



## Oldřich Král (13 September 1930 – 21 June 2018)

*Literary scientist and translator from Chinese, professor of sinology and comparative literatures, Oldřich Král, died on 21 June 2018 at the age of 87.*

Oldřich Král was born on 13 September 1930 in Prague. He studied sinology and English at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University (1949–1953) and became a candidate of sciences with prof. Průšek at the Oriental Institute (1954–57; in 1956–1957 he stayed at Peking University and received the CSc. Degree in 1960). In 1958 he came back to Charles University as an assistant professor.

In 1965 he returned to Peking University as a research fellow. However, from 1969 he was prohibited to lecture for political reasons and his habilitation procedure was interrupted, in 1971 he was dismissed from the Faculty and from 1972 he worked as a labourer at Prague-Žižkov freight railway station until he was offered a curatorial position in the Collection of Oriental Art of the National Gallery in Prague.

There he prepared a number of exhibitions and catalogues, mostly in cooperation with Lubor Hájek. In the meantime, he worked on translations of literary and philosophical texts, some of which were published in samizdat (*Master Chuang, The Cucumber Sage, Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, Ox herding: The Ten Ox herding Pictures*) and the *Ancient Mirror*, which he published in Odeon under the name of Josef Fass. In mid-1980s he finished the translation of the novel *A Dream of the Red Chamber* and Odeon was granted permission to publish this Chinese classic in three volumes starting in 1986. The last volume was issued in 1988 and won Odeon Publisher Award for best translation of 1988. Series of other of Král's translations followed.

In 1990 Oldřich Král returned to the Faculty of Arts at Charles University and became Head of the Department (today Institute) of Far East (1990–1998). At the same time, he founded Centre for Comparative Literature, which he directed in the 1990s. In 1990, his habilitation procedure was resumed and based on his thesis from 1969 he was made associate professor of Chinese and comparative literature. In 1993 he was named professor of sinology and comparative literature at Charles University, where he worked as director of the Centre for Comparative Literature until 2000.

In 1997 he founded the Chiang Ching-kuo International Sinological Center (CCK-ISC) at Charles University, sponsored by Taiwanese Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for Scholarly Exchange, whose primary goal is the development of Chinese studies in the European, especially Central European, region. In 1994 he organized a congress of the

European Association of Chinese Studies (EACS), which is regularly held in Prague; for years he was member of its committee.

In 2000–2001 he was rector of the Josef Škvorecký Literary Academy in Prague. After 1990 he lectured at numerous foreign universities (Beijing, Hong Kong, London, Leiden) and participated at numerous international conferences. From 2006 he was chairman of the Prague Linguistic Circle.

Professor Oldřich Král received number of national and international awards including the Odeon Publisher Award for the best translation in 1988, International award for translation of the novel *A Dream of the Red Chamber* on the 240<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cao Xueqin's death (Beijing 2003); The Learned Society of the Czech Republic Humanities Award in 2010; Czech State Award for Translation (2010); Chinese Award for Translation (Beijing 2017).

Jan Wiendl

Photograph by Irena Vodáková.