak Amdo Tibetan.

C: May I take a picture of this book?

J: Yeah.

C: Cover?

J: Yeah.

J: So, he's now back to Qinghai, looking for a job. He comes from a very special family because they had a very ordinary background but there are several brothers who managed to get abroad; one of them lives in Paris and makes films and another one is a Tibetan medical doctor living in Italy and this Wu Qi came to Helsinki to take his PhD. But now he is back to Qinghai again.

C: So, he hasn't found a job?

J: I don't think so. He has been looking for a good job.

J: The other student from Qinghai was Wang Shiyong; he's half Chinese and half Tibetan and he also got his PhD. These are not linguists, they are more like social scientists like this one and also Wang Shiyong. So, this is his Chinese name, his Tibetan name is Gyamtso. He speaks both Tibetan and Chinese. He was originally trained as a teacher of physics, but he graduated with a thesis on the business participation of the Tibetans: "Why are Tibetans so unlucky in China? They cannot collect any experience in business and the Chinese are marginalising them everywhere. Why is this so?" He tried to find an explanation for all these problems. So, you can find his disputation like this one on the Internet, they are both published electronically. There's an electronic database on disputations. So, all of the disputations in our university are also published electronically nowadays.

All in all, I have studied Siberia, Manchuria and the region we call Amdo or Amdo-Qinghai. Amdo (ཨ་མདོ) is the Tibetan name and it is originally a part of Tibet but it was divided by China into a number of provinces. So, then because of this Tibetan connection I was also invited to become the chairman of the Finnish-Tibetan Association and in this capacity I invited the Dalai Lama to Finland two times and after the second time in 2011 I no longer got a Chinese visa, so I switched back to my Siberian and Mongolian studies and also Kazakh studies, so more like classical Altaic studies. But I'm quite happy with that so now I'm again travelling to Hokkaido in Northern Japan and also to Sakhalin and the Amur region in Russian Far East and maybe also to Mongolia and maybe in the future also to Kazakhstan. But what I wanted to say is that I'm not really trained as a sinologist. I first worked in the department of Finno-Ugric studies and then, in 1974, my professor, Aulis J. Joki, a professor of Finno-Ugric or Uralic languages who also had great interest in Asian studies, namely Altaic and Chinese studies, founded an institute which was first called the Unit of Altaic and East Asian Studies but then it was expanded into a department called the department of Asian and African studies. And this department existed until rather recently. But then, with one of the university reforms, this department was abolished and merged with other departments, so now it's called the Department of World Cultures, where we are now.

Joki was specialised in Siberian languages related to Finnish and in the 1940's and 50's he was working in Sweden as a lecturer of Finnish. There he studied with the very famous Swedish sinologist, Bernhard Karlgren (高本漢). You have heard of Karlgren? He is in some ways the founder of Chinese linguistic studies⁴ and was in China for about two years soon after the end of the Qing-dynasty and worked on the Chinese dialects and then went on to the reconstruction of Old and Middle Chinese but was also interested in Chinese culture like bronze vessels and other things. So, my professor studied in Sweden with this Bernhard Karlgren. One of his colleagues is still alive, the Swedish professor Göran Malmqvist, who is an academician in Sweden and studied together with

⁴ *Karlgren was the first to attempt to reconstruct the phonology of earlier phases of the Chinese language. He reconstructed Middle Chinese (中古漢語), the language of the Sui- and Tang-dynasties, in his 1915 doctoral dissertation, Études sur la phonologie chinoise, and Old Chinese (上古漢語), the language of the Zhou-dynasty, in his 1940 book Grammata Serica whose revised and extended edition of 1957, Grammata Serica Recensa, is considered his Opus Magnum.*

my professor there, but my professor became a professor in Finno-Ugrian studies while Malmqvist became a professor in Chinese studies. So, in about 1971 or 1972 my professor invited Göran Malmqvist to Helsinki to teach a course in Modern Chinese. It's to my knowledge the first time a regular Chinese course has been taught here. But one or two years after that, I think in 1973, my professor organised the founding of regular lectures in Chinese. We have lectures in many languages and from about 1973 we have had a regular position of a lecturer in Chinese language at our university. The first lecturers were sent on the basis of an exchange agreement with China. They were sent by the Chinese government and changed very often. One lecturer would stay for one or two years before being taken away and sometimes they disappeared quite suddenly and then came another person. In the 1980's the lecturers were more regular and some of them were rather good. There was one with whom I became a rather good friend. His name was Tian Shanji (田善吉) and he was from the Beijing Institute of Foreign Languages (北京外國語學院, nowadays Beijing Foreign Studies University, 北京外國語大學).

In the 1980's the Ministry of Education here in Finland realised the importance of studying and teaching the languages spoken outside of Europe, or Extra-European languages. They had a committee which was supposed to make a plan for developing these fields and it was decided that teaching these languages would be concentrated in the University of Helsinki and in the department of Asian and African studies which was already extant at that time. At that time there was a regular professor of Semitic studies and then there were so-called personal professorships in Assyriology and Indo-European Studies. Personal professorships were given to merited people on their special merits, but they were not continued, so when these people retired, there was no continuation. One of the students of my school, one of the Parpola brothers, used to be the professor of Assyriology, but he was a personal professor, so, when he retired a few years ago, Assyriology was not continued, even though it was on a very good basis in our university, but there was no successor.

So, this committee under the Ministry of Education was supposed to make a plan for establishing regular chairs on several fields and the first chair was on East Asian Studies, or East Asian languages and cultures. That was established in maybe 1987, I think. For several years some people took care of this chair, but there were no regular chair-holders, just acting professors. One of them was a Korean friend of mine by the name Kho Songmoo (고송무, maybe 高松茂). He was a Korean who had studied and taken his MA and PhD at our university and was also a student of my professor Joki. He took care of this chair of East Asian Studies for some years. And after him, Kauko Laitinen was the acting professor. Then this Kho Songmoo died in an accident; he had become involved in the study of Koreans in Central Asia and he died in a car accident in Almaty in Kazakhstan in 1994. And that was about the time when this chair was once again announced as vacant, so they took applications and I also applied to it, because I noticed that in my proper field there would never be a chair. So, I applied for it and got this chair in 1994.

However, very soon some business circles wanted to establish a separate chair of Japanese studies and then they established it and appointed a rather young man who is now in the next room; his name is Rein Raud and he is an Estonian. He's a specialist of the classical literature of Japan and has now been the Professor of Japanese Studies for more than twenty years. After that, my chair has officially not comprised Japanese studies, it's separate. For some years Japanese Studies were a separate subject, we had Japanese Studies and East Asian Studies without Japan; that is in practice Chinese and Korean Studies. However, we have had many reforms and in one reform these two subjects were united once again. So for some years we have had a uniform subject called East Asian Studies and it comprises Chinese, Korean and Japanese studies, but the Japanese Studies remain under a separate professorship. I was supposed to be in charge of the rest of the Asian Studies, but now we got a separate professor in Chinese studies, and very recently they also brought up money

for a professorship in Korean Studies. That's a very recent development and has not yet been announced for application, but as far as I understand, it will finally be realised and thereafter there will be three separate professors in Chinese, Japanese and Korean Studies. This has mainly been financed by the Korean embassy and the current Korean ambassador has been very active, because for the Koreans it has been a problem that there is a separate chair in Japanese Studies but no separate chair in Korean Studies; it's a kind of question of prestige and therefore they have been very active in trying to get a separate chair of Korean Studies.

But in practice, as you know, we enrol new students together with the African and Middle Eastern studies. So, we actually have one big entity, but it was separated a few years ago, so we maybe now have two lines, one for Asian studies and the other for African and Middle Eastern studies, I don't really know this very well. But anyway we don't know the choice of main language and country for those students, who are enrolled to Asian studies, before they are enrolled, but in practice it turns out that most of them want to study Japanese; Japan is the most popular choice. China has been the second choice, and only last autumn did we get as many new students for Chinese studies as for Japanese studies. For the first time there are as many of those, who want to study Chinese, as there are those, who want to study Japanese. For Korean studies the number of new students has been smaller, but it has been growing quite rapidly, and many of those, who study Korean, are very active and good students, and it seems that the recruitment of new students to Korean studies has been very successful; it tends to attract very good students. So, in the last reform of this system we renamed the subjects so we now have a BA-level subject called Asian studies and an MA-level subject called East Asian studies and this BA-level subject also comprises South Asian studies while the East Asian studies comprises of Chinese, Japanese and Korean. And then we have another MA-level subject called Altaic studies, and this is a totally different subject. It works in English and we have a small, but very capable group of students in Altaic studies and I am now taking care of this subject. We have a very international group and we are [currently] studying Kazakh and other things, but the other subjects are formally in Finnish (including another very small and highly linguistic MA-level subject called Indoeuropeistics); we are entitled to teach also in English, but the programmes are in Finnish and that means that the students are allowed to write their papers and also their master theses in Finnish (or in Swedish); some students are very strict about this, but many of them actually volunteer to write their papers in English to get practice in English, so it's not a big problem, but in principle the subjects still work in Finnish.

Concurrently there is another big programme called World Languages; Chinese is one of the foreign languages nowadays and Japanese also. This is because, very recently, Chinese and Japanese were introduced to Finnish schools; so there are now school teachers in Chinese and Japanese in quite many schools.

C: High schools?

J: yes, mainly in high schools, but there are also a few schools which give the option for the student to start Chinese as the first foreign language on the third grade⁵ at the elementary school level.

⁵ In Finland children start their school at the age of seven. The grades one to nine are called *peruskoulu* / *grundskolan*, or *comprehensive school* in English. The grades one to six are called *ala-aste* / *lägstadiet*, *primary school* in English. The grades seven to nine are called *yläaste* / *högstadiet*, or *lower secondary school* in English. After the ninth grade the students choose to advance to either to *ammattikoulu* / *yrkesskolan*, *vocational school* in English, where they learn a profession, or to *lukio* / *gymnasiet*, which usually takes from two to four years depending on the number of courses the student decides to take and ends in the matriculation examinations. The first foreign language starts on the third grade and is called the A1-language. One can also choose a voluntary second "advanced" language called the A2-language, which usually starts on the fourth or fifth grade. Swedish-speakers start compulsory Finnish on the first grade and Finnish-speakers start compulsory Swedish either as an A1- or A2-language, or on the seventh grade, when it is called

There is one school in Helsinki in the region called Meilahti which has Chinese as the so-called first long foreign language. With most students English is the first foreign language, but in some schools one can choose Swedish, German, French, Russian or even Spanish, and now there is also this possibility with Chinese, and that's why we have quite recently got the right to train our students into teachers of Chinese and Japanese and they can be formally accepted as competent of teaching Chinese or Japanese at schools. For this, their study programme will have to contain a certain amount of credits specifically on Chinese or Japanese language and they should also write their MA theses on topics related to these languages. So, in this case these will be checked, but those, who fill the requirements, will get a paper claiming that they are competent teachers of Chinese or Japanese. In addition to this they will have to complete a sixty-credit programme in pedagogies in order to become school teachers. This is now marketed as one option for our students. Our lecturer on Japanese language, a recently appointed Finnish lady Riikka Länsisalmi, has been very active about this and it was basically due to her wishes that we decided that a part of our new students will be enrolled via this Foreign Languages programme, while another part will be enrolled through this World Cultures programme. So, we'll get students focusing on language and students focusing on culture. But in practice, most of our students have wanted to study social sciences like society, economics, politics, modern history, in some cases minority regions like Tibet and Xinjiang and very rarely Chinese history and almost never anything related to language, really, but nowadays there are a few who write their theses on language teaching, so teaching Chinese at school. We are just having one such MA thesis by a no longer young man who is already teaching Chinese in pre-schools. Many of those who want to get a competence of Chinese teacher are actually Chinese people living in Finland. We have a certain problem with them because many of them don't know Finnish, at least not well enough. Neither do they know the Finnish school system, and we are not quite sure if they really can teach Chinese at Finnish schools, but some of them have training from China as teachers of Chinese as a foreign language and for them it's more or less okay, but some of them have another kind of background maybe and they will not get official competence. Basically we would like to reserve these vacancies for our own students, who are Finns and have completed our programme. So, this is situation about our subject. Maybe you have some other concrete questions.

C: Yes. There are more contemporary questions like your views on China's future.

J: Yes. So, what I was trying to say was that I am not really trained as a specialist on China. One of my fields is the minorities of China and non-Chinese China and the diversity in China and the marginal regions of China, like Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Tibet.

C: There is one question that is more related to the relationship between the Chinese government and the Finnish government. I don't know if you are involved of if you have observed anything.

J: For instance, in 1973, when I was a very young student, my professor Aulis Joki, somehow got involved in taking care of the first Chinese students coming to Finland to study Finnish. There had been Chinese students in the 1950's, but during the Cultural Revolution, the connection was interrupted, and then in 1973 there were three new students, two young ladies and an older gentleman. The ladies spoke English and the gentleman spoke German as foreign language. I was working as an assistant to my professor, and he appointed me to teach Finnish to these Chinese

the B1-language. A voluntary B2-language can be started on the seventh or eighth grade and voluntary B3-languages can also be started in lukio / gymnasiet. In the matriculation examinations most languages have both A- and B-level exams, but some smaller and rarer languages, like Portuguese and Italian have only B-level. Latin has its own special short curriculum and intermediate curriculum exams, and Chinese and Japanese are not yet part of the matriculation examinations.

ladies. I was not their only teacher; they also went to regular Finnish courses at the university and probably elsewhere, while a colleague of mine was in charge of the gentleman who spoke German. So, they all became very fluent in Finnish and the two ladies became diplomats, and one was finally ambassador to Finland; she's now ambassador of China to the Philippines. So, they were gradually promoted. To my knowledge, the other one never became an ambassador, but she rose to the position of the first secretary at the embassy. So, they stayed a few years in China and then they always returned here one rank higher. The lady, who became the ambassador, was called Ma Keqing (馬克青). Ma Keqing was politically rather strict, while the other one was somehow nicer. In any way, they both became diplomats, as China likes to train diplomats specialised on one country; they have had several people here in the Chinese embassy who are rather fluent in Finnish, some of them in Swedish or Scandinavian also. For the moment, I don't know the situation. I used to get invitations to the Chinese embassy as long as I was able to get a visa to China, but after that I haven't been invited to the embassy.

But this Ma Keqing was the ambassador under whose tenure our university established its Confucius Institute, and because of my long-term acquaintance, I supported the idea, as she was my former student. I still think that the Confucius Institute can be used in a fruitful way, although many people consider them a propaganda or spy institution. There's really not much to spy here, but they can be used as a tool of propaganda, anyway. So, you should be careful with them. They should not get too much involved with the general society and to spread knowledge of China outside of the university, because it's supposed to be an academic institution, but I think there are two things we can get from them. One is teaching of Chinese as a language and the other one is research cooperation. This other aspect has not been of much interest to the Chinese partners in the Confucius Institute; we should increase the amount of research cooperation, so maybe projects or inviting scholars and maybe not only cooperation but also inviting foreign specialists on China with the Confucius Institute's money to just visit Helsinki and give talks or international seminars with participants from many countries including China. So, when the Dalai Lama was here we organised an international seminar on conflict resolution with Dalai Lama as the main speaker here at our department and we invited six experts. One of them was a Finnish lady and the others were foreigners. I cannot remember all the names, although there was one Chinese from Shanghai who accepted to take part in the panel with Dalai Lama. I think his name was also Tian, and he seems to have been a professor but is now an independent scholar, so kind of a private enterprise. So, he came here and took part in the panel. We discussed the situation in Tibet and how to solve the conflict between China and Tibet. We also had Robert Barnett who is professor in modern Tibetan studies in the Columbia University; he doesn't get a visa to China. We also had from Britain a scholar of Indian origin called Ananda, I don't remember his second name. He was specialised also on Tibet.

C: I think there is one question related to your talk. It's "Involvement in academic debates on China or Chinese studies, theoretically as well as practically, concerning human rights in specific".

J: Yes, this is a problematic issue, because I'm not a human rights advocate. I think human rights are a western invention used by the United States to suppress the rest of the world and that is why Dalai Lama is also talking about human rights and democracy because he understands these are words he should use. He understands it better than people think. So, I don't really support human rights in the way the United States propagates them. But I think we should make a distinction between human rights and ethnic and language rights, because irrespective of what kinds of rights people had, for example in Tibet before the Chinese occupation, the Chinese government is saying that people were living in serfdom and were very poor and unhappy. Actually, many Tibetans say that it was not so; the society was functioning quite well. Even if it was bad, we know that all

countries have modernised after that, it's not thanks to the Chinese government that Tibet has modernised and we see in Bhutan that they have arranged their country. That is the only Tibetan country which has remained independent. I think it is more a question of whether the Tibetans have the right to their own country, culture and language. So it's not a question of human rights in the sense those "politically correct" Americans want to present it.

C: There's another question related to political consultation. Does the Finnish government ask for advice regarding China?

J: No. The Finnish government doesn't need advice. So, they always know better and I think they never ask any academician about anything. There have been proposals recently; we have for instance two academies and the Academy of Finland, which actually isn't an academy, but research council which is a politically organised funding organisation. But we have two real academies; one of them is called Society of Sciences and Letters, the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters, and was founded in 1838, and the other one is called the Finnish Academy of Sciences and Letters and was founded in 1908. They are very similar, except that the first one uses Swedish and Finnish whereas the later one uses only Finnish. I used to be member of both but I am now only a member of the bilingual society.

C: What do they do?

J: They are closed societies for academic people with a limited number of members. They hold meetings, publish journals and yearbooks and also give grants to young students and scholars. They have a joint cover organisation, and recently they have proposed that they should get more say in official decisions and that the government should ask for their opinion or ask for some research on the effects of the government decisions so that the governments would not make so many mistakes in their decision making, but so far this has not led to anything, it's just a proposal.

C: Can you offer evaluation and comparison of different China studies communities in the Nordic countries and in Finland?

J: I always used to say that there are three types of China studies. One is the classical line which studies Chinese classics, classical Chinese language, literature and philosophy. This is the traditional way of European sinology and we don't have it in Finland. They have it in Sweden, Denmark and some other countries, but we don't have it. It would require some resources like libraries, archives and a scholarly tradition. In Sweden they have this mainly because of Karlgren and his students, but they also have collections; there is this museum of Asian cultures in Stockholm which has very nice collections of Chinese archaeological objects. That's because there were also many Swedish archaeologists working in China in the 1920's. There were really many Sinologists. Some of them were actually engineers, but they became specialised in Chinese antiquities and became very good connoisseurs of Chinese arts. But then the other type is modern China studies like social studies and sciences of modern China which is a very new type of China studies and we have not had it either in Finland but are now developing it because it's supposed to be useful for the country and because it's a field of study for which there is demand amongst young people and potential new students. This is the main thing we wanted to offer by our East Asian studies programme, so kind of modern China studies. The third line of studies is this Finnish tradition of Altaic or Eurasian studies where China is included in this context of Eurasian cultures and then the focus is on the non-Han-Chinese parts of China like Mongolia, Manchuria, Turkestan and Tibet. In this field we have a very good tradition in Finland; we have many scholars, many collectors and also collections. That's what I have been involved with and that is what we can also

offer to China; we can even train Chinese people in these kinds of studies. I have had PhD students from Inner Mongolia who took their PhD here on Mongolian dialects. I think they were trained for their professions here in the Finnish tradition, but we also have others who have visited us. We used to have a visiting scholar from Inner Mongolia University almost every year, but for the last two years we haven't had anyone. We have an agreement with Inner Mongolia University, an exchange agreement, but they are probably sending people in other fields like biologists and physicists, but we have good relationships with them. I'm also a so-called honorary professor at the Inner Mongolia University. This is something we can offer to the Chinese scholars if they want to learn, for instance, this science of comparative linguistics; it's very undeveloped, so they do it like it was done in the 18th century Europe, so their level is very low. So, we can train them and I think we should get more people from China to study this field from the beginning, because if you don't learn it early enough, it's very difficult to change your course of thinking. So I think this field of China studies, if you think this is part of China studies, is what we can offer, but modern China studies are also very important and are something which China can give us in the form of sending people here to talk, and I'm always telling my students that even if these people are politically biased, we can always listen to them and analyse what they say. We don't have to believe what they say but we can look at what they say.

C: This question is closely related to what you say; evaluation of China's academic establishment and scholarship.

J: Yes.

C: So, can you elaborate any more, do you have further observations?

J: I think a problem in China is that they know very little about what is done in other countries; even when they publish academic papers they often contain no references and they also often invent the same things that has already been done in the West for maybe a hundred years ago. So, the problem with Chinese scholars is that they are not very well acquainted with global research; they don't know what is done in Russia; Russia has a very great tradition of sinology; in Western Europe or in America. This is now changing with the young generation but the problem is that the young generation of Chinese scholars only knows English; that's their only foreign language, even though they should also know Russian, German and French at least to know what has already been done. And then in some fields, I think, the technical level is very low like in comparative linguistics. This is a very technical field and you have to understand it properly if you want to do it. On the other hand, the Chinese are, of course, very good at studying Chinese sources like classical history and Chinese philology; there are Chinese scholars who know everything about the Chinese dynastic history; this is something that no western scholar could ever do, because it requires working with the sources from early childhood and I think we should therefore have a division of labour. Let the Chinese do the classical history because we never have enough time to learn it as well as they do.

C: Could you offer evaluation of China pedagogy in Europe and Scandinavian countries and their future prospects”.

J: You mean how Chinese is taught here?

C: Yes. Could you define how it is taught in Europe and in Scandinavian countries?

J: Some European countries have these language institutes where the students specialise on one language and they study this language very thoroughly, maybe twenty hours a week during a period

of four or five years and then they may additionally study the related culture, but they don't study anything else, so they become very narrow specialists, but on the other hand they know their language very well. Here in Finland we have so far had this tradition of university education that will give the students a rather broad basis in many different things and in fields like China studies this means that our students study their languages only four or six hours a week and therefore their knowledge of the language is never as good as in those countries where they study the languages twenty hours a week. However, we include one year of exchange in the target country and this has not been a problem with China because there are a lot of exchange universities in China and it is also a cheap country [to live in]; so all of our China studies' students go to China and stay there one year, except in some cases where they have personal reasons not to be able to be away for so long. According to our current requirements at least one visit to China is required, but it doesn't have to be very long, but in practice most of our students stay in China for a year. During this year in exchange most of them learn to speak Chinese; some of them learn very well, even those who don't specialise on language usually learn it, and they read social media and know all the slang words. However, others never learn the language very well; it depends also on what the topic of study is. So, in Finland we don't focus on one thing and the study programme always contains also things outside of the major subject that they have to study. I think that in the Finnish education system we also have a rather good basis on the education of languages other than Chinese; our students know at least Finnish, Swedish, English and one other European language which is normally French⁶. Nowadays all European countries have adopted this Bologna system, so the structure of the degrees is more or less the same, but Finland has never applied the Bologna system consistently and only now is the Bologna system being properly applied so that one can have a BA degree in one subject and an MA degree in a rather different subject so that one can change one's main subject and the PhD can be still another subject. This, I think, is good; it's good to change one's [subject]. However, it used to be so that if one had chosen to study China studies, one would start at the BA level and then continue to the MA level and perhaps to the PhD level; one never changed one's field. That's not so good. I think broad education is better than narrow education.

C: There's a question related to dissertation. Have you noticed that there's a change of interests and subjects over time like the kind of topic our students work on?

J: Do you mean MA thesis or PhD thesis?

C: Both. Any popular topics?

J: Well, we have had MA theses on China related topics since about 1990 when the first students who started at the new subject of East Asian studies came to the MA level. During the last 25 years, I think, topics have been rather similar; they have predominantly focused on social sciences, there have been rather many MA theses on cultural comparison like the challenges of Finnish companies in China or the challenges of Chinese immigrants in Finland or the differences in food culture, but

⁶ *In Finland the most commonly known foreign language after English (Swedish is not considered a foreign language as it is the second official language) used to be German, but it has been recently been surpassed by Spanish. Up to the late 1960's most Finns usually actually knew German better than English. This is partly explained by the very high lexical and syntactic similarity of German and Swedish (even though German and English being West Germanic languages are more closely related to each other than to the North Germanic Swedish language). French has been rather common but its popularity has been hampered by its reputation as a difficult language. A knowledge of Russian has been always rather rare, even though Finland was part of the Russian empire from 1809 to 1917. This can be explained by a widespread distrust and even fear of Russia in Finland and Russian was not an official language in Finland during the period of Russian rule. In addition to these modern languages, Finland has a very strong Latinist tradition, and the Finnish national broadcaster YLE is amongst the few to broadcast radio news in Latin. The Nuntii Latini is broadcast once a week on the website of YLE.*

then there have been some related to the minorities; I think the topics have remained more or less the same. However, at the PhD level we haven't really had many theses on China, actually very few. In the 1980's we had one on Confucius, on the central concepts of Confucianism, that was by Pertti Nikkilä who is still active and is a Finnish missionary in Hong Kong and speaks very fluent Cantonese. He's also a docent. You know this system of docents in Helsinki?

C: Yes. Privatdozent.

J: A docent is a kind of a higher academic level than just a PhD. It's called Privatdozent in the German system. This Pertti Nikkilä is specialised on Chinese religions but is himself a Christian missionary in Hong Kong. He's now at least 70 to 75 years old.

C: Do you have his contact information? I could interview him as well.

J: Yes, he is a very good object for an interview. He's a quite nice person, actually. He also has a wife who also wrote her PhD at a rather advanced level about these missionaries in China. I think her work is in Finnish. I'm not sure if I have Pertti Nikkilä's current contact information. He used to be a docent at our department and exams and essays related to Chinese religions and philosophies used to be checked by him, he's now retired from that, so I can check if I can find his contact information. He's a very interesting person and quite recently he was still in Hong Kong but now, I think, he's back to Finland. So, his PhD was about China. Then we have another one called Paulos Huang, he is Chinese and from Nanjing, and he came to Finland and became an ardent Christian too. He wrote his PhD on Laozi. And then went to study to the faculty of theology and took another PhD there and then went to Hong Kong to work as a Finnish missionary.

C: So, he's not here anymore?

J: I don't know if he's here or in Hong Kong now, but he also speaks quite good Finnish. He wanted to become a docent but we didn't take him, but you might interview him too.

There is also a very long-term project on a Finnish-Chinese dictionary, a very large dictionary. Have you heard about it?

C: No, please tell me.

J: I don't remember the name of the Chinese person, but it was one of those who had been here in the 1950's and early 1960's. He was a Chinese diplomat working in the embassy who had a knowledge of Finnish and he started compiling a Finnish-Chinese dictionary and it's a very large one. I think he's still alive, but he must be 80 to 85 years old and lives in Beijing. However, he never published his dictionary. I think he gave it to Veli Rosenberg who is very active in China-related issues and is the chairman of the Finnish-Chinese friendship association (Suomi – Kiina-seura) which is one of these old friendship associations and was founded in the beginning of the 1950's when Finland recognised the PRC. Then it was temporarily occupied by Maoists during the Cultural Revolution, but has been working very well recently. They have a very good journal published four times a year. I actually have a collection of them and have also been writing papers to this journal. It's in Finnish and it's called *Kiina sanoin ja kuvin*. Veli Rosenberg is a very well known China specialist.

C: Where can I get this journal?

J: You can get this if you like if you need this specific issue. I can also give you all of them if you like because I was giving them away.

C: Oh really, thank you.

J: Anyway, this association is now chaired by Veli Rosenberg He's my age or a bit older and has been for the whole of his life involved in China connections. He knows everything about the history of the cultural relations with China, cultural agreements. He has arranged visits of Chinese theatres and orchestras in Finland. Anyway, this Finnish-Chinese dictionary was given to him. He then started working on it and got grants from the Finnish ministry of education to get people to work on it. But it's still unpublished. I'm saying all the time that it should now be published irrespective whether it's finished or not because it's a very large work already and there might be some mistakes, but it's still publishable, I think, and the original author is still alive, but for some reason, it's not yet published.

C: Do you have the contact information of Veli?

J: It should be here. I think there's his e-mail address and you can also write to Suomi – Kiina-seura.

C: This man on this issue passed away this year. I wanted to interview him.

J: Yes, he was a school teacher who was specialised in Chinese classical poetry and was also a poet himself. His son is still alive, but is specialised on Japanese literature. His name is Kai Nieminen.

C: He's working at the university?

J: No. I think he's a private freelance writer and author. He had a collection of Chinese books which he donated to us a few years ago. I think they came to our National Library.