

ZHANG ZHENGLANG 張政烺 (1912–2005)

Zhang Zhenglang 張政烺 (*zi* Wanfeng 苑峰), one of the most beloved figures in the field of early China studies, passed away 29 January 2005 after a long illness; he was ninety-two years old. His lengthy scholarly career extended from the early years of the Institute of History and Philology of the Academia Sinica (*Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所), to the Institute of History of the Chinese Academy of (Social) Sciences (*Zhongguo [Shehui] kexueyuan Lishi yanjiusuo* 中國[社會]科學院歷史研究所), of which he was a founding member. During most of his many years with the Institute of History, he was concurrently vice general editor of *Zhonghua shuju* 中華書局 in charge of editing their famous punctuated editions of the Chinese dynastic histories. Although his scholarly contribution might seem minimal if measured only by his own publications (his entire scholarly output has just been collected and published as *Zhang Zhenglang wenshi lunji* 張政烺文史論集,¹ it is enormous when measured by the work of his students, who constitute a veritable Who's Who of contemporary early China studies in China. His door was always open to foreign scholars as well, and all who visited him in his modest home across from the Institute of History would attest to his great generosity of time and information.

Professor Zhang was born April 15, 1912, in Rongcheng 榮成 county, Shandong, and carried a very heavy Shandong accent with him throughout his life. He received a traditional education at home before enrolling in the History Department of Peking University, from which he was graduated in 1936. Upon graduation, he was appointed as a librarian in the Institute of History and Philology, and was responsible for developing the fledgling Institute's library on a very modest budget. He claimed that this taught him valuable lessons about editions and textual history; he learned these lessons well and became almost legendary in his later years for his encyclopedic command of these fields. Shortly after joining the Institute, the task of moving the 130,000 volumes of the library from Changsha 長沙 (whence they had been moved from Nanjing 南京) to Nanxi 南溪, Sichuan, was entrusted to him; that he accomplished this

1. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004.

without losing a volume is probably due more to his love of books than to any native logistical abilities.

In 1946 he was appointed to a professorship in the History Department of his *alma mater*, Peking University. This perhaps saved him from having to decide whether to move yet again with the Institute of History and Philology when Academia Sinica went into exile in Taiwan. In 1954, he became a member of the preparatory committee of the Institute of History, with the rank of Researcher (*yanjiuyuan* 研究員), and remained in that position throughout the rest of his life.

Zhang Zhenglang never published a book of his own. However, he did publish one hundred scholarly articles on topics ranging from oracle-bone and bronze inscriptions down to Song and Ming textual histories. With the discovery of the Mawangdui 馬王堆 library in 1973, he was entrusted with the editing of the *Yi jing* 易經 manuscript, a task which unfortunately remained uncompleted when illness finally overtook his faculties in the mid and late 1990s. However, it did lead to the one great scholarly discovery with which he is usually associated. In 1979, at the first meeting of the Chinese Paleography Association (Zhongguo Guwenzi Xuehui 中國古文字學會) in Changchun 長春, Jilin, participants from Shaanxi province brought with them photographs of the recently excavated Zhouyuan 周原 oracle bones, on which were inscribed groups of symbols that had theretofore gone undeciphered. Fresh from his work with the Mawangdui *Yi jing*, Zhang recognized the symbols as numerals, and surmised that their grouping in sets of six represented the original form of *Yi jing* hexagrams. That night he retreated to his hotel room and penned the first draft of his study “Shi shi Zhou chu qingtongqi mingwen zhong de Yi gua” 試釋周初青銅器銘文中的易卦, which was quickly published² and translated in *Early China* as “An Interpretation of the Divinatory Inscriptions on Early Chou Bronzes.”³ This study remains one of the most frequently cited accounts of the origin of *Yi jing* divination.

The alacrity with which Zhang Zhenglang penned this influential study was very much out of character for him. I remember well interpreting for him at a conference in Berkeley in 1980, when one of the participants urged him to make a point faster. Zhang’s response, in his thick Shandong accent, was delivered at his usual deliberate pace (as if a 78 rpm record were played at 33 rpm): “As for me, when I walk, I walk very slowly; when I eat, I eat very slowly; when I talk, I talk very slowly” 我這個人, 走路走得很慢, 吃飯吃得很慢, 說話也說得很慢. He was certainly self-reflective about this nature. Famed as a calligrapher,

2. *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 1980.4, 3–15.

3. *Early China* 6 (1980–81), 80–96.

one of the last of the countless scrolls that he brushed came at the request of the newsletter *Zhongguo Shehui kexueyuan tongxun* 中國社會科學通訊 for its New Year's 1997 issue. Since 1997 was a year of the ox, he wrote "With the diligent and steady spirit of the ox, Let us make contributions to the two cultures" 以牛的勤懇、踏實的精神，為兩個文明做出貢獻. He chose this as his parting advice to scholars of early China, an ideal that he personified throughout his long life.

Edward L. Shaughnessy