

## REMEMBRANCES OF LI XUEQIN (1933–2019)



Li Xueqin and his team at the Center for Research and Conservation of Unearthed Documents, Tsinghua University.

### Sarah Allan 艾蘭 (Dartmouth College)

I first met Li Xueqin in 1981, when he was a visiting fellow at Cambridge, and I was teaching at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Paul Thompson and I took a train to Cambridge to invite him to London for a few weeks—Paul said we should pay a scholar of his caliber the courtesy of going in person rather than writing to him. In London, Li spent an hour or so every morning happily working his way through all of the galleries of the British Museum, before beginning on the shelves of the SOAS library. He soon discovered a small used-book store on a back street where he bought popular novels in English very cheaply, and, as a fan of Sherlock Holmes, he made a point of visiting Baker Street. I offered to take him to visit the various oracle bone collections in Great Britain. Then he suggested we collaborate in publishing them. Thus, began a series of projects that we worked on together over the subsequent decades.

It goes without saying that Li Xueqin had a brilliant mind and he worked extremely hard. But I think the reason he was so successful as a scholar was the sheer pleasure that he took in learning new things and the delight he took in solving intellectual problems. Because his knowledge was so extensive, he could make leaps of imagination and then back his ideas up with solid evidence. The concomitant of his pleasure in learning was scholarly integrity, without which his efforts would

have seemed futile and meaningless. Thus, when new evidence presented itself, he would adjust his opinions accordingly. Because he enjoyed sharing his ideas with others, and always did so without condemnation, he was an inspiration for many. As for myself, my career and my life, to the extent that these are intermingled, would have been very different if I had not met him early on. I owe him more than I am able to express, and I mourn him deeply.

**Geneviève Barman 白而曼 (Université populaire  
de Lausanne, Switzerland)**

Professor Li Xueqin came to Paris in October 1996 at the invitation of my husband Yau Shun-chiu to visit the Centre de recherches linguistiques Asie Orientale. I met him only for a few hours when I accompanied him on a visit to Musée Cernuschi. But though the time was short, my memories of him are still very vivid.

We were guided through the collections by the then-director of the museum, Dr Gilles Béguin. English was the only language spoken that afternoon. During the visit, Prof. Li mentioned that he had seen the Lionel Jacob collection of Chinese art and found it very interesting. Later, I discovered by leafing through the three-volume catalogue of this collection that one of the items—a strange kind of bronze knife—had been identified by him as a chisel (diaoke dao 雕刻刀) to bore pyromantic hollows.

On our way back, we walked through the rue Montorgueil market and I pointed out to him the Rocher de Cancale, a famous restaurant often mentioned in Balzac novels. He seemed interested and we had coffee there. He then told me that he was looking for a book on “antique cities” by a nineteenth-century French author named “Klong.” The name sounded very un-French to my ears. I first thought of a book about ancient architecture or city planning. At that time we had no internet, one had to search books for information or dig into one’s own memory. Suddenly it came to my mind that it could be *La Cité antique* by Fustel de Coulanges, not a book on architecture, but on Greco-Roman institutions and beliefs. And that was it. Unfortunately, I didn’t dare to ask him why he was looking for that book and will never know.

**C. A. Cook 柯鶴立 (Lehigh University)**

“I’ve read everything you’ve written,” I told Li Laoshi 李老師 the first time I met him in the early eighties when he visited Berkeley. I was so pleased to meet the person whose articles I had been reading for years. He smiled indulgently. Later, of course, I would realize how impossible it was even then to have read everything he had written. In the late 80s,

he accepted me as a visiting PhD student at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. I studied bronze inscriptions with him and oracle bones with Qi Wenxin 齊文心—a formative period of my training in paleography. When I finished my much-too-long dissertation on Chu bronze inscriptions, I presented him with a copy, telling him that I was terribly embarrassed because there is one chapter that ends with the word “and.” I have not seen him laugh so hard since. It seems that his responsibilities became heavier and heavier as his fame grew. Nevertheless, he always found time to include me in the larger scholarly exploration of ancient Chinese texts and for this, Li Laoshi, I am forever grateful.

**Carine Defoort 戴卡琳 (Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven)**

I met Li Xueqin in the nineties, when he suggested having my *Heguanzi* book translated into Chinese. He was then at Tsinghua University and helped facilitate the translation. After that, I met him at several conferences. He was always a gentleman, not only towards well-known scholars, but to everybody, including graduate students and drivers. His contributions to the conferences were so clear and well-presented that they gave me the impression of really understanding Chinese. I am happy that, thanks to Xing Wen we have an issue of *Contemporary Chinese Thought* dedicated to Prof Li for this eightieth birthday (2013, 44.3). Li Xueqin has contributed so much to the study of early China that he will forever be remembered in the field.

**Lothar von Falkenhausen 羅泰  
(University of California at Los Angeles)**

I never got to know Li Xueqin well personally, but I am without question under his influence, for I have read a good chunk of his voluminous published oeuvre. Like many of his most illustrious premodern predecessors, Li was a master of the small essay. He must have written thousands of them, each zeroing in on an important issue on which he had made an original discovery. Giving just as much context as necessary, he would express his point of view with great clarity and economy, and he was particularly good at explaining the reasoning that led him to his conclusions. Western scholars who read Chinese slowly and selectively particularly appreciate this form of presentation. Much of the time I found that Li was right on target; where he was not, he often corrected himself in a later piece. Once—I believe it was at the conference “Chinese Archaeology Enters the Twenty-First Century” at Beijing University in May 1993—I witnessed a senior American colleague saying in a public address: “I want to be Li Xueqin. Every Western scholar of Early

China wants to be Li Xueqin.” I don’t know whether this is literally true—I would doubt it about myself—but I believe that this colleague’s envy for Li’s unparalleled access to new archaeological discoveries, and his admiration for Li’s uncanny ability to contextualize them within traditional historiography, were widely shared. The field will not be the same without him.

### Li Feng 李峰 (Columbia University)

My first encounter with Professor Li Xueqin dates to 1981, when I attended a lecture he gave at Northwestern University in Xi’an. In an overcrowded old classroom, his lectures in Chinese paleography became a memory of ours forever. His description of the newly discovered Warring States bronzes from Chengdu as “*ming huanghuang de*” 明晃晃的, and the thick Beijing accent in which these words were pronounced, were enough to install in many of us an eternal love for bronzes and ancient culture. Two of my classmates, Zhang Maorong 張懋鎔 and Tian Xudong 田旭東, went on to study with Professor Li for their graduate degrees. I, with an even stronger interest in bronzes, entered the Institute of Archaeology to pursue a career as an archaeologist.

Then, I met Professor Li again in October 1994 when he arrived in Chicago for the working conference of the *Cambridge History of Ancient China*. But it left a chilly imprint in my mind. After a short reception in the Divinity School, I was given the mission by Professor Shaughnessy to take the two greatest Sinologists of the group, Michael Loewe and Li Xueqin, in my old Mazda 323 to Starved Rook State Park, Illinois, where the conference was to take place. Having just arrived in Chicago myself, I lost my way almost immediately after we left the campus. All I remember of our conversation during the three hours of riding just 93 miles was Michael Loewe’s words, spoken with ultimate politeness and frustration, in his British accent, “Could you turn on the air-conditioner?” The trip failed to be an opportunity for me to ask for instruction from the two great scholars as I was constantly fearful of becoming an embarrassment to the conference, hence reflecting badly in the eyes of my new advisor.

But I was able to partly make up for my bad feelings the next day. I showed Professor Li my own reconstruction of the routes of march by the Zhou army, recorded in the Duoyou *ding* 多友鼎, which was different from the one he had previously published. Professor Li very patiently read my analysis twice and then said: “Smart!” Praised this way by one of best minds in our field, I felt my frustration from the day before overly compensated. My memory also remains clear of David Keightley’s remark: “Every time Professor Li opens his mouth, I have to change my view of ancient China!”

Professor Li Xueqin was one of the most inspiring scholars that Modern China has produced. Many of his ideas will continue to shape the field into the future, to be celebrated, expanded, and even more, substantiated.

**Michael Loewe 魯惟一 (Cambridge University)**

Following some years in which direct contacts between scholars of China and European countries were rarely possible, in 1981 Li Xueqin spent six months as a Visiting Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge. With his own specialist and scholarly interests, he opened the eyes of historians and archaeologists of the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Europe to the advances that had marked the maintenance of these studies in China, irrespective of the contemporary political doctrines. While his critical appraisal and approach impressed Cambridge's historians and archaeologists, for his part he deeply appreciated and valued how the traditional disciplines of the west could shed a new light on subjects in which he himself specialized. Always ready and indeed anxious to co-operate with European and American scholars, he contributed personally to the work of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Cambridge, both collaborating with established scholars and in the person-to-person teaching of undergraduates that he himself asked to undertake.

Clare Hall was fortunate to have had the chance to enjoy Li Xueqin's company; scholars and students at Cambridge were lucky to be able to work with him and benefit from his deep scholarship and working methods. He stands out as a pioneer in re-establishing direct contacts between leading scholars and the learned institutions of China and other countries.

**Chrystelle Maréchal 麥里筱 (CNRS-École des Hautes  
Études en Sciences Sociales-INALCO, CRLAO)**

I would like to contribute these few lines in memory of the scholar, Prof. Li Xueqin, whose death we deeply regret. I met him in 1996 during his first visit to our Centre at the EHESS in Paris, at the invitation of my thesis supervisor, Prof. Yau Shun-chiu. The opportunity of attending all four lectures on Chinese ancient writing systems was indeed a rare opportunity for a young student like me. I was very impressed by his simplicity in presenting his arguments and explaining certain technical details, and his readiness in answering our questions, despite our naivety. I also have a vivid remembrance of his visit to our house in the suburbs of Paris, and his cheerful lunch with my parents. Yau, who accompanied him, thoughtfully brought along his own copy of Li's *Xin*

*chutu qingtongqi yanjiu* 新出土青銅器研究 and offered it to me, so that I could ask him for his dedication, and he gladly accepted our request. Later in 2001, in a long letter, he gave me his precious comments, after reading the draft of my article on the bronze inscriptions of Huang Jun Meng 黃君孟 and his wife discovered in 1983 in Guangshan 光山, Henan. I was, and still am grateful for his help and encouragement. After a lapse of 12 years, I met him for the last time in 2013, precisely on the second of December, when he honored me by attending my talk at his Research Center at Tsinghua University.

### Christopher Rea 雷勤風 (University of British Columbia)

In the fall of 1998, I was neighbors with Li Xueqin. Professor Li was then a Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College and he and Mrs. Li lived at the Montgomery House on Rope Ferry Road, a short walk from the dorm for students studying Chinese language. They regularly invited students over to luncheons, always insisting that we take home extra food. That term, Professor Li also led a seminar on early China, with Sarah Allan offering live translation and commentary. The dozen or so students in the room knew that this course was unique, but only a few of us were aware that we were in the hands of the pre-Qin dream team—the paleography equivalent of Hank Aaron and Barry Bonds co-teaching a course on how to hit a baseball. I did know that Li Xueqin was prominent, since I had played campus tour guide at the Guodian Laozi 郭店老子 conference that May. But, fortunately, college students tend to be hazy about, and not intimidated by, scholarly eminence. Li turned out to be a kind and engaging teacher. We learned about historical sites, oracle bone script, divination, bronze inscriptions, bamboo slips, burial practices, the difference between a *gu* and a *jue*. I remember a class trip to the Hood Museum, during which he gave us a hands-on introduction to ancient bronze vessels. I do wonder what he thought to say when, four years later, a student he had known for just a few months wrote to ask him for a recommendation letter. (“He has a good appetite.” “His Chinese name also has the character *qin* 勤 in it.”) Whatever he said, it was life-changing.

### Edmund Ryden 雷敦穌 (Fu Jen Catholic University)

*Duibuqi* 對不起 ... How often I remember Li Xueqin’s *duibuqi* as an introduction to some pearl of great wisdom. Here I offer but a meagre story in his memory. One day I rode my bike through the rear entrance to the Imperial Palace in Beijing at the invitation of Professor Li’s daughter-in-law, who was working in an office at the northwest corner.

This had come about when Li's grandson asked his own mother what happened to people after they die. The mother, rightly considering her father-in-law to be a man of great learning, asked him for an answer. He, in turn, directed her to ask me, without telling her why or mentioning the matter to me. At the time I was a student sent by SOAS with very strict instructions to be involved in no religious work that might harm the relationship between SOAS and Li. Sarah had told me, though, that she had informed him I was a Jesuit priest. We never mentioned this once in any of our meetings. So, there I was at the request of his daughter-in-law cycling into the Palace to talk about the resurrection! I could not help being rather amused, reflecting back on Jesuits of centuries past.

A more important Jesuit friend of Li was Jean Lefevre, who was also self-taught in the field of oracle bone inscriptions. He had great respect for Li, earned by Li's unfailing courtesy and meticulous scholarship. May they both now be united with the ancestors they valued so highly.

*Sarah Allan (response to Edmund Ryden):*

Edmund, this is wonderful and somewhat astonishing. Li did go to a missionary school, but he said that his family weren't Christians and he didn't pay much attention to that aspect of the school. My sense is that he didn't have to attend the religious activities or classes and didn't have any interest in doing so. When we traveled around Europe together, I made a point of taking him to see the great cathedrals and European art in the museums, not just Chinese materials, which he enjoyed very much, but I never had the sense that he was interested in their religious rationale. The odd thing about the accusations of nationalism is that he was so very internationalist. He seemed to think that cultural mixing was a good way forward. Perhaps this was part of that too.

*Edmund Ryden:*

A good scholar knows that there are things he/she does not know.

That is how I would see Prof Li's outlook. He may personally have seen no need for religion or for adopting any other culture, but his mind was not closed. His appreciation of the values of Chinese culture was a healthy appreciation that did not require any denigration of other cultures or ways of thinking. He could advance a thesis on the basis of careful evidence but was always aware that this was provisional and limited since the evidence was limited.

### **Edward L. Shaughnessy 夏含夷 (University of Chicago)**

I knew Li Xueqin (always Li Xiansheng 李先生) for nearly forty years, having first encountered him in the summer of 1979 and then getting

to know him when I attended a meeting of the Association of Chinese Paleography in 1981. I was very grateful to him at that conference for the special respect he showed my own teacher David Nivison; indeed, his generosity of spirit to foreign scholars of all ages and all backgrounds was one of his great virtues (it goes without saying that his scholarly intellect was his greatest virtue).

Li Xiansheng and I had a complicated relationship. We certainly did not see eye to eye on all aspects of scholarship, and at times our differences threatened to blow up into open hostility. However, it is a great testament to his generosity of spirit that we managed to work through those differences and maintained a cordial working relationship throughout the years. He hosted me numerous times at Tsinghua, and I was honored to host him in return on several occasions. I last visited him, in his home, in April 2017, just a few weeks before he entered the hospital. We signed a memorandum of understanding for cooperation between his Center for the Study and Preservation of Unearthed Documents at Tsinghua University and the Creel Center for Chinese Paleography at Chicago, and both of us expressed the desire that this relationship would extend well into the future. We will not again see a scholar the likes of Li Xueqin, but thanks to his manifold contributions the future of our field is secure.

### Francesco Sisci 郗士 (Renmin University)

Professor Li Xueqin was the greatest Chinese historian of his time, a giant whose contributions will only be appreciated, as is right for him, with time, with history. But to me, he was a teacher, or perhaps *the* teacher, the father I felt for many years I had betrayed, or maybe not.

For almost two long patient years he took me by the hand reading Chinese classics. His goal and that of my English teachers, who had sent me to China, Paul Thompson and Sarah Allan, was to train me to become a classical scholar. Yet, it was Li Laoshi who turned me, perhaps unwittingly in another direction. In early 1989, when the air of Beijing was starting to get hot, with the streets about to rumble for the Tiananmen protests, we were plowing through *Hanfeizi* 韓非子. I stopped over a sentence of the ancient master Hanfei, unsure whether I was missing something of his grammar. No, Li Xueqin told me, it was the thinking I didn't get. The ruler must be indirect and oblique, and his close ministers should understand him. The ruler could say "yes" and mean "no," and his ministers should get it. I was stunned and puzzled, I didn't even know whether to say yes or no. Then he casually added "that is Chinese politics ... even now." I had almost a religious revelation, my moment of enlightenment, as Buddhists would put it. He was teaching me Chinese politics. Or maybe not? Was I wrong?

Anyway, Tiananmen disrupted my life. I felt it was not right to continue with my classical studies. I could not, should not get a degree, a badge of honor and glory, when so many had suffered. Moreover, I was burdened with thoughts and memories that for years made me not sleep. Yet had I betrayed all my teachers who had invested so much in me?

For many more years I felt guilty for not pursuing a career in classical Chinese and having instead gone into journalism. Because of this, for decades, I avoided meeting him, feeling guilty for my betrayal, and unsure of how wise it was to seek him out now that I was a journalist in China. Anyway, over twenty years after we had parted in late 1989, I went to visit him at Tsinghua University. We strolled around the campus and, unsolicited, I tried to tell him why I gave up on Chinese classics. He didn't comment. He pointed his finger at an inscription we had before us, at the place where he had taken me. "Think straight" it read. Think straight, he repeated to underscore the point; this is the task of intellectuals.

He had already told me this, twenty years before; I remembered, and remember every time I write.

#### **Helen Wang 汪海嵐 (British Museum)**

It was an honor to be invited to write for Li Xueqin's Birthday volume (*Early China* 35–36) and to draw attention to his little-known work with the China Numismatic Society. However, I think we only talked about this subject once. We met mostly at our kitchen table with experts on Early China (Wang Tao, Sarah Allan and others) and the conversation while we ate was often an extension of their scholarly discussions during the day at SOAS or the British Library. On one occasion he took such pleasure in home-made cake that thereafter I always baked a cake if I knew he was coming or made one while he was there. I may even have taken one all the way to his home in Beijing, but it was a long time ago, and my strongest memories of that visit were of meeting his wife and of the shimmering emerald carpet. It was always lovely to see him, and I will miss him not only for his scholarship but also for his friendship and kindness.

#### **Wang Tao 汪濤 (Art Institute of Chicago)**

I first met with Li Xueqin in late 1986, soon after I arrived at London University. I think it was at a seminar at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), given by Angus Graham, and after the seminar everyone went down together to the pub in the basement; we ordered rounds of drinks and talked for hours. I remembered that Li did not drink any wine or beer, only soft drinks, but he was participating in the discussion.

At that time, Li was collaborating with Sarah on a project studying Chinese bronzes in European collections and setting up an exchange program between SOAS and the Institute of History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. So he spent months in London. We often met at SOAS and walked back to the International House that was a university students' residence where Li had a room. He had an incredible memory, citing books and describing people he came across, always full of vivid details. He liked to tell stories of other famous scholars whom he knew, but he would rarely say anything bad about them. I never saw him getting emotional or upset.

I had become interested in oracle bone inscriptions and I spent days in the SOAS library, tracing oracle bone inscriptions from *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 and reading Li Xiaoding's 李孝定 *Jiaguwen jishi* 甲骨文集釋. One day I took some of my notes to show Li, and he looked at what I had done and asked: "Most oracle bone inscriptions are fragments, but do you know what the original position of each fragment was?" "Do you know if it's an ox scapula or turtle shell?" These questions made me to realize that there is a big difference between studying oracle bone inscriptions and transmitted historical texts. Oracle bones are really archaeological objects and there is a particular materiality to them. When I wrote my first essay on oracle bone inscriptions, Li gave me some detailed comments and encouraged me to continue my work in that direction, which eventually developed into my doctoral thesis.

My contact with Li was intermittent, but he was a mentor to me and to many scholars of my generation and even younger. He always said: "I had no teachers but learnt from everyone I came across. I read whatever I could lay my hands on—this was my way of learning." Looking back I can see how much he influenced me. His writings and his approach to learning has been inspirational for me for the last thirty years and will remain so for the next thirty years—if I can live to Li's age!

**Frances Wood 吳芳思 (British Library) and Beth McKillop 馬克樂 (Victoria and Albert Museum)**

Together with Sarah Allan, Li Xueqin was responsible for the publication of *Oracle Bone Collections in Great Britain* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985). The four volumes consisted of rubbings of all the oracle bones in the UK, in institutions as diverse as Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the Royal Scottish Museums, the Ashmolean, Cambridge University Library, the Percival David Foundation and the British Library. It took a while to convince very skeptical British Library conservators that taking rubbings from the oracle bones would

not harm them, but when they saw the delicacy and care with which Qi Wenxin worked, their doubts were dispelled. As curators, we were delighted with the project, which offered Chinese scholars a far better view of the British Library collections. Drawings and photographs had been made in the early twentieth century, photographs had been taken but rubbings of the inscriptions incised into the oracle bones offered the greatest accuracy and clarity.

Li Xueqin first visited the British Library in 1982. The 1980s were an exciting time when, after decades of Cold War separation, it became possible, with huge efforts on both sides, to connect European curators and professors with their Chinese counterparts. The understanding of China's past was greatly enriched though it is difficult from today's perspective to remember how unexpected and satisfying it was for Chinese and British colleagues to collaborate professionally in this way. In the Library, we were greatly concerned to offer Chinese scholars better access to British collections, particularly through publication, since overseas travel was still difficult. Owing to currency restrictions at the time, it was important to publish in China, and Li's colleagues in the Institute of History were to become leading figures in the publication and digitization of the Dunhuang corpus.

It was always a great pleasure to welcome Li Xueqin, a man of great charm and a model of courtesy, but also a passionate teacher. I remember him addressing SOAS students over a table covered with British Library oracle bones, demonstrating one method of detecting possible forgeries. His voice would rise to a squeak as he indicated "Mei you BURN guode yige pit!," a worrying sign. The 'pits' were shallow depressions scooped out on the back of the bone, to which heat was applied, leaving a dark burn-mark. A pit with an accompanying inscription to which heat had not been applied was suspect ...

#### **Yau Shun-chiu 游順釗 (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France)**

Xueqin Xiansheng was introduced to me by Xigui Xiong 錫圭兄 (Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭) in 1992. He came to Paris twice to participate in academic activities that I hosted. One was the "International Conference on the Centenary of the Discovery of Oracle Bone Inscriptions" in 1999. He made a month long-visit, during which he and his wife stayed in my house.

Before writing this remembrance, I reread his letter, including his more than 4,000 words on the "Gu Han zi shuxie zongxiang yu Ding Gong taowen" 古漢字書寫縱向與丁公陶文 (The Vertical Direction of Early Chinese Characters and the Writing on Pottery from Ding Gong)

manuscript. I was surprised that he did not use a single simplified character, even the character for only, *zhi* 只, was in traditional 祇! In another letter, I only found one—*guo* 国, instead of 國.

In the letter he talked glowingly about my student, Chrystelle Maréchal's family. Her father had cooked him a few dishes and gave him a bottle of wine from '82 when he left. After returning to China, he wrote to me: "the wine has been properly stored, but I really cannot bring myself to drink it." It was during the French tennis tournament, the French Open, and at the end of the letter he wrote, "I'd like to watch a tennis match on TV with you again."

### Crispin Williams 魏克彬 (University of Kansas)

I was introduced to Li Xueqin by Sarah Allan as a graduate student and, from that time on, he was always extremely supportive and kind to me. I was also fortunate enough to begin teaching at Dartmouth College in the fall of 1998 when Li was in residence as a visiting fellow. I have fond memories of sitting in on his classes and lectures, and of social events and trips to local scenic spots with him and his wife Xu Weiyong 徐維瑩. I particularly remember using the kitchen at their lakeside residence one winter's day, to bake a very rich chocolate cake which we enjoyed after a meal of delicious *baozi* cooked by Xu Weiyong. On future trips to China, Li and Xu would welcome me and my family to their apartment, where we would drink tea and talk. Li would always give me thoughtful and practical advice about my own research and collaborative projects. Such intellectual generosity to me was an example of Li's great and enthusiastic support for international collaboration on research into Early China. Major collaborative projects, such as the series of conferences and workshops into excavated texts organized with Sarah Allan, allowed and encouraged scholars and students from all over the world to participate in the research into these hugely important new discoveries. The significance of Li's own research goes without saying, but I would also point out his inspiring leadership, so clearly demonstrated in the speed at which the Tsinghua slips have and continue to be published in annotated editions of the highest quality. Li Xueqin's passing is truly a great loss to his colleagues, students, and the whole field of Early China.

### Robin D. S. Yates 葉山 (McGill University)

The first time I met Li Xiansheng was in the late 1970s at Harvard University, when I was still a graduate student under the supervision of my *laoshi*, Professor Chang Kwang-chih. KC had invited Li Xiansheng for his first visit to the United States. I was working on the legal texts from

Tomb no. 11, Shuihudi 睡虎地, at the time and I remember asking him about the contents of the almanac texts found in the same tomb. Li Xiansheng diplomatically responded that they were of no academic interest, being only *mixin* 迷信. Needless to say, my question was not exactly appropriate at the time, shortly after the end of the Cultural Revolution and long before the documents were published and recognized for their intrinsic value for understanding early popular religious beliefs and practices. But Li Xiansheng was very tolerant of my faux pas.

Subsequently, while he was still Director of the Institute of History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, he sponsored my 1992 research trip under the auspices of the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China to study the Yinqueshan 銀雀山 documents. He generously wrote innumerable letters of introduction for me when I reached Beijing. Although they were not always successful in gaining access to the relevant scholars and documents, he was always courteous, encouraging, and supportive of my academic efforts. He hosted me for dinner with Grace Fong on a number of occasions, including a memorable banquet at the Dasanyuan Restaurant, with Xu Pingfang 徐蘋芳, Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, and others. He told me that he had started out his academic career assisting Hou Wailu 侯外廬 in preparing his magisterial history of Chinese philosophy and especially focused on the intellectual history of the Ming dynasty. I was quite surprised, not expecting at all that Li Xiansheng's range of interest went that far. But perhaps Hou's own interest in comparing Chinese with Western philosophy encouraged Li in his turn to reach out to and support young Chinese, Asian, and Western scholars such as myself. I shall always be grateful to him for his mentorship and kindness over many years. Of course, his immense learning and prodigious record of publishing has enriched the world of scholarship for all time.