

Yerevan Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences

Research Centre for Chinese Studies Launch / Acceptance Speech for PhD Honoris Causa by Dr. Johnny Hon, Armenia, 24th November 2015

Distinguished scholars and Faculty members

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear Friends

It is really a great pleasure and a happy day for me to be back in Armenia and especially for me to return to the Yerevan State University of Languages and Social Sciences, just two short months after my last visit here.

Every time I come back to Armenia I am struck by the warmth of the welcome I receive, by the friendliness of the Armenian people and by the great culture, history and civilisation of this beautiful land of learning.

Your university has a long and venerable tradition and it continues to produce scholars and to contribute to both nation building and international understanding.

When I spoke here before on the subject of the new Silk Road, a concept advanced by Mr Xi Jinping, the President of China, I could appreciate the keen interest of my audience in the latest trends in international affairs and the warmth of the friendly feelings cherished by the Armenian people for the people of China.

Indeed, the peoples of China and Armenia are true friends and that friendship dates to the ancient Silk Road. The first references to Armenian-Chinese relations are to be found in the works of Moses of Khoren, the fifth century historian and author of the classic work. 'History of the Armenians', and of Anania Shirakatsi, the seventh century geographer, mathematician, philosopher and astronomer, a man generally considered as Armenia's first scientist.

Armenian merchants travelled to and lived in China long before the 12th century and many left their mark on the country. Over the centuries, Armenian merchants and communities established themselves in various places in China, including Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Harbin, Shanghai, and even in Tibet.

It is therefore fitting and meaningful that today we celebrate the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding that will lead to the establishment here of a Research Centre for Chinese Studies, with the exciting possibility to further develop it into a Centre for Asian Studies in the future.

By making use of advanced technology, the centre will have not just national but international significance, for example by combining online and offline activities to enable the involvement of both local and international experts and professors and to facilitate active cooperation with relevant bodies in the PRC.

I am very proud to be associated with this project and I pledge my continued support.

I am of course deeply moved by your bestowing on me today a PhD Honoris Causa. This is a great honour for me and I will strive to remain worthy of it. Thank you so much. This is something I shall always treasure.

Honoured as I am, I do not see this PhD Honoris Causa simply as recognition of my own work alone, but also as an acknowledgement and a promise of the work that we will do together in the future and of the friendship between us.

Once again, I express my sincere and heartfelt thanks.

Dr. Johnny Hon

24/11/2015