

E. A. Kracke, Jr.

1908–1976

The death of Edward A. Kracke, Jr., on 8 July 1976, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, brought to an end the career of a distinguished pioneer scholar in Chinese history; a dedicated teacher and helper of younger scholars; and a kind, thoughtful, and truly gentle gentleman who epitomized in Occidental form the best in the scholarly and humanistic tradition of Chinese civilization, which he knew so well and loved so dearly.

Born in 1908 in Brooklyn, N.Y., Ed Kracke was raised largely in Chicago and in Europe; he attended Harvard University, winning his A.B., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees there in 1932, 1935, and 1941. His undergraduate studies had focused on architecture and fine arts; but, inspired by a course on Oriental art by Langdon Warner, he turned his attention as a graduate student to the study of Chinese history at a time when this field was still considered an exotic subject on the periphery of normal scholarly endeavor. Since American universities in the 1930s did not have much formal instruction on Chinese history, he and his bride Joan went abroad in 1935 for a year's study at the University of Paris and then three years between 1936 and 1940 in Peking. World War II deflected him for a while from historical studies, while he served from 1942 to 1945 in a research capacity in the Office of Strategic Services in Washington and then for another year in the Department of State. Having gone to the University of Chicago in 1946 as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Chinese, he remained there to become a cornerstone of Chinese historical studies in Chicago. He achieved the post of Professor of Chinese Literature and Institutions in 1960, served as chairman and director of various committees, programs, and centers, and finally retired in 1973. In the meantime, he had served from 1954 to 1957 as a director and the Editor of the Monograph Series of this association (then known as the Far Eastern Association) and in 1972/73 as the President of its venerable parent organization, the American Oriental Society.

When Ed Kracke embarked on his career in Chinese historical studies, Western scholarship was still largely concentrated on ancient China and the nineteenth century. A few European scholars were venturing into the Six Dynasties and the T'ang, but the Sung and Ming Dynasties remained virtually untouched. He selected as his particular field of exploration the political institutions of the Sung, especially the civil service system, which in many ways achieved its apogee at that time. In an article in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* in 1947, "Family vs. Merit in Chinese Civil Service Examinations under the Empire," he began for the first time to give shape and body to the vague notions then held about the role of the civil service examinations in pre-Ch'ing times. In 1953, he followed with a full book on the sub-

ject, *Civil Service in Early Sung China, 960–1027*. This small volume was an exciting pioneer work, opening up one of the most significant aspects of China's great history; but it was also, at the same time, a work of definitive scholarship. He worked with such care and precision that, even when he was forging into new fields, most of what he wrote would never need redoing. He continued to produce many more short articles of meticulous and significant scholarship. The latest was a study of the shape and nature of the Sung capital, "Sung K'ai-feng: Pragmatic Metropolis and Formalistic Capital," which appeared in 1975 as a chapter in the book *Crises and Prosperity in Sung China*.

Compared with some scholars, Ed Kracke's total literary product was relatively small in pages, though it was great in content. He wrote with extreme care, making each statement as accurate, clear, and brief as possible. Days of scholarly endeavor would lie behind a single sentence. Annotation was copious and thoroughly checked. Each paragraph was carefully, even beautifully, crafted.

It was for this reason that his writings, while serving as pioneer ventures into new fields, could at the same time stand the test of time as classic, definitive statements. He used his energy to save his reader's time. In this age of prolix publication, when all scholars feel that an avalanche of books and journals is tumbling down on their heads, his economy and care of statement illustrate an ideal that other scholars should strive to attain.

A university scholar is not just a publisher of research; he is also a teacher. Ed Kracke was a great teacher, in particular for advanced students wishing to follow in his footsteps into the exciting world of the great political achievements of the Chinese during the middle span of their long history. He gave himself unstintingly to these students, correcting their papers and theses with meticulous care, always ready to give council in person and in later years by letters. That today there is a very sturdy band of fine scholars working in the rich field of medieval Chinese political institutions is in no small measure due to his pioneer efforts, his inspiration, and his generous and even self-sacrificing devotion of his energies to his students.

A scholar is not to be judged solely by his publications and his teaching. Ed Kracke was also a helpful colleague and a thoughtful friend to those privileged to work with him or know him. No one could have better exemplified the East Asian ideal of harmony. No one could have been more thoughtful of others. He must have felt inner strains, but he always faced the world with soothing calm and a quiet though delightful sense of humor.

Ed Kracke was a shy and sometimes self-effacing man, but in his scholarship and his person he blended harmoniously the best in both the Western and Chinese traditions of the scholar-gentleman. We have lost in him a great pioneer scholar, a dedicated teacher, and a noble friend, but we have been greatly enriched by knowing him and by sharing in the enduring fruits of his scholarship.

EDWIN O. REISCHAUER

Harvard University

Professor E. A. Kracke, Jr., In Memoriam

熱心不作寒心嘆
南宗何如北宗官

His warm feelings never permit chill-feeling sighs
Late Sung how could it match Early Sung Civil Service

James T. C. Liu