

學習拉丁文：高尚品味，抑或文化自省？ Learning Latin: not haute couture but culture shock



夏其龍神父 Father Louis Ha

大概不少人相信人類文明與日俱進，今時勝於往昔，古代語言也可能因此幾近絕跡於學校課程。實際上，古代語文是我們思索人生要義和人類何去何從等問題的線索。中大天主教研究中心主任夏其龍神父，設計了一門別出心的拉丁文課程，鼓勵中大學生多認識自己的文化傳統。

我首先問夏神父他教的拉丁文是哪一種。專研歷史而學問淵博的夏神父，即給我上了一堂拉丁文歷史速成班，初探拉丁文發展的沿革。

羅馬人始祖據說是逃離特洛伊城的埃涅阿斯及其同伴。這當然是傳說而已；羅馬人從希臘移民借來希臘字母作書寫之用，卻是事實，其考古證據可追溯至公元前七世紀。羅馬曾奉行帝制，帝制崩潰後則改行共和制，至公元前四世紀中頁，共和制已趨成熟。羅馬欲成為地中海地區霸主，戎馬干戈實現了統治者的願望，也把羅馬思想和文化遍播邊陲。拉丁文成為了地中海地區不同語言和族群的共通語言，其形色也因此改變。拉丁文既是羅馬世界的語言，也是少數菁英用於演說修辭的工具。羅馬政治家和演說家西塞羅（公元前107至43年）的文學作品，就是古典拉丁文的精萃，千古傳誦。

西羅馬帝國於公元476年因外族侵略而傾崩，但拉丁文並未隨之湮滅。拉丁文雖然不復聞於帝苑深宮，卻散落修道院裏，及後歐洲大學成立，就成為了學術界的語言。

拉丁文與歐洲本土語文糅合而演化成今天所謂的羅曼語。據夏神父所說，當時居於現今德國地區的人，他們所說的拉丁文，相比意大利地區人士的拉丁文，較接近古羅馬拉丁文語音，教人出乎意料。

「舉個例子說，Cicero的『c』音，在意大利拉丁文讀成『church』的『ch』音，而德國拉丁文則讀成『car』的『c』音。我教的拉丁文發音以德國拉丁文為準，」夏神父說。

這課程介紹古典拉丁文的概況，但其主要目標，是對照古典拉丁文和中文，使學生認清中文行文特色。他選取《左傳》等古籍章句作對比，務求收立竿見影之效。

夏神父認為，現代漢語受歐西語言影響過甚，故此不適宜與拉丁文作對比。近代西方以至日本的影響，改變了中文的句法和用字。

雖然語言演變無可避免，我們應當心，許多我們慣常使用的詞句，委實可簡潔一點，以貼近文言語法重寫。

「我希望藉課程闡述基本拉丁文語法，並提高華人學生對母語的認識，」夏神父說。

「縱使古典拉丁文和文言文大相徑庭，他們也有相似之處，那就是言簡意賅。我想，那可能是由於古代文字須刻在石頭、陶器、竹簡上，簡豈豈不是比較划得來嗎？」

夏神父的說話，正好帶出現今文字工作者的處境：科技縮短書寫時間，卻不保證思考和行文清晰。

拉丁文課程PHIL2400為選修科，於暑期授課。他的學生來自歷史、哲學、英文、法律、物理、藥劑、生物學等學系。

「我的學生覺得拉丁文難學和複雜。拉丁文動詞帶有二百六十五個屈折變化，而形容詞則有三十六個。你還得要學習詞形變化和組合。古典拉丁文講求準確，不容含糊，以中文為母語的學生頗難掌握。但是，修習拉丁文後，撰文時便懂得如何鋪陳和省略資料，以調節讀者的反應。」

兩次世界大戰和冷戰改變了國際政治秩序，也喚起了尋找新「歐洲身分」象徵的呼聲，拉丁文當然是最佳選擇之一。

「歐盟崛起，如何團結語言、種族繁多的歐洲大陸，頗費思量。在芬蘭即有一所無線電台每周廣播拉丁文新聞報道。會說英文的人不少，選英文為歐洲身份象徵，固然不無道理，但七成英文字彙源自法文，而法文的源頭則為拉丁文呢！」

夏神父說1962年召開的梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議之後，拉丁文不再是教會通用的語言。不過，拉丁文仍然在學術世界發揮影響力。譬如，新發現的植物或生物，通常以拉丁文或希臘文字詞起名。學術以外，不少高尚住宅和運動用品等商品，其名字皆取自拉丁文或希臘文字詞。

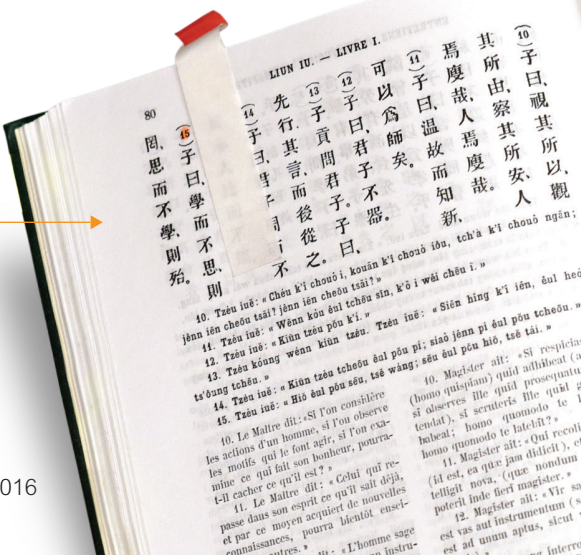
許多古代語文不復為今人日常所用，但卻是我們尋問古昔的津樑，也賦予此時此地存在的意義。

The popular belief in “human progress” seems to have given rise to an assumption that the contemporary world is always superior to the bygone worlds of our ancestors, and this assumption may have contributed to the near extinction of ancient languages in our curricula. But the fact is ancient languages still impart to us important truths about who we are and whither we should go. To encourage his students to pay better heed to their own cultural heritage, Father **Louis Ha**, Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies, is teaching a course in classical Latin with a twist.

I begin by asking Father Ha what kind of Latin he is teaching, and the erudite historian and clergyman soon gives me a quick walkthrough of the development of Latin, or more accurately a crash course in the history of Latin.

While legend has it that the first Romans were descended from Aeneid and his men fleeing from the besieged city of Troy, what we know for sure is that the early Romans borrowed from Greek settlers the Greek alphabet, with the first proof of writing dating back to around 7th century B.C. (Boatwright: 7). Monarchy gave way to the Roman

耶穌會傳教士Séraphin Couvreur翻譯《四書》等中國古籍成拉丁文
Chinese classics such as *The Four Books* were translated into Latin by Séraphin Couvreur, a Jesuit missionary



Republic, which matured at around the middle of the 4th century (Boatwright: 33). Successive military conquests by the Romans to tighten their grip on the Mediterranean world led to the dissemination of Roman ideas and culture. To cater for an ethnically and linguistically diverse populace, Latin must be ‘primed’ for use as the medium of universal communication. But the adaptation of Latin for wider use did not throttle its growth as a rhetorical and oratorical instrument of the select few. Cicero (107 – 43 B.C.) the statesman and public speaker passed on to posterity exquisite literary pieces representing classical Latin at its best.

The barbarian invasion and victory over the Romans in 476 A.D. spelt the end of the Western Roman Empire (O’Flynn: 137) but did not stamp out Latin. Latin exited from the imperial courts of the Roman Empire to gain a firm foothold in the monasteries, and the emergence of the first universities in Europe solidified Latin as the language of learning and academia.

Latin was assimilated with the vernacular languages of Europe to become what is known as the Romance languages today. Surprisingly, according to Father Ha, the Latin pronounced by the Germans rather than the Italians is closest to the way the Romans pronounced Latin.

‘For example, the “c” sound in Cicero in Italian Latin is pronounced as a palatal-affricate (as in “church”) while the “c” sound in German Latin is a velar stop (as in “car”). The pronunciation of the classical Latin I am teaching is closer to the German variant,’ he says.

As mentioned earlier, the course aims to give students a basic idea of classical Latin but the real objective of the course is to contrast classical Latin with Chinese to shed light on the characteristics of Chinese, the lingua franca of his students. To maximize the shock factor in this comparison, he made a point to select his teaching materials from classical Chinese texts such as *Tso Chuan* or *Zuo Zhuan*, written in the late Spring and Autumn Period (722 – 481 B.C.) as a commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals.

To Father Ha, the Chinese with which we are familiar today is too Europeanized to warrant a meaningful comparison with a European language. The influence of the West (and to a certain extent Japanese too) over the past century or more has significantly altered the syntax and diction of Chinese.

Although it is fair to say that all languages evolve somehow, it is worth noting that many expressions in modern Chinese can in fact be rewritten in plain and concise Chinese in keeping with the style of classical Chinese.

‘Chinese is now so anglicized that a comparison between Latin and modern Chinese won’t be as striking as it should be. The purpose of my course is not only to introduce students to the basics of Latin grammar, but also to heighten Chinese students’ sensitivity towards their own language,’ explains Father Ha.

‘In spite of their differences, classical Latin and classical Chinese do share one similarity: they are concise and pithy. I think this is due to the fact that in the past, words were carved on stones, potteries or bamboo sheets, so it made sense to be brief, didn’t it?’

Father Ha’s remarks bring home the circumstance that we writers face today: technology makes faster the generation of words but does not contribute to clear and precise thinking and writing.

The course PHIL 2400 is an elective course designed for the summer months. His students hail from diverse academic backgrounds ranging from history, philosophy, English, and law to physics, pharmacy, and biology.

‘My students do find classical Latin to be difficult and complex. A verb in classical Latin entails 265 inflected forms, and an adjective 36. You also have to study declension and conjugation. Classical Latin is a very precise language, leaving little room for ambiguity. This is what baffles a student whose mother tongue is Chinese. But after learning classical Latin, a writer would be better able to manoeuvre readers’ expectations by selecting the details to be presented or omitted in the text.’

The World Wars and the ensuing Cold War, which have brought indelible changes to the international political landscape, have given rise to a European identity seeking a new vehicle of expression. Latin is undeniably one of the best candidates to fulfil that role.

‘The emergence of the European Union has led people to ponder on ways to unify a European continent divided by linguistic and ethnic lines. In Finland, there is a radio station broadcasting news in Latin every week. English may be an alternative, but 70% of the English vocabulary is borrowed from French and the origin of French is of course Latin!’ Father Ha says.

Father Ha says that after the Vatican II Council (convened in 1962), Latin ceased to be a common ecclesiastical

language within the Church. However, Latin still enjoys application in the academic world; for example, newly discovered plants or organisms are usually built from Latin or Greek stems owing to the universal nature of Latin and Greek. Many products on the market – from luxury homes to sports gear – have their names derived from Latin or Greek roots.

Although many ancient languages are no longer in active use, they serve as a vital link between us and the past, be it imagined or real, to give the here and now its raison d’être.

拉丁文語法與中文語言學的發展

古典拉丁文與中文毫不相仿，其比較研究的卻是碩果疊疊。現代中文語法的興起，馬建忠所著《馬氏文通》實在是功不可沒。馬氏（1845 — 1900）生於天主教家庭，通曉西方語言，熟諳國學經典，為晚清學者及朝廷官員。他提倡洋務，致力應用拉丁語法研究中文語法。

Common Ground:
classical Latin and the rise of Chinese linguistics

Different as Latin and Chinese are, the comparative studies of the two languages have over the generations been the fertile ground for academic research. In fact, Chinese grammar as a modern discipline was spearheaded by Ma Jianzhong or Ma Chien-chung (1845 – 1900), who attempted to analyse Chinese grammar by ap plying Latin grammar. Ma was a scholar and official from a Chinese Catholic family. Versed in both European and Chinese languages, Ma was an advocate of China’s modernization in the late Qing Period. Ma’s book on Chinese grammar, Ma’s Chinese Grammar, was published in 1898.

▼ 馬氏文通 (商務印書館1925年印行)
Ma’s Chinese Grammar
(published by the Commercial Press in 1925)

