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Semiotic Studies in China into a New Era

The 11th Biennial Conference of the Chinese Association for Language and Semiotic Studies

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On June 28 – 29, 2014, over 100 experts and scholars from more than 80 different universities and research institutes convened at Tianjin Foreign Studies University to attend the 11th Biennial Conference of the Chinese Association for Language and Semiotic Studies, conducting in-depth discussions in the following four areas: (1) linguistic semiotics, (2) Chinese characters and Chinese semiotics, (3) signs and the media, and (4) literary and artistic semiotics.

The year 2014 is special in the field of semiotics the world over in that it marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Charles Sanders Peirce in 1914. It is a special year in the field of semiotics in China as well in that it has been exactly twenty years since the Chinese Association for Language and Semiotic Studies (CALSS) was founded and held its 1st biennial conference at Soochow University in 1994. Therefore, this conference is a symbol of semiotic studies in China emerging into a new era.

The opening ceremony took place at Tianjin Foreign Studies University at 9:00, June 28, 2014. Prof. Hu Zhuanglin, President of CALSS, attended the opening ceremony; and Prof. Xiu Gang, President of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, gave the welcoming remarks. For the opening ceremony, the MC was Prof. Tian Hailong from Tianjin Foreign Studies University. On the mornings of June 28 and 29, ten plenary speeches were given, respectively by Prof. Hu Zhuanglin from Peking University, Prof. Zhao Yiheng from Sichuan University, Prof. Gu Yuanqing from Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Prof. Wang Mingyu from Tianjin Foreign Studies University, Prof. Xiong Xueliang from Fudan University, Prof. Zhang Jie from Nanjing Normal University, Prof. Zhang Zhiting from Nankai University, Prof. Wang Labao from Soochow University, Prof. Tu Youxiang from Shandong University, and Prof. Meng Hua from Ocean University of China.

Four parallel sessions were held on the afternoon of June 28 related to the following topics: linguistic semiotics, Chinese characters and Chinese semiotics,

signs and the media, and literary and artistic semiotics, each of which provided excellent arenas for scholars of different fields to freely share, exchange, and debate their convictions.

The brief but equally grand closing ceremony was held at 11:00, June 29. Prof. Chen Xinren from Nanjing University, Prof. Wang Shaolin from Xinxing Applied Technology Institute, Prof. Dong Xiaoying from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and Prof. Wang Yongxiang from Nanjing Normal University reported on the discussions of the four sessions respectively. Prof. Su Xiaojun from Soochow University, the Secretary-General of CALSS and the MC for the closing ceremony, presented to the Conference the work done by CALSS during the past two years. Prof. Lin Zhengjun, Dean of School of Foreign Languages, Northeast Normal University — the organizer of the 12th Biennial Conference of CALSS to be held in 2016, gave a warm welcoming speech. Prof. Wang Mingyu, Vice President of Tianjin Foreign Studies University, delivered the concluding remarks of the conference. And Prof. Hu Zhuanglin made the closing speech, expressing his satisfaction with the great success of this conference and extending his sincere gratitude for all the efforts and contributions to make this conference successful.

Although semiotics, as a discipline, originates from Europe and America, many semiotic ideas may date back to two thousand years ago in China. Since semiotics was introduced into China in the second half of the 20th century, it has been combined with Chinese culture and has produced an enormous number of high-quality achievements. Compared with the research achievements of the western world, Chinese scholars have made breakthrough progress in semiotic studies on Chinese characters, nomenclature, traditional etiquette, Chinese architecture, clothing, etc.

All of the scholars present at the Conference unanimously agreed that the purpose of CALSS is to promote communication among different fields such as linguistics, philosophy, literature, art, architecture, etc., to encourage different voices, to integrate different research teams, to carry forward the localized research of semiotics, and thus to promote the prosperity and development of semiotics in China. With the 20th anniversary of CALSS, semiotic studies in China move into a new era.

The 11th Biennial Conference has been successfully concluded, but semiotics in China will continue to thrive, through collaboration and communication among different institutes, academic groups, and individuals both inside and outside China, for we are dedicated, with great enthusiasm, to the wonderful cause of semiotics.