# Foreword
# In Memory of Antonino Forte*

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In the summer of 2006 the eminent Sinologist, Buddhologist, and Dunhuang scholar Antonino Forte (August 6, 1940–July 22, 2006) passed away, constituting a major loss to the international study of East Asian religion and culture. In this short essay I will touch upon a few of the highlights of his long and productive career.

The tradition of Sinology in Italy stretches back many centuries. Two of the early figures in this tradition are the prominent Jesuit missionaries Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) and Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), both of whom resided in China during the late Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Ruggieri was the first Western missionary to enter the Chinese hinterland, and he made the earliest translations of Confucian classics into a Western language.[1] In addition to disseminating Western religion, astronomy, mathematics, art, and geographical knowledge to the Far East, the better-known Ricci also introduced Chinese culture to the West.[2] Among the European missionaries and Sinologists active in China in the early Ming dy-

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* English translation by Ken Kraynak.

[1] For more on Ruggieri's translations, see Lou, 'Yesu huishi Luo Mingjian Zhongyong Ladingwen yiben shougao chutan'; Ferrero, 'Lunyu zai Xifang de diyige yiben'; and Meynard & Wang, 'Yesu huishi Luo Mingjian yu Rujia jingdian zai Ouzhou de shouci yijie.'

[2] For more on Ricci's introduction of Western science into China, see Mei & Zhou, 'Li Madou chuanbo Xixue de wenhua shiying celüe'; Lin, 'Li Madou shuru ditu xueshuo de yingxiang yu yiyi'; and Gong, 'Li Madou zai Nanchang

nasty, Italians were the largest group, establishing the earliest bridges between China and the West, and laying the groundwork for the modernization of China.

Another prominent Italian Sinologist was the missionary Matteo Ripa (1682–1746), who worked as a copper engraver at the court of Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1661–1722) at the beginning of the Qing dynasty (1636–1912).[3] Also serving at the Qing court around the same time was the Italian Jesuit and accomplished painter Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766).[4] In 1723, at the behest of Pope Clement XII (1652–1740), Ripa returned to Europe with four young Chinese Christians to be trained as missionaries, which led to the establishment of the Chinese College (Collegio dei Cinesi) in Naples—the first center in Europe for the study of Oriental languages and cultures.[5] Upon the unification of Italy in 1861, the school was transformed into the Royal Asian College (Reale Collegio Asiatico), gradually added a wide range of other Asian languages to the curriculum, and eventually became today's University of Naples 'L'Orientale' (Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'). This secular university is where Antonino Forte earned his degree in Asian Languages and Culture in 1964, and where he taught until his death, carrying on a tradition of Sinology and Asian studies that has continued unbroken for nearly three centuries.

Forte was born on August 6, 1940 in the Sicilian coastal city of Cefalù, known for its quaint scenery and ancient history. Having acquired an extensive knowledge of oriental languages and cultures during his university studies, at the age of thirty-six he wrote his first book—*Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of*

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qijian zhizuo de rigui.' For more on the dictionary compiled by Ruggieri, see Wang, 'Luo Mingjian, Li Madou *Pu Han cidian* cihui wenti juyu.'

[3] For more on Ripa, see Han, 'Ma Guoxian yu Xifang tongban yinshua de chuanru.'

[4] For more on Castiglione, see Beurdeley & Beurdeley, *Giuseppe Castiglione*; Musillo, 'Reconciling Two Careers.' Also Yang, 'Lang Shining zai Qing neiting de chuangzuo huodong jiqi yishu chengjiu.'

[5] For more on the College, see Feng, 'Chuanjiaoshi bentuhua de changshi.'

*the Seventh Century*—a masterful piece of academic research which has had a lasting impact on our understanding of the interaction between the political and religious institutions of medieval China.[6] According to the author himself, the book began as a paper he wrote for an elective course he taught at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' during the 1971–72 and 1972–73 academic years. Prior to writing this paper, Forte had been researching the famous *Jin shizi zhang* 金師子章 [Golden Lion Treatise], written by Fazang 法藏 (643–712) during the Great Zhou 周 dynasty (690–705), which led him to make an in-depth study of the political and intellectual history of this period, eventually stimulating his interest in the Dunhuang versions of the apocryphal *Dayun jing shenhuang shouji yishu* 大雲經神皇授記義疏 [Commentary on the Interpretation of the Prophecy Regarding the Divine Sovereign in the Great Cloud *Sūtra*; hereafter *Commentary*], fascicles S.2658 and S.6502 collected by Aurel Stein (1862–1943).

The Zhou dynasty is generally considered an interregnum in the middle of the long Tang dynasty (618–907), brought about when Wu Zetian 武則天 (624–705; r. 690–705) usurped the throne with the help of Buddhist ideology.[7] However, Wu Zetian was the only

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[6] Forte, *Political Propaganda*.

[7] See Xue Huiyi's 薛懷義 (662–695) official biography:

> Huaiyi, together with Faming and the others, fabricated the *Dayun jing* and set out a series of 'signs [concerning the Heavenly] Mandate' (*fuming* 符命) saying that Zetian was Maitreya, who had descended to be born and act as head of Jambudvīpa, and that the clan of the Tang ought to collapse. Accordingly, Zetian changed the Mandate and proclaimed the Zhou [dynasty]. 懷義與法明等造《大雲經》, 陳符命, 言則天是彌勒下生, 作閻浮提主, 唐氏合微. 故則天革命稱周 (*Jiu Tang shu* 183.4742; trans. Forte, *Political Propaganda*, 5).

See also the report by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) and his team, on the events happening in the seventh month of Zaichu 載初 1 (690):

> The monk Faming of the Eastern Weiguo Monastery and others, having compiled the *Dayun jing* in four *juan*, presented it with a memorial. [Therein] it was said that the Empress Dowager was no other than the

empress regnant in the long history of China, and soon after her death the Tang dynasty was restored and the Confucian orthodoxy set about rewriting the official history of this period. This makes it very difficult to gain an accurate picture of the politics and religion of this period, since we are easily misled by the whitewashed histories, and much of the related records have been lost in time. Following in the footsteps of Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) and Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), Forte adopted a sociopolitical approach to the study of religion, and applied it with much success in using the Dunhuang materials to shed new light on this period of Chinese history. Forte received much academic inspiration and guidance from Demiéville, visiting him in Paris in 1972 and 1973.

*Political Propaganda* is based on two fascicles of the *Commentary* amongst the Dunhuang materials at the British Library—S.2658, a short fascicle edited by Yabuki Keiki 矢吹慶輝 (1879–1936),[8] and S.6502, a longer fascicle studied and translated by Forte. Both of these fascicles are important source material for research on the religious and political propaganda of the Zhou dynasty, as they were intended to lend it legitimacy. These two fascicles have also been studied by Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969), the results of which are presented in his article 'Wu Zhao yu Fojiao' 武曌與佛教 [Wu Zhao and Buddhism];[9] as well as by Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 (1893–1964),

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> Buddha Maitreya, who had descended to be born, that she had to take the place of the Tang and be head of Jambudvīpa. By edict the [*Dayun jing*] was distributed throughout the empire. 東魏國寺僧法明等撰《大雲經》四卷, 表上之. 言: 太后乃彌勒佛下生, 當代唐為閻浮提主. 制頒於天下 (*Zizhi tongjian* 204.6466; trans. Forte, *Political Propaganda*, 5).

For a relatively recent discussion of these two passages, see Lü, 'Mingtang jianshe yu Wuzhou de huangdi xiang.'

[8] The beginning and end of this fascicle are missing, and Yabuki refers to it as 'The Commentary on the Enthronement of Empress Wu' 武后登極讖疏. For more on this fascicle and related research, see Yabuki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, 686–742.

[9] Chen, 'Wu Zhao yu Fojiao.'

who argued that S.6502 is an expanded version of S.2658.[10]

*Political Propaganda* is divided into two parts, the first part of which discusses the nature of fascicle S.6502, its political functions, and those who played a role in its production, including a number of Buddhist monks at the Da Fuxian 大福先寺 and Foshouji 佛授記寺 Monasteries, and, of course, Wu Zetian herself. In the last chapter of the first part, Forte deals with Wu Zetian's claims to be a universal monarch and an incarnation of the bodhisattva Maitreya. In the second part of the book, Forte provides a critical translation of S.6502, including a meticulous and erudite analysis of the text. Amongst the many important issues he raises in the book are the textual complexity of the *Commentary*, the religious and cultural diversity of its source material, and the complex nature of Wu Zetian's political agenda; he pays particular attention to the class basis of her political power, especially the conflict between the nobility and the rising new class. It would be no exaggeration to say that Forte's specialized research from half a century ago brought to fruition the pioneering research of his predecessors, and that it continues to inspire Buddhist research up to the present. In the 2005 revised edition of this book he makes numerous amendments to his source material and his interpretations of it.

Continuing his focus on the workings of political power in the Zhou dynasty, Forte published a monograph on the *Mingtang* 明堂 [Hall of Light] constructed in the imperial compound during this period, which is actually an expansion of his discussion on the *Mingtang* and the armillary sphere (*dayi* 大儀) earlier presented in *Political Propaganda*. The *Mingtang* was one of the important symbols of the authority and legitimacy of the rulers in ancient times, and in 688, when Wu Zetian was in her final sprint to the peak of power, she had the Qianyuan Hall 乾元殿 demolished and had its foundations expanded for construction of the *Mingtang*.[11] Soon after it was completed the following year, this is where Wu Zetian performed the imperial sacrifice to heaven, thereby demoting Emperor Ruizong 睿

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[10] Tang, *Sui Tang Fojiao shigao*, 198–199.

[11] See the section on the year 688 in *Zizhi tongjian* 204.6448.

宗 (r. 684–690 and 710–712; i.e., Li Dan 李旦 [662–716]). It should be noted that the *Mingtang* was closely associated with Buddhism, for its construction was overseen by the monk Xue Huaiyi 薛懷義 (662–694), and directly behind it was a huge Buddhist statue, such that an understanding of its construction and function sheds much light on this period of Chinese history.[12] This monograph was published in 1988 as *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock*.[13]

This work remains a leading sourcebook on the subject. In his preface, Forte states that he began writing this book in 1982, as part of his investigation of a Buddhist building called *Tiantang* 天堂 (Heavenly Hall), built in Luoyang in 689. Eventually, however, his research on this building came to include a number of related topics, including the history of science and technology, and the interaction of politics and religion. Forte served as a full-time researcher at the French École Française d'Extrême-Orient (of which he was a member from 1976 to 1985) from 1978 to October 1981 and then again, from November 1983 to October 1985, during which time he was based in Kyoto, primarily engaged in writing this book. It was also during this period that he had an in-depth academic exchange with the noted Sinologist and historian of science Joseph Needham (1900–1995). The book is divided into four chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter, he mentions the mechanical clocks produced in ancient China, including one produced during the Tang dynasty by Liang Lingzan 梁令瓚 (690–?) and the Buddhist monk Yixing 一行 (673–727), and one produced during the Song Dynasty (960–1279) by Su Song 蘇頌 (1020–1121); he also discusses the famous armillary sphere, an instrument for making astronomical observations that may have contained a clock with a balance wheel, which he conjectures may have been made in 691–692, during the reign of Empress Wu, or else a few years

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[12] For an account of the archaeological excavation of the *Mingtang*, see Wang, Yang, & Feng, 'Tang dongdu Wu Zetian mingtang yizhi fajue jianbao.' For more on the *Mingtang*, see Sun, 'Fojiao yu yinyang zaiyi.' Also see Su, 'Wu Zetian Mingtang kaoyi.'

[13] Forte, *Mingtang*.

earlier, in 686–689. Forte also discusses the history of the *Tiantang* mentioned above, which was located in the imperial compound and housed a large, dry-lacquered Buddhist statue. According to records, this building was five stories high and located to the north of the *Mingtang*, which was visible from its third floor. During the reign of Empress Wu, both buildings were destroyed by fire. In the second chapter he discusses in detail these mechanical clocks produced in ancient China, and continues the discussion of the *Tiantang* and its relationship with the *Mingtang*.

Based on his textual research, Forte concludes that the *Mingtang* complex built in the imperial compound at Luoyang in 686–689 consisted of three main buildings on a central north-south axis, with the *Lingtai* 靈臺 (Spirit Terrace) in the middle, the *Biyong* 辟雍 (a moated mound) in the north, and the two-story *Mingtang* in the south. On the *Lingtai* were two pagodas; the taller one was the abovementioned *Tiantang*, and the smaller one was called the 'armillary sphere,' since it served as an observation tower housing various astronomical instruments. Openly flouting Confucian tradition, the buildings in the *Mingtang* complex had obvious Buddhist elements, and were intended to legitimate Wu's ascension to the throne.

In the third chapter, Forte compares the first *Mingtang* with the second one. The first *Mingtang* was built by Xue Huaiyi on the site of the demolished Qianyuan Hall; the south side was completed in February 686, a convocation of ministers was held there in 688, and it was completed in early 689. Construction of the second *Mingtang* commenced immediately after the first one was burnt down, but was immediately suspended for some reason. Forte makes a detailed comparison of these two *Mingtang*s, in the process correcting several misunderstandings concerning them.

The fourth chapter is a detailed discussion of the social background of their construction, especially their political and religious significance, including their connection with the Maitreya cult in Buddhism. In this connection he also discusses the pavilion built at the Baimasi 白馬寺 (White Horse Temple) in 685, the *Tiantang* Pagoda 天堂塔 built in 689, the pagoda built at the Shengshan Temple 聖善寺 between 705 and 710, and how two of them were destroyed by marauding Uyghur troops in 762. From this brief

account, we can see how Forte's research was characterized by a rigorous attention to the historical details which shed much light on the relationship between religion and state.

Forte was still engaged in writing this book when he established the Italian School of East Asian Studies in Kyoto in 1984, and began serving as its director, from 1987 to 1997, from 1998 to 2000 and finally, from April 2006 to his untimely death in July of the same year. Although he continued teaching at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale,' he spent much of his time in Kyoto, where he passed away in 2006.

In 1995 Forte published another important work on the Tang dynasty—*The Hostage An Shigao and His Offspring*[14]—the publication of which drew considerable attention to the issue of textual authority in Buddhist and Dunhuang studies.[15] An Shigao 安世高 (fl. c. 148–180) hailed from the Arsacid kingdom of Parthia (the inhabitants of which are generally considered to have been of Sogdian stock), and his ethnikon An is the standard Chinese transcription of the first syllable of his place of origin. As Forte points out, another well-known figure of Sogdian and Turkic descent was An Lushan 安禄山 (703–757), who led a devastating rebellion against the Tang dynasty during the middle of the 8th century. The Parthians, however, were mainly known for their devout religiosity and skill in trade, both of which led to extensive contact with China, facilitated by the ancient Silk Road that connected China and the Middle East. An Shigao arrived at the Chinese capital Luoyang in 148, remained there for 20 years, and is the earliest known major translator of South Asian Buddhist texts into Chinese. In this book Forte makes a meticulous study of a number of epigraphs and related historical materials, in an attempt to show that An was actually sent to China as a hostage, and that amongst his descendants were An Tong 安同 (?–429), An Xing-

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[14] Forte, *An Shigao*.

[15] Amongst the many reviews written in English on this book, see Teiser, '*Antonino Forte, The Hostage An Shigao and His Offspring*'; Zürcher, 'Review'; Welter, '*The Hostage An Shigao*.' For a review in Chinese, see Rong, 'Fuandun Zhizi An Shigao ji qi houyi.'

gui 安興貴 (c. 600), and possibly also An Lushan. Forte's conclusions may seem somewhat speculative, yet the primary value of this book lies in the masterful way in which he makes use of a large number of Chinese source materials, with a degree of depth and skill matched by very few non-Chinese sinologists.

In his preface, Forte traces the origins of this book back to a revised version of a paper he presented at a conference in October 1991.[16] The purpose of this book is twofold. Firstly, by making a meticulous investigation of a small and a seemingly unrelated issue, Forte raises many important questions. For example, exactly what is known for sure about the mysterious An Shigao, this legendary figure who plays such a pivotal role in the early history of Chinese Buddhism? What impact did those who considered themselves to be descendants of An Shigao have on Chinese history? Was An Lushan one of his descendants? This way of insightfully raising key questions by thinking outside of the box is essential in ground breaking academic research. Secondly, Forte meticulously gathers a wide range of materials and subjects them to a rigorous analysis. As he mentions in the preface, rather than coming to any final conclusions, in this book he is mainly concerned with raising essential questions, and then clarifying them for the benefit of future research on related topics. In this way, Forte draws attention to a number of critical issues, especially the multiple roles played by Sogdians in Buddhism and the political history of medieval China. As for whether or not An Lushan was actually a descendant of An Shigao, it is not quite as important as raising the issue itself.

This book consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and two appendices. In the first chapter, Forte presents the extent material he makes use of, which consists of biographical material, genealogies, and rhyme dictionaries (*yunshu* 韻書, an ancient type of Chinese dictionary that collates characters by tone and rhyme rather than by radical). Forte's approach is as follows. First, in dealing with the biographical material, he considers the information on An Tong 安同 (d. 429) and his son An Yuan 安原 (d. 435) in the *Weishu*

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[16] Forte, 'An Shigao.'

魏書 [Book of Wei] and the *Beishi* 北史 [History of the Northern Dynasties]. Regarding An Tong, the *Weishu* states, 'His ancestor was Shigao who at the time of the Han had entered Luo[yang] as an 'attending son' (*shizi* 侍子) of the King of Anxi [at the court of Chinese emperor]. Throughout the Wei (220–265) and into the Jin (265–317, 317–420) [the descendants of An Shigao] fleeing from the turmoil [brought about by wars], they migrated to Liaodong, where they settled' (其先祖曰世高, 漢時以安息王侍子入洛. 歷魏至晉, 避亂遼東, 遂家焉).[17] Forte then turns to the genealogies, amongst which the entry on the surname An in the *Yuanhe xingzuan* 元和姓纂 [Compendium on Family Names of the Yuanhe Reign (806–820)] states,

> An [family]. The *Fengsu tong* 風俗通 [Comprehensive Discussion of Traditional Practices] [says that] during the Han dynasty there lived An Cheng. The *Lushan ji* [says that] An Gao was the son of the king of Anxi who entered [the court] to be in attendance (*rushi* 入侍). [Family origin]: Guzang, Liangzhou. [The family] derives from [the king of] the country of An[xi] who during the Han sent to the Court his son who then lived in the Liang territory. From An Nantuo of the later Wei (386–556) to his grandson [An] Pansuoluo, for generations they lived at Liangzhou and served as *sabao* [leaders of the Sogdian community]. Pansuoluo fathered Xinggui (...) who fathered Heng'an and Shengcheng; [Sheng]cheng fathered Zhongjing (...) Zhongjing fathered Baoyu upon whom was bestowed the surname Li (...). [Pansuoluo] also fathered Xiuren (...). 安: 《風俗通》: '漢有安成.'《廬山記》: '安高, 安息王子, 入侍.' 姑臧涼州. 出自安[息]國. 漢代遺子朝, 因居涼土. 後魏安難陀至孫盤婆羅, 代居涼州, 為薩寶. 生興貴. (...). 生恒安, 生成; 成生忠敬. (...). 忠敬生抱玉, 賜姓李氏. (...). 修仁 (...).'[18]

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[17] *Weishu* 30.712/*Beishi* 20.751. Translation modified on the basis of Forte, *An Shigao*, 14–15.

[18] *Yuanhe xingzuan* 4.500–502. Translation by Forte, *An Shigao*, 18–20.

It was through this chain of evidence that Forte constructed the general hypothesis that the An clan of Wuwei (later given the surname Li) had descended from An Shigao.

In the second chapter Forte studies the biographical information inscribed on a number of steles, including the epitaphs of An Yuanshou 安元壽 (607–683), An Lingjie 安令節 (645–704), and An Zhongjing 安忠敬 (661–726), the last of which was written by Zhang Yue 張說 (667–730). The epitaph of An Yuanshou mentions a certain An Luo 安羅, believed by Forte to be the Panpoluo mentioned above (a.k.a. An Pansuoluo 安盤娑羅; style name: Fang Da 方大). The epitaph of An Zhongjing states,

> The taboo name of His Honor was called Zhongjin, his style was so and so, and he was from Wuwei. The descendent of the Emperor Xuanyuan (that is, Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor) went to live in Ruoshui. The son of the king of Anxi adopted his family name according to the [name of his] country. At the time of the Han Shigao moved away, and from Henan [the family] went to Liaodong. During the Wei Gaoyang was enfeoffed and from Yinshan [the family] established itself at Liangtu. (...) His great grandfather was Luo Fangda. ... his grandfather was Xinggui. (...) his father was Wensheng. 公諱忠敬, 字某, 武威人也. 軒轅帝孫, 降居弱水. 安息王子, 以國為姓. 世高之違漢季, 自河南而適遼東; 高陽之受魏封, 由陰山而宅涼土. .....曾祖羅方大.....祖興貴..... 考文生.[19]

This establishes the ancestral line from An Pansuoluo (a.k.a. An Luofangda) onwards. An Zhongjing is also mentioned on a stele at the Dayun Monastery 大雲寺 in Liangzhou. The epitaph of An Lingjie states, 'He originally resided at Guzang in Wuwei. He was [descended from] a Parthian prince who came to China as a hostage during the Han dynasty, and remained [in China]' (先武威姑臧人, 出自安息國王子, 入侍於漢, 因而家焉).[20] By collating these steles with

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[19] *Quan Tangwen* 230.2331b; Translation by Forte, *An Shigao*, 51–52.

[20] 'An Lingjie muzhi' 安令節墓誌, Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi (ed.), *Shike shiliao xinbian*, Series 1, 11.8183–8184.

the related extent material, Forte succeeds in identifying the descendants of An Shigao.

In the third chapter, Forte discusses the canonical material relating to An Shigao, focusing on the Buddhist records which seem to identify Jiaxiang Jizang 嘉祥吉藏 (549–623) as a descendant of An Shigao. He also presents evidence indicating that An was an adherent of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, rather than a follower of the Sarvāstivāda, as is widely believed; he also argues that An was a layman and not a monk, which would have to be the case for him to have descendants, unless he had children prior to becoming a monk. In the two appendices that follow, Forte discusses the Tang dynasty edict of the early eighth century on the repatriation of court hostages, some of whom may have been distant relatives of both An Lushan and An Shigao. At the end of the book is an extremely detailed and clear family tree showing An Shigao's descendants. In dealing with such a wide variety of ancient materials, discrepancies in their details are inevitable, yet in this book, even by the most demanding standards, Forte exhibits an amazing degree of proficiency in distilling the essence of these knotty texts. Such skill and expertise in ancient Chinese literature is rare even amongst native speakers of Chinese. Undoubtedly, this book will continue providing much insight and inspiration to scholars studying the history of Buddhism for a long time to come.

In addition to several erudite monographs, Forte also wrote a large number of articles, dictionary entries, and book reviews, and also edited numerous compilations, covering a wide range of fields, all related to his core interest in the relationship between politics and religion in medieval China.[21]

Forte's knowledge of ancient Chinese language, culture, and religion was truly extensive, and was shaped by his roots in the Italian and European traditions of Sinology and Dunhuang studies. While living in Japan for many years, he collaborated with both local and foreign Buddhist scholars on various projects, including the *Hōbōgirin: Dictionnaire encyclopédique de bouddhisme d'après les sources chi-*

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[21] For a complete list, see E. Forte, 'Antonino Forte: List of publications.'

*noises et japonaises* 法寶義林, an encyclopedia of Buddhism in French which has been released in fascicles since 1929; the previous editors of this important reference work were Paul Demiéville (1894–1979), Jacques Gernet (1921–2018), Hubert Durt (1936–2018), and Anna Seidel (1938–1991).[22]

From this brief description of Forte's research, we can see that he had a knack for dealing with complex topics; starting from the macroscopic level, he would determine the most important elements of a particular era, and then deeply enter into his material to identify the relevant details. Thus his research has provided a general sense of direction to those currently studying related topics, while simultaneously demonstrating how to insightfully deal with these types of historical source materials when investigating a particular question.

During his long residence in Kyoto, Forte became a kind of bridge connecting East and West, and under his directorship the ISEAS was where numerous young Western scholars became acquainted with such eminent Japanese Buddhologists as Makita Tairyō 牧田諦亮 (1912–2011) and Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山 (1922–2006); by following in Forte's footsteps, these international scholars have begun to make their own contributions to Buddhist studies in the West. Also worth mentioning are the large number of excellent research works on Buddhism published by the ISEAS under Forte's directorship.

Antonino Forte (affectionately referred to as 'Nino' by all those who knew him) was a true trailblazer in both Buddhist and East Asian studies. I first met Nino in Kyoto in the spring of 1994, when the cherry blossoms were just beginning to bloom. At that time I was still writing my doctoral dissertation on East Asian Esoteric Buddhism, and had gone to Japan to seek some guidance from various authorities on the topic. I initially began working with Yanagida Seizan, the eminent scholar of Zen studies at Hanazono University 花園大學 in Kyoto, but a few months later he retired, whereupon I began working with Aramaki Noritoshi 荒牧典俊 (1936–) at Kyoto University. Since Kyoto University was nearby the ISEAS established

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[22] Amongst Forte's many contributions to this dictionary are: 'Chōsai'; 'Daiji'; 'Daishi'; 'Daisōjō'; 'Daitoku.'

by Nino, I went to visit him, taking with me a letter of recommendation given to me by Robert Sharf, one of my supervisors at McMaster University at the time. I found Nino to be very personable and amiable; the first time we met he expressed keen interest in my dissertation topic, and offered quite a few practical and detailed suggestions.

I also found the ISEAS to be a kind of mecca for young scholars, especially its small library packed from floor to ceiling with academic publications on Buddhist and Oriental Studies. In addition to an extensive collection of materials on ancient bronzes and stone tablets, the library had a large number of important Western journals and reference works which could be freely consulted by visiting scholars. But what made the deepest impression on me was the open and welcoming atmosphere. Apart from providing easy access to its excellent collection, the library had computers which visitors could use for free—a real bonus in the 1990s, when laptop computers were still prohibitively expensive. Having noticed how I had been spending long hours in the library pouring over its collection, Nino actually entrusted me with a set of keys, so that I could get in on weekends and holidays. In fact, Nino treated all the young scholars affiliated with the ISEAS with the same amount of trust and confidence. As a result, the ISEAS became one of the favorite places for Western graduate students living in Kyoto to hang out and share ideas.

Under Nino's directorship, the ISEAS became a bridge between East and West, where young scholars from around the world came to carry out their research projects and exchange ideas, and where quite a few lifelong academic friendships began; it also served as an academic social hub, providing an intellectually stimulating atmosphere conducive to original thought. Nino typically spent his mornings at home writing, and his afternoons at the ISEAS taking care of administrative business. His office was right next to the library, and even when he had lots of work to attend to, he was always happy to be of assistance when young scholars came to him seeking advice, such that his office was often packed full of visitors.

In my estimation, one of Nino's greatest contributions was the way in which he turned the ISEAS into an open platform for exchanges between scholars from a wide range of fields, specializations,

cultures, and nations. Looking back, I can see how Nino's dignified bearing and personal example has had a lasting impact on my own way of thinking and how I manage academic venues. Although he passed away some years ago, his open mindedness and enthusiasm for academic research live on in the younger generations of scholars who have had the pleasure of knowing him. Moreover, Nino always had one eye on the future, and some of the projects he proposed decades ago are only now beginning to materialize, due to advances in technology and facilities. Most of all, despite his unmatched erudition and impressive contributions to Buddhology and beyond, Nino was impeccably modest—a quality truly worth emulating.

In commemoration of Antonino Forte, whose work constitutes a major contribution to the study of Buddhism in medieval China and Japan, the religions of the Silk Road, and East Asian art and archaeology, from July 4 to July 6, 2021, the fifteenth anniversary of his passing, a series of international conferences was jointly held by the Glorisun Global Network, the University of British Columbia's (UBC) 'From the Ground Up: Buddhism and East Asian Religions' (FROGBEAR)' project (https://frogbear.org/), the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' (his alma mater), the Italian School of East Asian Studies in Kyoto, Princeton University, and Geumgang University 金剛大學 in South Korea. The first conference, titled 'The Transmission of Buddhism in Asia and Beyond,' was co-organized by the UBC-based FROGBEAR Project and Princeton University, and covered a variety of areas in which Forte conducted research, including Dunhuang studies, the translation of Buddhist scriptures, textual and historical research methodologies, Buddhist institutions, and Buddhist archaeology. Most of the twelve articles collected in this volumes were originally presented at this conference.

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