



Preface

In tribute to Prof. Michel Che scientific contributions & fond memories

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It is a great honor and pleasure to contribute this Preface to the Special Issue of the international journal, *Research on Chemical Intermediates (Res. Chem. Intermed.)* dedicated to the late Professor Michel Che. He was a mentor to us and always encouraged and inspired everyone he met, especially the younger generation. He was also an active contributor to the journal, *Res. Chem. Intermed.* as one of the first Editorial Board members. Thanks to Michel's strong support, the journal has become popular with about 400 accepted papers a year among more than 2000 submissions. As a tribute, we have planned to publish a Special Issue of *Res. Chem. Intermed.* dedicated to Prof. Michel Che. The *Journal of Catalysis* also published a Special Issue for Prof. Michel Che, therefore, we tried to publish a separate and unique Issue by inviting many of his good friends and collaborators while avoiding an overlap of the authors of *J. Catalysis*.

Long before I, Prof. M. Anpo, first met Prof. Michel Che early in my career, I had heard his name because of his important contributions to the study of heterogeneous

The world-renowned scientist, Prof. Sir John Meurig Thomas had agreed to write the Preface for this Special Issue since Prof. Michel Che was one of his closest friends and colleagues. However, Sir John is presently not well and taking a leave of absence from any commitments. We, the guest editors, have thus prepared this Preface.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Sir John for all his support to this project and pray that his health will improve so that we may all meet again.

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catalysis, especially in active oxygen species and coordination chemistry. Prof. Michel Che, whom we all affectionately called Michel, was born in Lyon, France in December 1941. His father emigrated from China to France as a young engineer. Michel's mother was French, and he was born and educated in France. Thus, although completely French in manner and speech, these Asian roots made the Japanese and Chinese feel a close familiarity with Michel, as I'm sure he also felt toward us.

Michel was particularly popular in China and became one of the first European scientists to be invited there in 1977. Many years later, he was invited to be the Chairman of the Academic Committee of the State Key Laboratory of Catalysis in Dalian, the first state key laboratory in catalysis in China (2006–2014) (by Prof. Can Li). As the Chairman, he promoted international collaborations for many young and promising Chinese scientists, especially between France and China so that he was awarded the International Cooperation Award of China at the Great Hall of the People by the President of the Republic, the highest honor for foreign scientists (2008). Michel was invited to East China University of Science and Technology in Shanghai as an Invited Honorary Professor (by Prof. Jinlong Zhang) and also invited to be a member of the International Advisors of the Solvay China Company in Shanghai and organized the Solvay China Conferences (2014–2018), thus contributing greatly to scientific development in China. And since I had started working as an Invited Special Honorary Professor & International Advisor at Fuzhou University in China after the retirement from OPU, I was able to invite Michel and Professor Salvatore Coluccia there for the first time in July 2015. We three were famous in the Catalysis Society for being very close, the best of friends. Since then, Michel was invited to lecture at Fuzhou University one or two times every year. He was also awarded an Invited Honorary Professorship and, in May 2018, he was presented with the China-France Lectureship Award by the Chinese Chemical Society (CCS) and selected Fuzhou University to give his acceptance lecture. I remember fondly that he first spoke of his personal history, then about his lifelong work on the oxygen species and their roles in catalysis, an impressive lecture which inspired and encouraged not only the students but also all of the faculty members.



Photo 1. Prof. Michel Che (left, front row), Prof. M. Anpo (right, front row), Prof. Jinlong Zhang (left, back row) and Mrs. Zhang (right, back row) in Shanghai, November, 2016.



Photo 2. Prof. M. Anpo (left), Prof. Michel Che (center), and Prof. Salvatore Coluccia (right) in the guest room at Fuzhou University, July, 2015.

Michel Che visited Japan for the first time to attend the 7th International Congress on Catalysis which was held in Tokyo in July 1980 but, as soon as he met the chemistry community of Japan, he was invited here almost every year after that. He received the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science Lectureship Award in 1986. He was often invited to lecture as an Honorary Professor at Osaka Prefecture University (OPU) and many other universities since 1987 and was also selected as one of the few to be awarded the Special Honorary Professorship of OPU in 2009. His inspiring lecture, *Beauty in Chemistry*, conveyed the attraction of chemistry to over 1000 students and staff. He was also an international judge for the selection committee of Newly Recrutable Scientists at OPU from 2010 to 2018, encouraging

and nurturing many young scientists who have since become outstanding scientists in their own right. Not only in France or around the world, but also here in Asia, we owe much to Professor Michel Che.

Michel was also invited to give plenary lectures at the 40th Anniversary of the Catalysis Society of Japan in Osaka (1993) as well as being selected for the Taniguchi International Conference on Catalysis in Kobe in both 1987 and 1996. He has given countless lectures around Japan but he always took the time to talk to the faculty and students afterward with words of advice and encouragement. He often emphasized the need to study English and to always have curiosity about the world around us.



Photo 3. Prof. Michel Che with Prof. Yoshio Ono (Tokyo Institute of Technology) at the 40 Anniversary of the Catalysis Society of Japan held in Osaka (at OPU) in March, 1993. These two professors studied at the same laboratory of Prof. John Turkevich at Princeton University in USA in 1969–1971.

Michel was not only well-known for his excellent work and great contributions to chemistry but also for his great charm, humor, wit and warm character, always making everyone around him laugh. He was thus, greatly loved and admired by everyone who knew him. Even though very important and well-known, I was always impressed by his humility, kindness and warmth.

Michel was also highly cultured and eager to learn about the history and traditions of Asia. He loved the antiquity of China and the wisdom of Chinese philosophers. But he also loved Japanese culture and was an ardent fan of Sumo wrestling. Sumo is one of the oldest sports in the world, dating back 2000 years, and is the national sport of Japan. Michel knew in detail the rankings and names of all the Grand Champions.

Since Michel was such an energetic and active researcher with an open and broad heart, it was shocking to hear of his passing last August 7, 2019. We have lost a great friend as well as a true scientist and educator. We will always miss his wonderful, joyful smile and cheerful laughter. I would like to express my deepest and most sincere condolences to Michel's family and friends. And with much appreciation for Michel's special friendship and mentorship, We pray that his soul now rests in peace.

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