

Chandler Morse

March 29, 1906 — December 5, 1988

Chandler Morse was born in Brooklyn and raised in Putnam, Connecticut. He received his A.B. degree from Amherst College in 1927 and the M.A. degree from Harvard in 1928. He subsequently taught at Dartmouth and worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (1929-35) and in Washington, DC, with the Federal Reserve Board of Governors (1935-41, 1946-47). He joined the U.S. Office of Strategic Services during World War II. He was one of the principal authors of the Krug Report entitled “National Resources and Foreign Aid,” prepared for the U.S. Department of the Interior. Subsequently, he became a member of the faculty, first at Williams College and then in 1950 at Cornell. After becoming professor emeritus in 1971, Chan remained in Ithaca for a decade, and continued to be involved in the life of Cornell. He and his wife, Katrina Pease Morse, then retired to Sarasota, Florida. Chan died on December 5, 1988.

As professor of economics at Cornell during the 1950s and 1960s, Chan taught about the problems and possibilities of economic development at the time of decolonization. This was also the period when the field of Development Economics was in its formative stage. While many Western academic representatives of the field did little more than provide an apologetics for neocolonial relationships, Chandler Morse put human welfare at the forefront of his concerns. He stressed the pivotal role of institutional change—especially institutional change that broadened participation in the benefits associated with economic development.

The leitmotif of his writing and of his life-long pursuit of the keys to economic development was the proposition that differentiation of economic roles (he often used “division of labor” in the same sense that it is employed in the *Wealth of Nations*) was the other face of economic growth and modern society. The principal obstacle to growth (as well as to economic development, which evaluated growth according to the “true”—as opposed to the individually perceived and socially conditioned—needs of man) was to be found in the stress, alienation, conflicts of individual interest, and disjoint between the interests of the individual and that of the broader society (e.g. environmental degradation). To design new institutions to “reintegrate” increasingly differentiated societies and keep them moving along the road toward modernism was the huge task confronting the developmental economist.

Chan found that traditional economic theory was of little assistance for it assumed not only virtual identity between individual and attainable societal goals, but also a plasticity (as opposed to structural rigidity) characteristic of existing economic institutions (e.g. firms and product/labor markets) that allowed them to accommodate economic

expansion while simultaneously containing the stress, alienation, conflict and the negative externalities that Chan viewed as the principal threat to modernization. It heralded the competition that—in Chan’s eyes—degraded, rather than the cooperation which elevated, man. The typical economist, he believed, had much to unlearn on route to becoming a useful developmentalist.

African socialism embodied Chan’s hope that rhetoric could sustain solidarity among diverse peoples and ease their way, perhaps not to socialism (in the form of public ownership, which represented simply an alternative instrument) but toward the end of a humane, modern society, a genuinely socialist society. In an earlier age, Chan might well have been a member of the Fabian Society.

His authority and expertise in matters of African economic development stemmed in part from the knowledge and experience he gleaned through his study of southern Africa. In 1959 he headed the mission to Great Britain’s High Commission Territories, which produced *Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland: Report of an Economic Survey Mission*. Soon thereafter his research agenda took him to Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tanganyika. He developed a particularly strong interest in Nyerere’s efforts to initiate and sustain a participatory and grassroots approach to economic development. This was evident in his “Economics of African Socialism” [in Friedland & Rosberg (eds.) *African Socialism*, 1964]. The key to Chan’s theoretical concerns more generally is found in *Modernization by Design*, (1969) which he edited and to which he contributed the concluding chapter “Becoming vs. Being Modern.”

Chan’s professional interests encompassed other issues as well. With Harold Barnett he authored *Scarcity and Growth: The Economics of Natural Resource Availability*, which for some time was considered the authoritative work on the subject. Other writings include “Making Science & Technology for LDC’s” (*Columbia Journal of World Business*, 1976), “Depletion, Exhaustibility and Conservation” [in Vogely (ed.) *Economics of Mineral Industries*, 1976], and “Natural Resources as a Constraint on Economic Growth” (*American Economic Review*, 1973). He was a member of the Ocean Policy Committee of the National Academy of Science 1973-76, a consultant to MIT’s Marine Technology Transfer Project in 1974, and chairman of a workshop on Needs for Marine Technical Cooperation in the Gulf & Caribbean in 1975.

Chan’s humanistic concerns extended beyond the classroom and printed page. His impact on the Cornell community is noteworthy. He served as chairman of the Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy, 1971-73. He played a founding role in the birth of COSEP and remained actively engaged in the development and operation of the COSEP program up to the time of his retirement in 1971. In the highly charged atmosphere that prevailed

on campus, Chandler served as acting director of the Afro-American Studies Program from its establishment in 1968 until 1969 when James E. Turner was named director of the Center for Afro-American Studies, now the Africana Studies and Research Center. During the years 1972-75, Chandler—along with other Cornell colleagues, in particular Herbert Mahr, Jaroslav Vanek, and William F. Whyte—founded O.S.A. (Organizing and Support Agency) to provide support, training and education for minorities and the disadvantaged. This organization, in turn, spawned a new similar organization of a regional character, the Federation for Economic Democracy. Chandler worked selflessly as O.S.A.'s acting administrator and treasurer; his contribution greatly surpassed that of his collaborators.

On a more personal level, Chan and Katrina Morse provided a haven to countless Cornell students. Their home was always open, and they provided the sort of nurturing support and friendship that helped many a graduate student. It is perhaps from this latter constituency that one finds the most eloquent tributes to Chandler Morse. The acknowledgements of many a doctoral student are quite telling:

... his enduring faith and encouragement as a teacher and friend were indispensable ...

he guided, cajoled, inspired me, and above all, cared ...

... he did not give up on me, accepting my thoughts . . . with compassionate respect. . . until his excitement at what he forced me to articulate threatened to equal mine.

Andrew Pienkos, Jaroslav Vanek, Tom Davis