

THE INSTITUTE FOR SEMANTOGRAPHY

A Non-Profit Institution for the Promotion of Semantics and Semantography

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EXPLAINING SEMANTOGRAPHY TO AN AMERICAN MAGAZINE WRITER

Introduction to Semantography Series No. 130, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136

In 1953 a few people living in California heard about my work and asked for informative literature. One of them contacted a magazine writer and he immediately saw in my work the material for an interesting article. We got in touch and he spent \$ 25.00 on my three books and the first 84 issues of the Semantography Series. He wrote to me that he will use for his article about my work the method of Plutarch. As he wrote "the Profile form based on the method exploited by Plutarch which seeks to convey information about the specialised subject by an extended biography and personality sketch." He told me that he will offer his article either to Readers Digest or the Saturday Evening Post or other glossy magazines and that the usual fee for such an article is \$ 1,000.00. Of this 10% must go to his agent. He is ready to split the \$ 900 evenly with me. I was of course delighted. I had co-operated in the making of the article even if he would not have offered me any money.

We began to correspond, but soon a hitch occurred. It was the old story, which I have experienced with other journalists. Firstly, they are attracted by the oddity of the subject. Anything odd is unusual and anything unusual maybe news. And the oddity of my work is that it is a "Picture Writing" (how odd!). They would not study my work in order to find out about the semantics of my symbols.

This man went even further. Somehow he got it into his mind to compare my writing with Chinese writing and he believed that there are more combinations and symbols in Semantography than in Chinese writing. I was, of course, crestfallen. I knew of the derision with which Americans look upon Chinese Writing which they consider utterly backward. What would happen to an article in which a new writing is presented to American readers which, according to the writer, appears more complex than Chinese writing. Well, maybe the article will be printed and the money will come in, but the cause of my work would not have been fostered, on the contrary. I tried, therefore, to change the mind of that "magazine writer". (I do not want to mention his name.) I began to write letters to him and somehow I felt that my labours will again be in vain. In order to retain a record of my writing which might come in useful later on when I have to convince someone else, I wrote some of my letter on stencils and mimeographed them.

First is Issue No. 130 which I printed under the title "Selling Semantography to America".

In this issue I tried to convince him that his approach is not correct, that his assumptions about Semantography and Chinese writing are not according to the facts, and that his idea of an article on Semantography for American readers would do great harm to my work. I tried to show him which aspects he can stress in order "to sell Semantography to America". Furthermore, he complained that he could not find anything about the Semantics of my Semantography in my books. This I could readily understand because my three books were written mainly from the points of the Graphics of Semantography, not of the Semantics. As the semantic treatment is interspersed in the various chapters, I gave him in this letter an index where to find references to the Semantics of Semantography.

My answer of course did not please him. Nobody is pleased when his approach to something is debated and declined. In short, he did not like to re-think and re-arrange the article.

Meanwhile I kept writing to him. I wanted to interest him in my work and showed him the possibilities of many paying articles as an outcome of our

co-operation. Once the idea of Semantography has found acclaim in America, an article could be written for almost every journal in every field, be it scientific, industrial, commercial etc. etc. I would draw up the respective symbols for that special field and my friend, the magazine writer, would write the respective article and sell it to journals and magazines which cater for professionals in the various fields.

I felt in the beginning that I have won a great friend. Moreover, he told me that he was a Professor and that he abandoned his post for a career as a free-lance writer. This was for me exciting news. Usually Professors are timid souls who will stick to their jobs because they have not learned anything else to do. A man who exchanges a secure job of Professor for the most unsecure job of a free-lance writer must be a man who is free of the conventional and conservative approach which marks the Professors. At that time, I had been disappointed by so many Professors that I was determined to attack professional educators in a special publication. Now, the magazine writer told me in one of his first letters that in order to write a true profile about me, he would have to go around with me for at least a month. He would have to talk to my neighbors, to my friends, to my enemies, to my grocer and to my newspaper vendor in order to get a complete picture about my personality. Of course, he could not do this. He had to stay in America. However, I wanted to help him to get a true picture about me, and therefore I told him about my secret thoughts and ideas, as for instance my great disappointment with the professional scholars and my desperate determination to de-mask them as obstacles to progress.

To this he answered in a letter in which he agreed with me. His own words about the professors were not kind at all. As he again complained that he does not know much about my semantics, I took the opportunity of trying to explain to him the Semantics of Semantography by "defending" the professors. I tried to show to him that whatever I bring forward "against" the Professors contains enough ambiguous language which would enable professors to attack me and defend themselves. I wrote, therefore, the Issue No. 132 "Semantography in Defence of the Professors".

In one of his first letters which is the basis of Issue No. 130, he referred to the article of the American Journalist, Paul Byers which appeared in Sydney in the magazine "People". He liked this article very much. I told him that it contains a lot of falsehood, and I choose one instance, namely how Byers distorted my report about my meeting with Professor Washburne of New York. This forms Issue No. 133, "Professor Carleton Washburne and Semantography".

Now my American magazine writer refused to go into all this and he refused to study the relevant chapters of my books on Semantics. He wanted to stick to his first story. He admonished me in very severe terms and demanded that I should write him a "Brief on Semantography" in not more than 2,500 words. Also a "Brief on the Semantics of Semantography", again in not more than 2,500 words. This I did in the Issues No. 134 and 135. Furthermore, as I felt that my friend is particularly uninformed about Chinese writing, I wrote Issue No. 136 under the title "Is Chinese Writing really a Pictographic Ideography?".

The reader of the two Briefs of Semantography would have to agree that I did really my best to say in 2,500 words whatever can be said about my work. My American magazine writer had now an easy job with these Briefs, but apparently by this time his interest was diverted to other things and he dropped the idea of an article. This was a great disappointment to me and it took me a long time to overcome it. I decided that this instance should be the last of the many in which I put great hopes into another man. I realised that from now on I have to stand alone, go alone, and fight alone.