

REMEMBRANCES OF DAVID KEIGHTLEY

Miranda Brown

I met David Keightley for the first time almost twenty-five years ago. It was the first day of college, and I had decided on a whim to take a class on Chinese history. Keightley's early China class was on offer that term, and I had thought to myself, "Why not? China is after all a big place, and if you study its history, you might as well start at the beginning." Needless to say, I never got beyond that introduction. By the end of that fateful first semester, my path was clear.

For me, the magic of Keightley lay in something other than his famous power to animate old bones. Keightley had managed to instill in me a dogged independence. He discouraged his students from hewing to any party line (he was not a fan of feminist archaeology or Marxist historiography or deconstruction, for example). Deference, respect for authority, reverence of antiquity—none of these had a place in his vision of scholarship. These were the qualities of his ancient Chinese subjects and not the modern scholars he trained. Accordingly, he exhorted even his introductory students to go beyond parroting the professor, or as he told us on the first day of school, "Don't tell me what I think; I already know what I think. I want to know what *you* think."

Those words have stuck. I have spent the last twenty-five years telling him what I think about early China.

Miranda Brown 董慕達,
University of Michigan;
email: mdbrown@umich.edu.

David D. Buck

I first knew David Keightley in the late 1960s when we were both students at the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language Studies at the National Taiwan University in Taipei. He was tall, spare, careful in his speech and even then clearly absorbed in the study of Shang dynasty. He joined the History Department at Berkeley in 1969 and began a distinguished career based on the study oracle bones. Deciphering the ancient divination texts was only the first step for David. He was fascinated by how these materials could be used to understand the political and religious life in the Shang era.

David was self-contained and had a no-nonsense approach to life. He commuted to campus by bicycle and ate sandwiches from a brown paper bag at lunch. To me he seemed always to be looking for more time

and more source material to elucidate Chinese history of the Shang era. Strong and firm in his judgments about the Chinese past, David was modest and plain in personal habits.

Logic and science buttressed all his work. Much of David's voluminous writing dealt with highly specialist studies, but to me his best work, as found in Loewe and Shaughnessy, *The Cambridge History of Modern China* (1999) was straightforward, clear, and encompassed wide familiarity with all manner of studies concerning ancient China. He was a remarkably dedicated and productive scholar.

David D. Buck 包德威,
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee;
email: davebuck@uwm.edu.

Roderick B. Campbell

In 2012, David Keightley signed a memorandum to donate 990 volumes of his collection of books dedicated to early Chinese paleography, art history, and archaeology to the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World. This collection included both fundamental basics of oracle-bone studies such as the *Jiaguwen heji* and *Jiaguwenzi gulin* as well as rare early studies from the 1930s through '60s. The collection is especially strong in mid-twentieth-century Japanese scholarship, containing many out-of-print volumes not available in the library collections of the greater New York area. Indeed, with so many of the classic works of Chinese paleography out of print, it would have been very difficult indeed to build a collection of this strength from scratch. For those like myself who are avid followers of Professor Keightley's scholarship, the marginalia in some of the books add priceless (and sometimes amusing) glimpses into his thinking.

As someone whose entry into early China studies was in great measure sparked and nurtured through the writings of David Keightley, I feel especially grateful for the donation. Indeed, there is something fascinatingly biographical about a scholar's library—their intellectual journey mapped out in books and marginalia. In it we can see both a collector of classic works from before his own career and a tireless accumulator of the latest works, many post-dating his retirement by over a decade. There is a value in the collection of a great scholar that goes beyond the individual books, it is, moreover, the outline of a career, a great adventure of reading and studying, containing vague forms of possible subjects, suggested maps of future research.

With this gift, Professor Keightley bequeathed the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World a world-class foundation for the study of early China and especially the Shang dynasty. It is my hope that

scholarly work at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World will justify Professor Keightley's confidence and generosity, and that we will build upon and carry forward his legacy for future generations of Early Chinese epigraphers and archaeologists.

Roderick B. Campbell 江雨德,
The Institute for the Study of the Ancient World,
New York University;
email: rbc2@nyu.edu.

Jonathan Chaves

I am very saddened by the news of David Keightley's death. David was a true giant in the field. He and I were fellow graduate students at Columbia and I will never forget the moment when he emerged from the Tombs (the four underground floors of Kent Hall's East Asian library) to inform me excitedly, "Jonathan! I have just had in my hands a Han Dynasty crossbow trigger!" David knew that I was working on Sung-Dynasty poet Mei Yao-ch'en for my dissertation, and that Mei had a remarkable poem on a Han Dynasty crossbow trigger. He had, incredibly, actually found one among the objects housed at Columbia by the Sackler estate. And he was that collegial and supportive that, in the middle of his own enormously important work, he would recall that a fellow student, myself, had an interest in this arcane subject!

May God bless his memory.

Jonathan Chaves,
The George Washington University;
email: jchaves@gwu.edu.

Constance A. Cook

I worked with David Keightley in the 1980s as a student of excavated texts and as his research assistant. I learned not only his method of note-taking but also to look up from total immersion in the paleographical details to examine larger historical and religious questions. Of particular interest was the role of ancestral spirits. I have continued to work on questions we discussed and had hoped to mail him a copy of my forthcoming book, *Ancestors, Kings and the Dao* (Harvard Asia publications), later this year. Now, I will simply take it as testimony that, while he may be dead, he is not gone.

Constance A. Cook 柯鶴立,
Lehigh University;
email: cac8@lehigh.edu.

Marián Gálik

The news about the passing away of Professor David N. Keightley, one of the greatest scholars of our age in Chinese studies, saddened me. I was informed about his suffering in the last years of his life and was very sorry for him. In recent years, I learned much from him and his monumental works on Shang Dynasty in relation to the sacred time, oracle-bones inscriptions, and special theocracy in the Shang era of the Bronze Age, in which I am at present interested. I am studying the sacred time and space of Israel, Judah, the Levant and Near East in comparison with China. I was happy to meet David Keightley during my US visit, on May 2, 1990 at the University of California at Berkeley where I gave a lecture on some aspects on inter-literariness in Comparative Literature. Professor Cyril Birch introduced me to him and to Professor Lothar von Falkenhausen. I am sure that David N. Keightley's works will be read by the scholars of the next generations.

Marián Gálik 高利克,
Institute of Oriental and African Studies, Slovak Academy of Sciences;
email: galikm2@gmail.com.

Lothar von Falkenhausen

David and I first met in Beijing in 1981, but it was not until my 1988–1990 sojourn at Stanford that we became more closely acquainted. I attended his seminars and he gave me detailed input on both the contents and the style of my writings; in return I commented, often critically, on his voluminous unpublished manuscripts. David's advice helped me find my bearings in American academia. He sponsored my first book for publication, and he generously introduced me to his circle of colleagues at Berkeley and elsewhere. Only much later did I realize what a privilege this was. During subsequent decades, our relations remained extremely cordial, and we met whenever possible.

As probably the first person in the Western world to profess pre-Imperial China in a History Department, David felt responsible for building his field. Hence, he launched the journal *Early China*, now approaching its fortieth issue. Both as an editor and as a scholar, he was a perfectionist. His own writings remain seminal; he aimed to make Chinese data relevant to wider issues in Ancient History and the Humanities. The resulting smoothing-out of differences between China and other civilizations is no doubt intentional.

David made extremely high demands both on himself and on others, and I sometimes wonder whether I could have measured up if I had been his student. His demeanor, humor, and ways of dispensing

kindness were unique. He still mystifies me in some respects. But I shall always be grateful for his timely help and enduring inspiration.

Lothar von Falkenhausen 羅泰,
UCLA;
email: lothar@humnet.ucla.edu.

Zev Handel

I learned the basics of reading the oracle-bone inscriptions from David Keightley in the mid-1990s, as a graduate student at UC Berkeley. At the time, I didn't fully appreciate how special this opportunity was. I understood, of course, that the bones themselves were special. I remember the particular thrill when, one day, David brought a small piece of inscribed bone in to class and passed it among the students, giving us the chance to handle a physical specimen of the 3,000-year-old artifacts that we had been studying through rubbings and transcriptions. But what I only grew to gradually appreciate over subsequent decades was how special David himself was, and what it meant to learn from him. There are many others who worked more closely with him over a longer period as students, scholars, and colleagues than I did. I am not a historian and only took two courses from David on my way to acquiring a doctoral degree in linguistics. But I stayed in occasional touch with David over the years, and came to more deeply appreciate his qualities as a wonderful man, an excellent scholar, and a fine teacher. What I learned from him has informed my approach to the history of the Chinese language and its writing system. I feel quite proud that the final paper I wrote for his course History 281, in 1997, merited a citation in a footnote of his 2000 book *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200–1045 B.C.)*. I was deeply honored to be invited to participate in the 2011 celebration of his 80th *sui* that was held at Berkeley in 2011, which gave me the chance to publicly acknowledge his impact on my own life and work, as well as his enormous contributions to our understanding of Shang history, epigraphic texts, and material culture. I treasure the opportunity I had to learn from him and to benefit from his generosity of spirit and intellectual brilliance.

Zev Handel 韓哲夫,
University of Washington;
email: zhandel@u.washington.edu.

Kuan-yun Huang

For History 9A, a survey course on Chinese civilization that David taught in the Spring of 1997, one of the readings that he assigned was his "Clean

Hands and Shining Helmets: Heroic Action in Early Chinese and Greek Culture.” This, as I later learned, was the outcome for one of the projects that he had initiated upon receiving the MacArthur “genius” award in 1986. Written with the same clarity, precision, and authority that are characteristic of all of David’s writings, the piece compares ancient China and Greece in broad and sweeping strokes, and we debated it in a small group in our discussion section. One afternoon early in the term, I knocked on the door of David’s office in Dwinelle Hall and mustered enough courage to tell him that I thought it would be more appropriate to compare Herodotus with Sima Qian, rather than the eclectic and disjointed accounts of the *Zuo zhuan*. David’s eyes lit up. “Wonderful idea,” he said, in an encouraging tone that I would never forget. Upon my next visit, he took the trouble to tell me that he had quoted me to a colleague. To a freshman who had aspirations to be a scholar, this meant the world. In many ways that is where it all started for me, not so much my babble as the invitation to occupy a seat in that office, to challenge, assert, and be treated every bit as an intellectual equal, provided that you could keep up. In countless subsequent visits, I watched David climb up and down his bookshelves on a moveable ladder, pull out notecards from his cross-referenced card catalog, and jot down quick notes so he could get back to you in an email. The conscientiousness and professionalism left an imprint in me. As I think back on those years when I had the good fortune to be a student in some of his last classes at Berkeley, it is these mundane details, rather than any grand undertaking or overriding agenda, that appear more palpable than ever. They teach you how to be a scholar, and through them you begin to understand why.

Kuan-yun Huang 黃冠雲,
National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan;
email: kuanyun@mx.nthu.edu.tw.

Lionel M. Jensen

David Keightley was the consummate teacher and inexhaustible researcher. This is well known. It may be less familiar that he was a devoted husband and father of utmost probity. As well, he was for me a dear friend. I was blessed with the opportunity to learn of his enduring traits firsthand, for David and Vannie brought me into their household where we shared dinners and he invited me to gatherings for the most imminent Sinologists from China, Japan, Europe and the United States. There were other aspects of our friendship: David’s request that I work with Richard and Steven to enhance their basketball skills, to join him in coaching the Albany boys’ soccer team. I learned far more than ancient

Chinese history, including the proper use of that and which. We learned together and in this way formed a life-long bond.

Study with David was an excavation of a vast reliquary of works from antiquity to the late Tang on Chinese cosmology, history, literature, philosophy, and religion. The rewards of this work remain with me today. A prominent reason for this enduring influence was David's high expectations of his students that inspired them to obtain his recognition. From this collective aspiration came a delightful music carefully orchestrated by his exacting demand of our mastery of his deeply loved material.

David once told me that in China "the dead are dead but they are never gone." He remains among us and I know that his memory will be a blessing for all time.

Lionel M. Jensen 詹啓華,
University of Notre Dame;
email: jensen.21@nd.edu.

Steven I. Levine

I am saddened by the news of David Keightley's passing. Although I never had the pleasure of meeting him in person and my own work in the contemporary China field was at the other end of his outstanding work on ancient China, I viewed him with great respect both as a scholar and a humanist involved in a common struggle. Allow me to indulge some old memories. As an untenured assistant professor at Columbia University (1973–76), with the support of intellectual giants like Wm. Theodore deBary, then the provost, John Fairbank, Zvi Schiffrin, Frank Shulman, and many others, I initiated the International Committee for Vitaly A. Rubin that I ran out of my upper right-hand desk drawer in my office at the East Asian Institute. It was Anne Birrell, then a graduate student in East Asian Languages and Literatures at Columbia, who suggested that as part of the campaign to free Vitaly Rubin, I translate his book on ancient Chinese thinkers, the Russian original of which my own mentor Benjamin I. Schwartz had reviewed in a scholarly journal, I think the *Journal of Asian Studies*. David Keightley's intellectual and moral support during the campaign to persuade the Soviets to allow Rubin to emigrate to Israel was indispensable. I echo the hope that his friends, colleagues, former students, and others keep alive their memories of Professor Keightley for many years to come.

Steven I. Levine 梁 思文,
University of Montana.
email: Steven.Levine@mso.umt.edu

Li Ling 李零

Prof. David Keightley has “mounted the crane and flown west.” I have two special memories in particular.

I first visited the US in 1990, when I received an invitation to give a talk at Berkeley. My talk was chaired by Prof. Keightley and I recall that it had something to do with numerology. When I gave it, he was especially interested in the direction of Chinese tombs and asked a great many questions.

My impression was that for a sinologist of his age, or perhaps even older than I thought, he was always unusually modest and completely without that “I’m the best” manner. The way he treated people was extremely polite, a little like the Chinese “old etiquette,” which made people feel very genial.

In the Spring of 2000, Keightley, Qiu Xigui, Edward Shaughnessy, Ken’ichi Takashima, Christoph Harbsmeier and I did research together at the Norwegian Academy in Oslo. For two months, together from morning to evening, we were very happy. The only unfortunate matter was that except for Shaughnessy and myself, many people had various minor and major health problems, including Keightley’s wife, who broke her arm. On the day that we parted, she asked me, “Will you miss us?” I said, “Of course.” Afterwards, we continued to correspond. In December of that year, in the letter that I wrote to Prof. Keightley, I said, “How is your wife’s broken arm? Please tell her that I do miss both of you and I hope that she has already recovered completely.”

Li Ling 李零,
Peking University;
email: liling@pku.edu.cn.

Li Xueqin 李學勤

The arrival of the news of the death of Prof. David Keightley of the University of California gave me a profound sense of shock, and I find it difficult to adequately express my mournful feelings. Prof. Keightley was an old friend of the Chinese academic community. I had the good fortune of getting to know him more than forty years ago and received much inspiration and assistance from him. He was one of the Western sinologists of the contemporary period with the richest accomplishments. On the basis of a deep sinological training, he threw himself into research on the historical culture of the Yin-Shang period. At the same

time, he absorbed new theories from modern linguistics and social sciences to develop new aspects of his field of research. His representative work, *Sources of Shang History*, combined the strengths of Chinese and Western oracle-bone scholarship and had very far reaching influence. This is something that the scholarly community cannot forget. I hope that in the not too distant future, Prof. Keightley's various important works can be gathered together and translated into Chinese, so that Chinese readers can better understand and commemorate Prof. Keightley's outstanding accomplishments.

Li Xueqin 李學勤,
Tsinghua University;
email: xqli@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn.

Paul Ropp

In 1985 I invited David Keightley to contribute an essay for an edited collection I was hoping to publish on Chinese civilization, aimed at a lay audience and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. The idea was to introduce non-scholars to some key features of Chinese civilization, with some attention to comparisons between China and other civilizations, particularly Western civilization since the volume was to be aimed at Western readers.

Despite very heavy demands on his time, David responded with enthusiasm to my request, and ended up offering me *three* different versions of an essay. We eventually used the shortest and simplest of his three versions, which probably pained him because over-simplification was something he resisted like the plague.

To be an "editor" for David was an intellectual adventure, and an education-in-itself. When a copy editor objected to the "male-centric" language in a few places he bristled and refused to make any changes lest he distort the original Chinese meanings. He was more attentive to the details of language than anyone else I worked with.

At the same time, David was supremely sympathetic to my goal of communicating scholarly insights with an audience of non-scholars, and wonderfully responsive to my occasional suggestions.

Among my treasured notes is a handwritten one from him on March 1, 1988, in response to my draft introduction for the book.

Paul: Congratulations on seeing this through. The Introduction looks good and I will not "undercut" it by whatever revisions I make in my "broader" version. I will get you final copy by 1 July, as you ask. Best,
David

Of course he met the deadline, and his essay became the one in *Heritage of China* that is most often cited and reprinted for course use.

Paul Ropp 羅溥洛,
Clark University;
email: propp@clarku.edu.

Edward L. Shaughnessy

Dear David,

I have been allotted 250 words to express my feelings for you. How is that enough even to begin to describe all that you have meant to me over these last four decades, not to mention all that you have meant to the field of Early China Studies over the last five decades? It goes without saying that you taught me everything I know about oracle-bone inscriptions, though I resisted even trying to learn everything that you knew about them. More important than that, you taught me much of what I know about scholarly method; how well I learned those lessons I'll leave to others to evaluate. More important still, you taught me any number of important lessons, both explicit and implicit, about how to conduct myself as a scholar, and these are lessons that I continue to take to heart and hope that I put into practice at least occasionally. Finally, you showed me how to face aging and a disabling illness with equanimity, a lesson that fortunately I haven't needed yet, but one that I hope I will recall when my time comes.

I have scores of memories of you, both scholarly and private, some of which I have shared with my own students and others of which will just have to remain private. But I suppose the main thing to say is that I feel very honored to have been able to call you a teacher and a friend.

Rest in peace, my friend.

Ed

Edward L. Shaughnessy 夏含夷,
University of Chicago;
email: eshaugn@uchicago.edu

Frank Joseph Shulman

Among the Soviet Jews who applied for exit visas to emigrate to Israel during the early 1970s was Vitaly A. Rubin, a specialist in early Chinese history and philosophy, a senior research fellow in Chinese Studies at Moscow's Institute of Oriental Studies, and a leader in the Soviet Jewish emigration movement. He and his wife Inessa became "refusedniks"

when their applications were officially rejected. A nearly five-year long international campaign to persuade the government to reverse its decision ensued. David Keightley played an active role early on in that campaign—and at an early point in his own professional career. He joined with me, Harold Z. Schiffrin, Steven I. Levine, Wm. Theodore deBary, Lucien Bianco, Rhoads Murphey, and many other American, European, and Israeli scholars engaged in China studies in undertaking a concerted effort that finally culminated in success in 1976.

For some further information in this regard, please see:

Harold Z. Schiffrin. "Obituary: VITALY ARONOVICH RUBIN (1923–1981)." *Journal of Asian Studies* 41.3 (May 1, 1982), 645. search.proquest.com/openview/.../1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1817327.

Vitaly A. Rubin. *Individual and State in Ancient China: Essays on Four Chinese Philosophers*. Translated by Steven I. Levine. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976. xxix, 149 pp.

"The Fate of Rubin," by L. Carrington Goodrich. *New York Review of Books*, October 3, 1974. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1974/10/03/the-fate-of-rubin/>

Moreover, he was the lead contributor to the volume entitled *Explorations in Early Chinese Cosmology*, edited by Henry Rosemont Jr. (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), that several of his colleagues and he dedicated to the memory of Vitaly A. Rubin. Additional information about David Keightley and his connection with Vitaly Rubin may be found through a search of the Internet. In addition, I have a number of files and copies of personal correspondence with David Keightley that document his efforts on behalf of Vitaly Rubin, all of which I eventually intend to deposit in an appropriate institutional archive.

May David Keightley's wonderful assistance to other scholars be remembered for many years to come!

Frank Joseph Shulman 蘇文, Bibliographer,
Editor and Consultant for Reference Publications in Asian Studies;
email: fshulman@umd.edu.