

Letter from the Editor

As this second newsletter is prepared for distribution we find ourselves looking back on more than a year and a half of activity by the Conference on Chinese Oral and Performing Literature (CHINOPERL). Following the charter meeting at Cornell University in the spring of 1969 our membership, as measured by the CHINOPERL NEWS mailing list, has more than doubled in number. Enquiries and expressions of interest continue to arrive from scholars at American and foreign institutions.

Our second meeting was held 31 March through 3 April 1970 on the Berkeley campus of the University of California. The consensus seems to be that this session was indeed a great success. During the four-day period we were able to demonstrate that the enthusiasm of the Cornell meeting was not an ephemeral thing, but rather a genuine and viable drive to do something important in a seriously neglected field. Although the scope of the meeting at Berkeley will be beyond our power to reduplicate in the low budget days facing us, it established some standards of quality in material, organization, and breadth of approach that we hope to follow in the meetings to come. The discussion sessions produced fine papers, some of which will be published in the near future; those sessions that included illustrative performances demonstrated the new dimensions of our organization; in the business sessions agreement was easily reached on an organizational structure for CHINOPERL. No praise is too high for the skill with which Professors James Crump and Cyril Birch handled the programs and logistics of the Berkeley meeting.

Among recent activities of interest are two field projects undertaken since the first newsletter. It has been reported that Professor Chun-jo Liu recorded examples of a number of genres in Taiwan; John McCoy recorded and transcribed Cantonese and Hakka folksongs in Hong Kong. Also, some of our members have instituted courses relating to CHINOPERL interests. All available details are included in this issue of the newsletter.

As we shift our attention from the past to the future we find ourselves with some definite plans and some general problems. Another session of CHINOPERL is scheduled for 1 and 2 April 1971 at Cornell University. It will be less formally structured than the previous meetings and will deal with a number of topics, including a symposium on the practical aspects of

CHINOPERL collecting in the field.

The problems, of course, come under the single familiar heading -- money. For several reasons the Committee on Studies of Chinese Civilization of the American Council of Learned Societies decided not to sponsor our request for foundation support. This means we are still very much on our own until we can convince some appropriate source that we deserve financing. In these days of the tightened purse string there is not much room for optimism; still, there is no reason for capitulation and we feel sure that much can be accomplished operating on our own resources. Of course we will continue our search for outside support.

We hope that the CHINOPERL NEWS will play an increasing role in keeping our group in communication and in disseminating the results of individual efforts. We will publish here any pertinent material ranging from substantive articles, course descriptions, and bibliographies to short notices and letters. For example, if articles of CHINOPERL interest are published in other places, we would like to be able to call attention to that fact; hopefully, authors will keep us informed. We repeat our appeal for material to be included here and again we ask that longer contributions from members be typed up in final form so that we can print them photographically without the necessity of editing and typing.

The bulk of this second newsletter is formed from correspondence received from our membership and future issues will require the same sort of help. Our personal research, our private collections, and the assets of our institutions will for the most part remain unknown to the rest of the field unless each of us makes the necessary effort to publicize such matters in the newsletter.

Finally, our thanks must go to the entire membership, to all of you who through your direct efforts or moral support have helped maintain the momentum of CHINOPERL work and the unity of our group.

The Editor