

REMEMBERING JOSEPH BROZEK (1913–2004): Brozek's China Connection

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In the pages of a recent issue of this journal, several historians of psychology wrote of their acquaintance with the late Professor Joseph Brozek, the naturalized American polymath born in central Bohemia (today known as the Czech Republic) who worked nearly all of his adult life in the Universities of Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Lehigh and championed the cause of international collaborations for the furtherance of studies in the history of psychology (Woodward et al., 2004). Apart from a brief biography, these historians mentioned his numerous investigations into the work of several Czech scientists who worked in psychology or related fields and who were either unknown or neglected in the West; they also discussed his numerous book chapters and reviews, some of which were in his specialty field, nutrition. But Brozek is most remembered for his desire to link up people in different parts of the world who had a common interest in the history of psychology. Although several of the contributors addressed this feature of his work, there was no mention of his attempts to bring Chinese psychologists into the international arena. What follows is my attempt to redress this omission.

When Brozek began compiling a historiography of psychology in China for his seminal 1983 paper, he had not, as far as we know, made any direct contact with Chinese historians (Brozek, 1983). He probably based the contents of that review upon his reading of some of the contemporary work of Matthias Petzold, who at the time was doing doctoral research in China on developmental psychology (Petzold, 1980, 1980/81, 1981, 1982). Oddly, however, there is no reference to Laurence Brown's book, which was based on the two visits he made to China between 1978 and 1980 (Brown, 1981). Because Brown, a New Zealander, was then based at the University of New South Wales, his distance from the United States might explain Brozek's ignorance of his work.

A year after Brozek's 1983 article appeared, Yan Wenfan, a young graduate student from Shanghai Normal University, was charged by his teachers, Li Buoshu and Yan Guocai, with contacting Brozek after he took up his postgraduate studies in educational psychology at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Yan was to become Brozek's "linguistic bridge" to China, as described in their correspondence, as I have noted.¹ He soon set about translating some journal

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¹ This quote and others are taken from correspondence between Joseph Brozek and Gao Juefu, copies of which were kindly passed onto me by Ye Haoshen, one of the late Professor Gao's last

articles and a précis of a few books on the history of Chinese psychology. This resulted in a number of papers on Chinese historiography that Brozek wrote in collaboration with Yan and Horst Gundlach, a fellow historian of psychology from the University of Passau whom Brozek visited during the summers of 1986 and 1987 to prepare for a symposium held in 1987 commemorating the work of Fechner (Brozek, Yan, & Gundlach, 1986a, 1986b).

Brozek had been drawn to the work of Gao Juefu as the translator of both editions of E. G. Boring's *A History of Experimental Psychology* into Chinese. He wrote a brief account of this with Yan and offered it as a "bouquet" to Gao on the eve of Gao's 90th birthday, complementing Werner Traxel's lengthier piece on Boring in *The History of Psychology Newsletter* (Brozek & Yan, 1986). This paper was subsequently published in Chinese (Brozek & Yan, 1987). Through Yan, Brozek began a brief correspondence with Gao in 1984 with a twofold purpose: to bring to Gao's attention what he was writing about Chinese historiography in English and also to suggest to Gao that he consider having his own two works on the history of Western psychology and the history of Chinese psychology translated into English (Gao, 1982, 1985). Fully aware that China was only beginning to emerge from a difficult period because of the damaging effects of Mao's Cultural Revolution, Brozek had nonetheless written optimistically of the gradual emergence of activity in the historiographical field (Yan & Brozek, 1987). Brozek had sent Gao a copy of his 1983 paper, and on the strength of that, Gao had offered more information about activities in the People's Republic of China (PRC). This led Brozek to secure Gao a place in his own festschrift, where an article by Gao on historiography in China subsequently appeared (Gao, 1984). Although Gao invited Brozek to visit China, Brozek did not take him up; possible explanations are noted.² Brozek therefore never got to meet the man who had influenced the history of Chinese psychology with his translations of many important psychological works in the West. This might suggest that Brozek's project for China had not been successful. To the contrary, by bringing activities in the history of psychology in China to the attention of English-speaking psychologists, he was not only being informative but also signaling the importance of these works to Chinese psychologists themselves, who, from the early 1980s onward, were eager to reestablish contacts with psychologists in the West. This gesture certainly made my own foray in the early nineties into China in search of Gao much easier.

At the time, I was ignorant of Brozek's China connection, in spite of my

graduate students, now professor of Psychology at Nanjing Normal University. Shen Heyong shared his thoughts on Gao and Brozek with me. Yan Wenfan kindly supplied copies of correspondence with professors Li Baishu and Brozek. I am indebted to Bill Woodward who first suggested I write this, to Horst Gundlach who steered me to some of Brozek's China articles, and to Alison Turtle for her always encouraging comments.

² According to his letter to Gao of August 21, 1984, Brozek intended to apply for a National Science Foundation visiting scholarship to China to work with Gao on a history of modern psychology. However, it seems that Gao might have been only lukewarm to the idea, preferring that his own Chinese colleagues work on that project without outside interference. This would not have been so unusual a reaction and does not in any case undermine Gao's intention of having Brozek visit for other reasons, something Gao seemed hopeful of as late as 1987, when their correspondence seems to have stopped.

having convened some years earlier in Taiwan a symposium on the history of psychology in Asia, which was attended by participants from the region and the outcome of which Brozek kindly reported in his 1983 paper. Those papers, plus some invited contributions, eventually led to a book I coedited with Alison Turtle of the University of Sydney (Turtle & Blowers, 1984; Blowers & Turtle, 1987). That project greatly interested Professor Brozek, who supported it during the six long years it took from inception to publication.

By 1991, I had begun looking at the effects of Freud's work in China, and this led to me to meet Gao Juefu myself, who was by now 94 years old and known to me as the translator into Chinese of Freud's *Introductory* and *New Introductory Lectures*. A small coterie of colleagues and graduate students joined in our discussions as we exchanged views on the history of psychology in China as compared with Hong Kong. I was able to gather a lot more materials from and about the work of this distinguished man, who had graduated from HKU after World War I and worked as a translator for the Commercial Press in Shanghai while also holding down teaching positions in several of China's universities. I made his work the subject of a paper that brought to light his significance (Blowers, 1995), taking up the task that Joseph Brozek, had he been able to, might have accomplished earlier. Gao died in 1993. Three years later, Professor Brozek and I were in touch again over a joint obituary of Professor Gao we were to write with Shen Heyong, one of Gao's last postgraduate students. We had plans for publishing it in *American Psychologist*, but the editors ruled against it on the grounds that he was not known to psychologists in the United States.

Nonetheless, Brozek's first letter to me began with the words with which he frequently opened his letters to others: "Let us begin with a good laugh (I love to laugh)." He then went on, "When did I fall in love with Hong Kong and why?" He came in 1920 on a big repatriation boat from Vladivostok and stopped in Hong Kong en route to Trieste. He was thrilled by a little fire station "on the hill." I took this to mean a fire station somewhere on Victoria Peak,³ but he did not elaborate why it was funny. Some mysteries remain. But he gladdened my heart with that first letter and made me feel part of something bigger than myself. It was that selfless attitude and joyous spirit of support that he instilled in myself and others that I find so memorable.

³ As Horst Gunlach reminds me, the view Brozek was remembering was that of a 6-year-old child. It is more likely to have been a storm signal station on a small hill close to where disembarking passengers would have entered the city at Kowloon.

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