

INTERVIEWS WITH LI XUEQIN: THE LIFE OF A CHINESE HISTORIAN IN TUMULTUOUS TIMES

Part One

When Li Xueqin was born in Beijing on 28 March, 1933, the Republic of China was in power, with its capital in Nanjing, and the Japanese occupied Manchuria. On 29 July 1937 Japanese troops invaded Beijing and brought it under control in little more than a week. The occupation of Beijing lasted until the Japanese surrender in August 1945. The People's Liberation Army entered Beijing in the end of January of 1949 and on 1 October 1949, when Li Xueqin was sixteen, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China. This period of warfare was followed by periods of political turmoil which often centered around intellectuals — thought reform in the early fifties, the anti-rightist campaigns and the Great Leap Forward of the late fifties and early sixties, the Cultural Revolution from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies.

Li's formal education came to an end with the closing of the Philosophy Department at Tsinghua University in 1952 (as he discusses below) and he had only one year at university. Today, he is generally recognized as the pre-eminent Chinese historian, both in China and abroad. This reputation is based upon an extraordinarily extensive corpus of scholarly works that ranges over most aspects of early China studies — paleography, archaeology, textual history, excavated texts, numismatics, etc. Although he has written many single-authored and co-authored books, he has specialized in short essays on specific topics in which he draws upon an unrivalled breadth and depth of erudition to propose new ideas. The essays are written in a clear, direct, logical style and are published in a wide variety of journals, newspapers, and conference volumes, and then collected and published as single volumes by many different publishers. At least twenty such volumes are already in print. Almost all scholars of early China have read some of this work and most have cited it in some of their own writing. How did Li do this — how did he manage to accomplish so much and in such tumultuous times?

*I have known Li Xueqin since he was a Visiting Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge University in 1981. When we decided to dedicate this volume of *Early China* to him on his eightieth birthday, I planned to write a biographical sketch focusing on his early life and intellectual development. With this in mind, I interviewed him at his home in Beijing (December 2010). The interviews were recorded and Yu Changqing 于常青 of the Institute of History later transcribed them for me. Reading through the transcribed interviews, I realized that his own account of his life in his own words was of more interest than any biography I might write. So, I have translated the interviews with only minimal editing to*

make them read more fluently. My interviews covered only the period before I met him and we began collaborating on various projects in the early 1980s. A further interview, by Wang Tao, about his later life follows herein (Part Two).

Sarah Allan

Childhood and Education

SA: Let's start with your family—who were your parents and where were you born?

LiXq: My father worked at Peking Union Medical College (PUMC, Xiehe Yixueyuan 協和醫學院). PUMC was a union of the medical schools of the missionary colleges in Beijing. His field was nutrition—they had a nutrition section, which was responsible for the nutrition of all the people who worked in the hospital and of the patients staying there, including the preparation of their food. He worked there a very long time.

I was born in Beijing. My mother was a year older than my father. My father was born in 1901, so they had me quite late. The year my mother was born was *gengzi* 庚子—1900—the year of the Boxer Rebellion. My father's year was *xinchou* 辛丑. They were both over thirty when they had me.

I was a very unusual child from the time I was small. This influenced my whole life. From the time I was born, my health was very poor. I didn't have any brothers or sisters. Before me, my mother had two pregnancies, but both children died. One was a miscarriage; the other died soon after birth. I think the first was a boy and the second a girl. She didn't like to talk about it. I was the third. Although my health was poor, I learned to read very early on. I remember being able to read when I was only so high (gestures).

My father and I both attended the same high school. He studied at the Peking Academy (Huiwen 匯文 School) in the 1920s.¹ When he was there, it was different from what it was like later on. It was a very large school. Part of it was a university, which later became part of Yenching University. The school belonged to a church; in Chinese, they were called *Weili gonghui* 衛理公會 (Wesleyan, i.e. Methodist). Because I was not a Christian, I didn't pay attention to that aspect of the school and never became very familiar with it. When I was a student there, the religious

1. At the beginning of this interview, Li Xueqin gave me a copy of the schools' alumni magazine, *Huiwen Xiaoyou* 匯文校友 2007.2, which includes a number of articles concerning him, including reminiscences of his classmates and one of his own, a brief resumé, etc. For the history of the Peking Academy, see their website at www.huiwen.edu.cn.

aspect was no longer very strong, but when my father was a student, it was a typical church school. Many of the teachers were foreigners. Of course, they weren't all Americans; some were from other countries. That school was very famous in Beijing. It was one of the first (modern) schools in Beijing and is over 150 years old now.

SA: Did your father go to university?

LXq: The education system at that time was such that I can't say that he received a university diploma, but he was at PUMC continuously from the time he was at Huiwen school until he went south to work. He had some other jobs, but his most important one was at PUMC. My father's English was extremely good. Everyone, even foreigners, said that if you heard him speaking English behind a closed door you couldn't tell whether the person inside was a Chinese or a foreigner. But he didn't teach me a single word of English.² My father was a very unusual person. His approach to me was that he gave me complete support, but it was completely free. He didn't pay attention to anything (I did), and he didn't teach me anything. He just sent me to the school that he studied at. He was that sort of person.

According to psychologists, people's memories go back to about age four; they can't remember before that. I, myself, am like that. I can remember things from when I was four years old even now. That was 1937, the time of the Japanese war. I still remember the warfare in Beijing at that time. They dug ditches in the roads—they were trenches for war. My mother did not have milk to nurse me after a while and I had a wet nurse. My wet nurse took me on her back and crawled along the trenches to hide by the PUMC. The reason was that the PUMC was an American hospital, so the Japanese wouldn't bomb it, and it would be relatively safe beside it. [*The US and Japan were not at war until after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941*]. I still remember what it was like when my wet nurse carried me there. And I still remember what the Chinese soldiers looked like and what the airplanes were like.

When it came time for me to go to primary school, when I was about seven years old, I couldn't go to school because my health was too poor and I wouldn't have been able to adjust. So, my parents invited a tutor for me to come to the house. This teacher, a woman, was named Jin 靳. I don't remember her given name, but I remember what she looked like.

2. Li Xueqin's only formal study of English was in high school. In the *Huiwen* alumni magazine (see previous note) he praises their teaching and mentions that he passed the university examinations in English with 98%, having written an "o" or "a" poorly. He seems to have acquired his English primarily from reading English books on his own, everything from academic works and works of literature to popular novels.

She was a very good teacher and taught me to read at home. I studied with her for two years and I learned quickly because she was a good teacher. When I had read the National Literature (*guowen* 國文) textbooks up to the first year of middle school and the mathematics books up to the fifth year of primary school, she felt that she could no longer teach me. So then my father sent me to primary school.

As you know, Beijing had been under Japanese occupation since 1937. Since my father worked for PUMC, he wasn't affected much at first. Moreover, he had to keep working—how else could he manage?—so, he continued to work there under Japanese occupation. When I started primary school, it was a few months before the bombing (of Pearl Harbor in December 1941). The primary school I went to was called Yuying Xiaoxue 育英小學. The school still exists. They regard me as an alumnus. It's now called Dengshikou 燈市口 Primary School. My father knew the principal. He went to see him and said, "My child wants to go to school." The principal asked me what grade I wanted to go in to. I said I wanted to go to fifth grade. (I had already finished fifth grade math.) The principal said, "It won't do. You are very weak physically. If you go into the fifth grade, the big children will bully you. I certainly can't let you go into the fifth grade." "What grade could I go into?" He replied, "According to your age, you should go into the third grade," so I went into the third grade.

I had a miserable time. From this time on into high school, it was very hard for me. Because I learned things faster than other people, I wasn't interested in the lessons. This was something that caused me hardship for many a year. I was a very solitary person. I didn't have brothers or sisters. The houses in Beijing at that time were courtyard houses (*siheyuan* 四合院) and we lived in a small courtyard house. Although it was small (we didn't have much money), it was a private house. A private courtyard had a lot of advantages; I could play however I liked. But without brothers and sisters, I didn't have much fun. The lessons in those days weren't like today. Children today do their lessons and still haven't finished their homework at eleven o'clock at night. But, in those days, after school finished at 3 in the afternoon, I didn't have anything to do. So I just read books. From the age of seven or eight, I began going by myself to buy books.

I went to Yuying Primary School for two years, the third and fourth grades. I had a schoolmate called Shao Yanxiang 邵燕祥. Shao Yanxiang became a very famous poet. His father was a doctor. He was about the same age as me and for at least one term we shared a desk. We went to buy books together. He remembered this and wrote about it in his memoir. The reason why I liked to read books from the time I was small

and read all different kinds of books is closely related to the fact that I was so solitary as a child. The courtyard house left me extremely isolated. The neighbors in the surrounding houses didn't have any connection to us; we were completely unrelated. When I was in the small courtyard, I especially liked to research ants. I liked to study all kinds of insects since there were different kinds in the courtyard, but I specialized in ant research.

When I was asked to fill in a form in middle school about what I liked to read, I wrote "science" and when I was asked what I wanted do in the future, I said, "Be a teacher." (I don't remember this myself but it is apparently in the school files). That I said I wanted to be a teacher was because I thought that, since I wasn't strong physically, I couldn't do anything else. Actually, my father didn't want me to do this at all. He wanted me to be a doctor. You can see why—he worked in a hospital, but he was not a doctor himself. His specialty was nutrition, but in his own department, he couldn't hold a formal position, because all the people who held formal positions were Americans. Since it was an American hospital, he could only be an "assistant." Because everyone there wore uniforms, they made him a special uniform. I saw it when I was a child. It was a Western-style garment, the top was yellow and the bottom was white. In the whole college, he was the only person who had this type of uniform.

SA: Were there other Chinese working in the hospital?

LXq: The other Chinese were of two types: One type was doctors, or possibly professors; although at that time, I am not sure that there were any Chinese professors. The others were working personnel.

Chinese history moved very quickly. I studied in that primary school for two years, and after that I changed schools.

SA: In what year did you graduate from primary school?

LXq: 1945. And then, the summer after that, I became sick with typhoid fever.

SA: Wasn't typhoid very common then?

LXq: Yes, it was common. It was very serious. Typhoid has two types. What I had was paratyphoid fever. As soon as the bombing (of Pearl Harbor) happened, PUMC no longer existed. On that day, the Japanese occupied everything. Japanese soldiers entered PUMC and Yenching University, both at the same time, totally occupying them and expelling everyone. My father couldn't leave (Beijing) and from that day on, my family was under the control of the Japanese. There was no means

of leaving and after a short period of occupation, wherever you went, there were Japanese soldiers watching you. There was no way out and my father did not have any work. My father had some friends who were arrested by the Japanese and some who died. Later on, he did this or that job, whatever he could find. We lived very poorly.

At that time, there was no medicine for typhoid. Of course, there was no penicillin. Nowadays, a lot of movies mention penicillin in Beijing in that period. That is ridiculous. We had no idea what penicillin was. The Japanese didn't have this medicine yet. They didn't even know about it, so how could we? So, there was no cure. We requested a friend who was one of the best doctors to treat me. His name was Wang Shuxian 王叔咸. Later, he became the head of Internal Medicine at the Beijing Medical College. He was a very famous and a very good doctor. There was nothing he could do for me. He could only give me a common medicine.

When I was lying in bed, I would try to find some way to secretly overhear the news. When I learned that the Japanese were going to surrender, I got so happy and excited, I fainted and couldn't get up for three days. When autumn came, I wanted to take the entrance examination for middle school. When I went to take the examination, I was almost unable to walk. I had to support myself against a wall to get there.

SA: But there was still this exam, so you went and took it?

LXq: I went to Huiwen Middle School (*chu zhong* 初中) for the exam because my father wanted me to go to that school. When it was under Japanese occupation, they changed its name. Number Nine Middle School—that was Huiwen School. When I went to take the exams, there were still some Japanese teachers there. It hadn't been completely re-appropriated yet.

I graduated from Huiwen Middle School in 1948. At that time, the fighting was very fierce and life was very difficult in all regards. My father was also having great difficulty. What to do? At that time many of my classmates were about to take the entrance exams for a new school, the National Beiping Advanced Technical School (*Guoli Beiping Gaodeng Xuexiao* 國立北平高等工業學校). There were two such schools in Beijing at that time; one was established by the city—we thought that one wasn't as good. The best one was this national one, the forerunner to the current Beijing Technical University (*Beijing Gongye Daxue* 北京工業大學). It was a kind of college that began after middle school and went on to the equivalent of university. Its asset was that it provided food and didn't require school fees. It even provided a little money. This was very important then and a lot of students went to take the exam. At that time, I wasn't so poor—I was okay—but my classmates all went for the

exam, so I did too. I took the exam for the electrical engineering department. This was the best department in this school. I did very well on the exam. I was first for that department and it was the best department in the school. We wanted to paste up a ranking, so I became first (in the school). At the time, this was considered a very good opportunity and I prepared to go, but I first had to have a physical examination, an x-ray.

At that time, there was a place in Beijing called the Beiping Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis (*Beiping Fanglao Xiehui* 北平防癆協會). It still exists. It had a sign which was made up of two crosses; it was the same all over the world. When you went to the Association, they took an x-ray. I went to have it done and the result was completely unexpected. They sent me a communication that said I had pulmonary tuberculosis that had infected the lower part of both lungs. It was very serious, second stage pulmonary tuberculosis. I was scared to death. There was no cure then. Even the word “tuberculosis” was extremely frightening. The first thing was that I couldn’t go to the school. The second was even more terrible. After a while, it occurred to us that I should get an examination at another hospital. So, we found another hospital to do the examination and discovered that I didn’t have tuberculosis at all. I went back to the Prevention of Tuberculosis Association and they said that the film had been mixed up. But, in any case, I didn’t want to go to the Technical School by then. If my family had not had enough food I would have gone, but I did get enough to eat. The school sent someone to talk to me, as my top place in the entrance exam made me well known, to ask why I was not going to attend. They felt it was a loss of face. I didn’t go. I didn’t want to study that field any more—to tell the truth, I didn’t really like it very much.

This made a great difference in my life. Do you know what the result would have been if I had gone to the Technical School? This was 1948. After 1949—in 1950—because my family didn’t have any particular [political] issues, I would most certainly have been sent to the Soviet Union for foreign study. After 1949, the new government was especially keen to emulate the Soviet Union and it paid particular attention to industrialization, so this school became a very important technical university. If you went to the Soviet Union to study electrical engineering, after you returned, you would probably be assigned to a factory as the factory head—that type of work. My classmates who took the exam with me and got results similar to mine all went to the Soviet Union to study and became factory heads after they returned.

After I got to high school, my interests gradually changed. Originally, when I was in middle school, I particularly liked to read books on science. My exam results were quite good, but I didn’t always come first (in the

exams) because I didn't like the classes. But I did love to read books. At that time, we did a lot of free reading. My school had a very good library; it was at the level of a university library because it was originally a university, so it had a large collection and I could read anything I wanted to. Moreover, I could buy books easily. I bought used books. They were very cheap. It's not like today. Today, books are expensive and students can't afford to buy them, so students today download from the net. Your books get posted on the internet quickly and as a result students don't buy the books; they only download this type of thing, right? This is the student way. Students always have their methods.

As for me, I bought used books. I have told this story before—at that time, the head of the Beijing Science Academy, Li Shuhua 李書華, a very famous scholar wrote a book called *Kexue Gailun* 科學概論 (“Outline of Science”). It was a standard book, but it was very theoretical. I wanted to buy this book, but I didn't have the money. How could I get it? I decided not to eat breakfast—that was my method, not to eat breakfast. If I didn't eat breakfast for a week, I could save my breakfast money and buy it. But it's hard not to eat breakfast for a week. So the method I selected instead was not to eat lunch for two days. But, it was not that I really didn't eat lunch. I didn't go into the (school) dining room to eat. I got a classmate who ate lunch at school to steal a couple of *wowotou* 窩窩頭 (steamed cornmeal cones) for me to eat.

When I got to middle school, I read a lot of books on scientific theory and gradually began to read books on philosophy.

SA: You say books on philosophy—what kind of books, what kind of philosophy?

LXq: Foreign philosophy. I first read foreign philosophy, for example, Hume and Berkeley, like Berkeley's *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*. I thought that book was really good. I still think that book is very significant. There are some people who think it is completely wrong, but I don't think so. His analysis is extremely interesting. I can still recite his theoretical points—they are very clear. Of course, he was a theologian. There is no question about that. I read that sort of philosophy, including Kant. Kant's works weren't very easy to comprehend. I also read books related to these works, including introductory works. It was easy to move to this type of book from reading books about science.

In those days, I had an unusual interest, I was fascinated by symbols, all kinds of symbols. Whatever could not be understood, I liked. I didn't particularly like mathematics; what I liked was symbols.

SA: When you read Hume and Berkeley, did you read translations or originals?

LXq: At that time, I read translations. The originals couldn't be obtained, especially Berkeley.

SA: And your English would not have been good enough?

LXQ: My English wasn't good enough either. The English in those books was somewhat archaic. The translations in those days were very good because the Commercial Press had a special series of famous foreign works and they were all translated well and readily available. There was also Francis Bacon's *New Organon* which was translated as *Xin gongju* 新工具 ("New Tools"). I read these books and found them really interesting, but my special fondness was for symbols, all kinds of symbols. When I was in the first year of middle school, I made up a kind of chess game. It was extremely complicated and very large. I used discarded coins that people didn't want any more for the pieces. I drew and pasted up a board. I included *yin* and *yang*, the five elements, the twenty-eight star lodges, all kinds of things. Then I arranged the pieces on it.

SA: Could one actually play the game?

LXq: One could, though I can't remember how now. Two or three people could play; you arranged the pieces in lines. I liked that type of game, involving things that could not be easily understood.

Later on I especially liked Bertrand Russell. I read a lot of his books, because they were translated very well and then, later, I read them in English too. His books were especially easy to find. That was because at that time there were a lot of people who promoted him.

SA: Have you read Russell's autobiography?

LXq: Yes, of course. I still have it. It was very interesting, especially when he wrote about visiting China. I also read the autobiography of Zhao Yuanren 趙元任 (Y.R. Chao) in which he talks about Russell. I particularly liked this type of reading. I also read Jin Yuelin's 金岳霖 *Logic* (*Luoji* 邏輯). Jin Yuelin was a famous Chinese philosopher. He had studied in the US and England and was chair of the Philosophy Department at Tsinghua University. He was one of the first persons to introduce mathematical logic to China. He had been at Cambridge and was influenced by Russell and Whitehead. The first three sections of his *Logic* discuss traditional logic and the last one is on a "new logical system"; that is, mathematical logic. I really enjoyed reading it.

At that time, I had a high school teacher who had worked in the Philosophy Department at Tsinghua and he told me that Jin Yuelin was there, so I took the exam to study philosophy at Tsinghua. My father didn't interfere in what I did at all, not at all. I know, though, that in

his heart, he hoped I would become a doctor. At PUMC, there was an internationally famous doctor, a Chinese, called Guan Songtao 關頌韜. His English name was S.T. Guan. I knew him from the time I was small. He was very famous because he was the seventh person in the world to do brain surgery. At that time—in the thirties—there were no antibiotics and the skill to be a brain surgeon was very difficult. In China, he was considered a pioneer. So, my father wanted me to be this type of person, but I thought that I was particularly unsuitable for doing surgery since I don't have much manual dexterity. I am very clumsy with my hands. I would not have been good at that at all! My father was disappointed. I also didn't want to do mathematics.

When I took my university exams, the exams for several universities were taken in the same place.

SA: What year was that?

LXq: 1951. It was after the establishment of the New China, but the method of examination was still the same. I chose three philosophy departments; the first was Tsinghua, the second was Peking University; the third was Yenching University. I was determined to study this field. The result was that I passed into the Philosophy Department of Tsinghua University. However, just at that time, I had begun to study oracle bone inscriptions.

Oracle bone inscriptions, intellectual history, and work at the Academy of Sciences

Li Xueqin's earliest scholarship was in the field of oracle bone inscriptions. Oracle bone inscriptions were first recognized as ancient writing in 1898 and first excavated scientifically at Xiaotun 小屯 near Anyang 安陽 in Henan province between 1928 and 1937, as part of the excavations of the last Shang capital at Yinxu 殷墟. Rubbings of the excavated oracle bones were published by the Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishiyuyan yanjiusuo 中央研究院歷史語言研究所 under the title Xiaotun di'er ben: Yinxu wenzi 小屯第二本: 殷虛文字. The first part, Jia bian 甲編, by Dong Zuobin 董作賓, was published in 1948. The second, Yi bian 乙編, also by Dong Zuobin, was published in three volumes, the first two in 1948 and 1949 in Nanjing. The third was published 1952, after Dong and the excavator, Shi Zhangru 石璋如, had gone to Taiwan. These volumes included some 13,000 rubbings and constituted the primary research corpus at that time. Most of the excavated bones and shells were fragments and Li Xueqin's first contribution to oracle bone studies was, as he describes below, in joining some of these fragments into larger pieces. The third part of this work, Xiaotun di'er ben: Yinxu wenzi, Bing bian 丙編, was published in three sections (six volumes) in Taiwan from 1957 to 1972.

It includes many rejoined oracle bone inscriptions as well as transcriptions by Zhang Bingquan 張秉權.

In order to understand how the inscriptions relate to one another and to research historical changes over the two and a half centuries in which Anyang was the Shang capital, it is necessary to be able to place the inscriptions within their chronological context, so one of the first scholarly problems was to establish a system of periodization. Dong Zuobin established a system of five periods beginning with Pan Geng 盤庚, who, according to the *Shi ji* 史記, was the first ruler at Anyang. These were based on ten criteria, such as ancestral titles, diviner names, graphic forms, calligraphy, etc. Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 offered an alternative to Dong Zuobin's periodization, using three primary criteria to group the inscriptions into nine reigns. He was also the first to introduce the idea of diviner groups. Particularly at issue were divinations that Dong Zuobin attributed to the reign of Wenwu Ding 文武丁 (the tenth king after Pan Geng and the fourth period in Dong's periodization) and Chen Mengjia to the reign of Wu Ding 武丁 (the third king after Pan Geng, the late first period in Dong's periodization, but the first reign in Chen's). Both scholars assumed a single line of evolution and that each diviner served a particular king. Li Xueqin entered this controversy with a critique of Chen Mengjia's *Yinxu buci congshu* 殷虛卜辭綜述 in 1957, in which he pointed out that there could be more than one diviner group under a single king and that a single diviner group did not necessarily belong to the reign of a single king.³ This idea was at the core of his later periodization scheme which assumed two lineages of diviner groups that traversed the reigns of particular kings. After the discovery of the tomb of Fu Hao 婦好 in 1976, he began to develop a more systematic hypothesis.⁴ Li's periodization system was refined by other scholars and he altered it in response to their work and new discoveries over the years. Although there is still controversy about periodization, his approach has gradually gained acceptance among oracle bone scholars.

In this same period, Li wrote the earliest book on Shang geography, *Yindai dili jianlun* 殷代地理簡論, and proposed a division of Warring States scripts into five regional types.⁵ He also began to work as an assistant for the intellectual historian, Hou Wailu 侯外廬.

3. Chen Mengjia 陳夢家. *Yinxu buci zongshu* 殷墟卜辭綜述 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1956); Li Xueqin, "Ping Chen Mengjia Yinxu buci zongshu" 評陳夢家殷墟卜辭綜述, *Kaogu Xuebao* 1957.3, 119–130.

4. See Li Xueqin, "Lun 'Fu Hao' mu de niandai ji youguan wenti" 論“婦好”墓的年代及有關問題, *Wenwu* 1977.11, 32–37. Other representative works by Li Xueqin include "Xiaotun nandi jiagu yu jiagu fenqi" 小屯南地甲骨與甲骨分期, *Wenwu* 1981.5, 27–33; "Yinxu jiagu liangxishuo yu Lizu buci" 殷墟甲骨兩系說與歷組卜辭, in *Li Xueqin ji* 李學勤集 (Harbin: Heilongjiang jiaoyu, 1989); Li Xueqin and Peng Yushang 彭裕商, *Yinxu jiagu fenqi yanjiu* 殷墟甲骨分期研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1996).

5. Li Xueqin 李學勤, *Yindai dili jianlun* 殷代地理簡論 (Beijing: Kexue, 1959).

SA: How did you start studying oracle bone inscriptions?

LXq: I started studying oracle bones around 1949—I'm not sure exactly when. When I was small, I heard people say that oracle bones were really difficult and I liked difficult things. What's more, I discovered later on that they could not be understood. That they could not be understood was wonderful. My psychology was that of a child. There wasn't any other reason at all. I just thought it was fun. When we went to school, we had a lot of free time. It was easy for me to go to Peking Library. At that time, Peking Library was at the Beihai park—not where it is now. The old library was really convenient and there weren't so many people in Beijing then. We could go and read books freely and the service was especially good, so I would go there and read by myself.

I know what you are going to ask next, so I will go ahead and tell you. I learned to read oracle bone inscriptions completely on my own. There was no one at all who explained anything about them to me. But, I was very lucky that when I was reading about oracle bones, the person in charge of loans noticed that I was always borrowing this type of book. That person was Zeng Yigong 曾毅公. He was working on joining oracle bone fragments. He was in charge of the Inscription (*Jinshi* 金石, "metal and stone") department of the library. He had been at Qi Lu 齊魯 University and was (James) Menzies' student—that's how he learned to read oracle bones.

SA: When was that?

LXq: Around 1949, 1950.

SA: In 1949 you were how old?

LXq: I was 16. I was born in 1933, so I began studying the inscriptions when I was 16 or 17. My method was very satisfactory because I studied the inscriptions by following the excavation reports. I felt this was the right way to learn. There was no one who told me I should do it this way, but my intuition was correct. I read the archaeological reports one by one.

Why? That was the period—1950—when the journals began to publish discussion of the Wenwu Ding 文武丁 inscriptions because (Dong Zuobin's) "*Yinxu Wenzhi Yibian xu*" 殷虛文字乙編序 ("Preface to the Yinxu wenzhi") was published in 1949.⁶ As you well know, in China, it was Chen Mengjia who opposed this (attribution to Wenwu Ding) and

6. Dong Zuobin 董作賓, "Yinxu wenzhi yi bian xu" 殷虛文字乙編序, *Zhongguo kaogu xuebao* 1949.4, 258–89. This "Preface" reported on the finds of oracle bones from the thirteenth to fifteenth sessions of excavation, most importantly the hoard known as YH 127, which necessitated a reassessment of previous periodizations.

Dong Zuobin. His first essay was published in 1950 in *Yanjing xuebao*, and later he published several articles in *Zhongguo kaogu xuebao*.⁷ When I was studying (in the Peking Library) was just when these articles came out. As soon as I found out how lively the controversy was, I quickly started reading this material. Because their arguments about the periodization of the inscriptions referred to the archaeological reports, I looked for the reports and read those first. At that time, no one at the Peking Library was reading this type of book, so they were readily available to me. So, my method of studying was something I happened upon as a result of the discussions going on at the time. I read the two (types of materials, oracle bones and archaeological reports) together from the beginning. This method was the correct one.

Very fortunately, in 1950, Hu Houxuan's 胡厚宣 *Wushinian jiagu xuelun zhumu* 五十年甲骨學論著目 ("Bibliography of fifty years of oracle bone research") was published.⁸ I was able to buy a copy of that book and followed it in my studies. I had access to all of the books (in the field) at that time, with the exception of some foreign articles, such as those by Anna Barnhardi in German, which I couldn't find. Actually, Hu Houxuan hadn't seen them either. I only read them later on, in the Cambridge University Library, when I was there.⁹ Almost everything else in the field was available in the Peking Library and I read almost all of it. It was not difficult. Guo Moruo 郭沫若 had, of course, much more ability than me, but what he used to study oracle bone inscriptions was nevertheless this very same material.¹⁰

I was in the Philosophy Department (at Tsinghua University) for a year. During that year, there were also a lot of political activities and thought reform activities. When I was at Tsinghua, I saw Chen Mengjia but I did not meet him personally. The reason I didn't meet him is that he was a

7. Chen argued that these inscriptions belonged to the reign of Wu Ding, i.e. to the first period rather than the fourth period in Dong's periodization. See Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, "Jiagu duandaixue jia bian" 甲骨斷代學甲編, *Yanjing xuebao* 40 (1951), 1–63; "Jiagu duandaixue ding bian" 甲骨斷代學丁編, *Zhongguo kaogu xuebao* 1951.1–2, 177–224; "Jiagu duandaixue bing bian" 甲骨斷代學丙編, *Zhongguo kaogu xuebao* 1953.1–2, 17–55; "Jiagu duandaixue yi bian" 甲骨斷代學乙編, *Kaogu xuebao* 8 (1954), 1–48. The contents of these articles were included in Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu buci zongshu*.

8. Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣, *Wushinian jiaguxue lunzhumu* 五十年甲骨學論著目 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1952).

9. Anna Barnhardi, "Frühgeschlechtliche Orakelknochen aus China," *Baessler-Archiv* 4 (1914), 14–28, provides the earliest photograph and other information related to a disputed genealogy on an ox scapula, now in the British Library. Li Xueqin, Ai Lan 艾蘭 (Sarah Allan), and Qi Wenxin 齊文心 *Yingguo suocang jiagu ji* 英國所藏甲骨集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1985, repr., 1991), 2674. Hu Houxuan regarded the genealogy as a fake.

10. Guo Moruo's *Yin Qi Cui Bian* 殷契粹編 (Beijing: Kexue, 1965), first published in Japan in 1937 was one of the seminal works in oracle bone studies.

teacher in the Chinese Department and I was a student in the Philosophy Department. The departments were both in the same place, which was in the old building that my office is in now, but I never attended any of his classes. That he came to know about me was undoubtedly because of Zeng Yigong. In Beijing, in fact in all of China, there were only a few people who did oracle bones at that time. Even today, there aren't many who really do oracle bone inscriptions, you can count them and we all know who (does this type of research). At that time, there were even less. That there was a kid studying oracle bones was very unusual, so it would surely have been passed around. Although I didn't meet Chen Mengjia, I did once go and sit in his classroom. I can't remember what the class was. I sat in the last row and took a look at him. He hadn't started teaching yet and was chatting about something. I sat awhile and then left.

In 1952, there was a very important change—the (government) instituted a reform of higher education (*yuan xi tiaozheng* 院系調整). They united a number of institutions and altered many of them. The most significant change was that Tsinghua University became a technological university. It was because there were no technological universities in China. In that period, the Soviet Union was the model and it strongly promoted (these schools). Actually, at that time, China very much needed to industrialize. So, Tsinghua became a technological university and Tsinghua's Arts and Sciences departments were separated off. It wasn't just the Humanities that were separated off—this is something foreigners often get wrong—the sciences also left. Even physics went. Two-thirds of the Physics Department at Peking University was (originally) from Tsinghua because Tsinghua had the strongest department then. There was no longer any physics, chemistry, or mathematics. The restructuring was badly messed up. Today, we can understand the historical reasons for what happened in that period, but there were really many shortcomings. Nevertheless, that is what happened then, and so our Philosophy Department moved to Peking University. However, I didn't go to Peking University.

SA: Why?

LXq: It was because of oracle bone inscriptions. I no longer wanted to study philosophy. Peking University had just established an archaeology specialization in the History Department, this was the first such specialization in China and I wanted to study oracle bones. But I didn't get permission.

SA: I seem to remember that you told me once that you had wanted to study mathematical logic, but that it became impossible to study this field at this time.

LXq: In that period, wherever it was, China or abroad, logic and analytical philosophy were inseparable and in the circumstances of the time, there were no classes in it, so I could no longer study it. Fortunately, there was an opportunity for me (to do oracle bone research).

It happened like this: Guo Ruoyu 郭若愚, of the Shanghai Museum was engaged in joining oracle bone fragments. I was also joining oracle bone fragments in Beijing. Why was I doing this? It was in order to research their periodization. At that time, the first volumes of *Yi bian* had been published, but it wasn't for sale because it was printed in Hong Kong. In mainland China, when such books were published, they were appropriated—I think they were kept in Shanghai, but I can't be certain. Anyway, this type of book couldn't be read publicly because it had "Republic of China" written on it, as it had been published by the Academia Sinica (*Zhongyang yanjiuyuan* 中央研究院) under the auspices of the Republic (Guomindang 國民黨). If I couldn't read this book, what could I do? At that time, I found a good way to deal with the problem. This was for the newly established Chinese Academy of Sciences (*Zhongguo kexueyuan* 中國科學院) to acquire them and then read them as an "internal" (*neibu* 內部) books. I went through Zeng Yigong to obtain copies of the first (*shang* 上) and second (*zhong* 中) volumes. The third (*xia* 下) had not been published yet. Reading them in the library wasn't convenient; I could only work at home.

I found that a lot of oracle bone fragments could be joined. I joined a lot of these inscriptions and told Zeng Yigong about them. Zeng Yigong specialized in joining oracle bones and he joined a lot too, but we weren't as fast as Guo Ruoyu. Guo joined a lot—some of the ones he joined, we had also joined. He immediately sent his book to Guo Moruo. Guo Moruo at that time was the Director of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Guo was very interested in this work and approved of it, but he was already vice premier; how could he have time to read it? He just passed it on to the newly established Institute of Archaeology. The head of the Institute of Archaeology was Zheng Zhenduo. Zheng Zhenduo did not research oracle bones himself, but it was a favorite hobby of his. He gave the book to Chen Mengjia, who had just gone to the Institute of Archaeology from Tsinghua due to the restructuring. When Chen Mengjia saw it, he discussed it with Zheng Zhenduo. Chen said the book was very good, but the research did not seem to be complete. He told Zheng that there were two people in Beijing doing this type of work, "an old one and a young one" (*yige laode, yige xiaode* 一個老的, 一個小的)—that he said this was told to me later on by other people. The old one was Zeng Yigong. He invited him and I was invited through Zeng. Thus, I was temporarily transferred to the Institute of Archaeology. Of course, Tsinghua agreed

or I wouldn't have been able to go. As a result, I never reported to Peking University (with the other Philosophy Department students).

So, that was how it happened. Chen invited us to the Institute of Archaeology and I did this work (of joining oracle bone inscriptions) for two years, 1952 and 1953. Actually, we finished making additions to Guo Ruoyu's manuscript in the summer of 1953. At that time, we all thought the final volume of *Yi bian* would be difficult for them to publish in Taiwan, especially after the Korean War started. We also thought that if it were published, it would be very difficult for us to obtain. Actually, it wasn't like that at all. The last volume came out very quickly. And, after that, Zhang Bingquan supplemented it with the *Bing bian* 丙編, in which they used the original oracle bones (rather than rubbings) to join oracle bone fragments. Of course, they did a better job than we had and we made some mistakes. But Zeng Yigong and I corrected some of Guo Ruoyu's mistakes and added some (fragments) to his joinings as well as contributing some of our own joinings. No one corrected our work, so it probably has more mistakes than it might have had otherwise.

At that time, I wanted to stay at the Institute of Archaeology. The Institute also considered it, but it was difficult for them to keep me. This type of thing commonly occurs today too. What was the problem? Because the Institute of Archaeology was founded in 1950, by 1953, it was already considered a relatively well-established institute and it was not very easy for them to add new personnel. Moreover, I had little formal education—I had only attended one year of university.

About that time, I made the acquaintance of Hou Wailu. Hou Wailu was a Marxist scholar and he had done work-study in France. Having studied in France, he was highly regarded as a Marxist and he became head of Xibe University. He had been transferred to Beijing because they had the intention of establishing three Institutes of History. The thinking then was that because Chinese history is so long, there would be one institute for the ancient period (Institute One) and one for the middle ages (Institute Two). Institute Three, for recent history, is now the Institute of Modern History (*Jindai lishi yanjiusuo* 近代史研究所). It was established first because the head, Fan Wenlan 范文瀾, brought the Institute that belonged to North University from the Communist controlled region (to Beijing). Institutes One and Two were newly established, beginning in 1953. Institute One had Guo Moruo as its head (concurrently with his other positions). Yin Da 尹達 was the Deputy Head. In reality, Yin Da managed the Institute. Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 was to head Institute Two, but he did not come. Chen Yuan 陳垣 was appointed later on, but he was head of Beijing Normal University and did not have time, so in reality, he very seldom came.

SA: How did you get to know Hou Wailu?

LXq: In 1952 and '53, life was relatively difficult and a lot of things were very hard, so I needed a job (to earn money). When I was reading in the library, I met another person—a scholar, not a diplomat—who worked in the Foreign Affairs Office at the time, and he recommended me for a job, which was to teach classical Chinese to an overseas Chinese. The overseas Chinese had lived in Southeast Asia for a long time. He was a very good person. He could speak Chinese, but he couldn't read the classical language. I taught him, starting with the *Shang shu* 尚書, going on up to Han Yu 韓愈 and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 in the Tang dynasty. I tutored him for over a year. I went twice a week, more or less, and so I earned a little money.

The person in the Foreign Affairs Office knew Hou Wailu and introduced me to him. After Hou had returned to Beijing from Hong Kong, he was the head of the Department of History at Beijing Normal University. Then he went to Xibei as head of that university. And then he was transferred to Institute Two as Deputy Director, though really he acted as the director. The Foreign Affairs officer told Hou that there was a kid who was tutoring classical Chinese. Hou said, "Have him come to see me." Hou was an extremely generous person. It's very rare to meet this type of person. When he decided something, that was it; he was like that. I went to see him and after I talked to him for a while, he said, "Come to our Institute of History." I returned and reported this to the Institute of Archaeology. They said, "This is perfect. We didn't know how to resolve (the problem of your employment), so you should first go to the Institute of History. Once you enter that Institute, you will have entered the Academy of Sciences, and after you've entered the Academy, we can ask for you back."

When I entered the Institute of History, I became Hou Wailu's assistant. I really still hoped to go to Institute One, but Hou was only in charge of the Institute Two. Also, he wanted me to act as his assistant. So from that time, I followed him. He thought that since I studied philosophy and he was doing intellectual history—or, more properly, history of philosophy—I was just the right person to act as his assistant. I worked under him on his *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中國思想通史 until the Cultural Revolution. I must admit that he thought I did a good job, so he liked having me assist him. Afterwards, when the Institute of Archeology wanted me, he didn't give permission for me to go. Actually, after the Cultural Revolution, the Institute of Archaeology asked for me again, but both times I was not able to return.

I started work at the Institute of History in 1954. This is because, in the winter of 1953, when I went there to report, they told me that this

research institute still hadn't started, "Go on home. When they tell you to come, then come".." So, it was only after the lunar new year that I started going to work. My job was with Hou Wailu but, at the beginning, I didn't have any work as a researcher, so I bought books for the Institute of History—a lot of books in the Institute of History today are ones that I bought. At that time, many of the book sellers had an agreement with me that they would send books for me to look at on two days of the week. They were all the traditional-style thread-sewn books, and they would give me only the first volume to look at, so I only looked at that. After that we would discuss it and decide whether we wanted them. We bought a great many books then—they were very cheap.

But my most important work was helping Hou Wailu to proofread and reprint the books he had previously published. Because they were written during the time of the Japanese war, they had been published in Chongqing or other places and the quality of the books was terrible—there were a lot of typographical errors and the paper was awful, so he wanted to reprint them. In order to reprint them, the text had to be proofed. He didn't have time to do it himself, so he had me do it. The first book was called *Zhongguo gudai shehui shilun* 中國古代社會史論.

In reality, from then on, I knew that I wouldn't be able to go back to work at the Institute of Archaeology; I would work for Hou. So, my other research, including what I did on oracle bones and Warring States period inscriptions, became what I did in the evenings. I don't mean it was secret but I couldn't do this work in the daytime. If I did, he could become displeased, and ask me, "Why are you doing this?" I once asked him, "Will you let me go to Institute One," but he didn't agree and said I should stay with him. After that, he formed a small group, called the "Chinese Intellectual History Group" (*Zhongguo sixiangshi zu* 中國思想史組). It was the forerunner of the Research Seminar of the Institute of history that Zhang Haiyan 張海燕 now heads. He was, of course, the person responsible for that group, but I was the first leader of it, even though the people who joined later were older than me. So, I gradually moved into working on intellectual history. In fact, from then on, I almost never returned to the Institute of Archaeology. It wasn't convenient because we weren't in the same place—the Institute of History wasn't in the place is now, but over on Dongsi 東四. It had its own courtyard. The two institutes of pre-modern history never really separated and later on they were joined. The Institute of Archaeology was close by, it was only separated by one street, but since we were working every day, it was difficult to find time to go there.

SA: So at that time, everyone went to work every day? [In the 1980s,

researchers at the Institute of History reported to their Institutes twice a week and now only report once a week.]

LXq: Yes, at that time, we went to work every day. We went every morning and there were also a lot of meetings to do with political campaigns—what we called “doing campaigns” (*gao yundong* 搞運動). There was almost no time to do anything else. Of course, most of them were anti-rightist. It was at the time of the anti-rightist campaigns that the political movements were the most pervasive. This is well-known. That I should write about Chen Mengjia’s *Yinxu buci yanjiu* was stipulated (*guiding* 規定) by the Institute of Archaeology.

SA: At that time, who was head of the Institute of Archaeology?

LXq: At that time, Zheng Zhenduo had already died, so it was Xia Nai. At least it was Xia Nai who (actually ran the Institute). For a short period, there was no head and both Yin Da and Xia Nai did the work. Then, Yin Da was appointed Director of the Institute of Archaeology, but he was simultaneously Deputy Director of the Institute of History. Later, in 1962, Xia Nai was appointed director of the Institute of Archaeology.

SA: You mentioned that you studied oracle bones following the excavation reports. I’m curious—what was the process that you went through?

LXq: I read all the publications. After Hu Houxuan’s bibliography came out, I followed that. I made a card and wrote down all the books in the bibliography on it, then I pasted notes onto it, following the publications in sequence. Sometimes I would look up a character. In order to find out how the character was written and its different interpretations, you had to look up all the books (to find the various interpretations). At that time, there wasn’t a dictionary yet, only the *Jiaguwen bian* 甲骨文編 (which gives character forms), but even this was old. The new one didn’t come out until 1958 or ’59. If I looked up all the books at the Peking Library, the whole process took three months. I did it many times, so I remember it clearly.

SA: So, at that time, you were already interested in periodization? From the very beginning, you had this interest?

LXq: That was because this was the question that was most discussed then. First, there was Dong Zuobin’s *Yibian xu* and after that Chen Mengjia’s “*Jiagu duandai xue*” 甲骨文斷代學.¹¹ Then there was a discussion among the Japanese in 1953.¹² Zeng Yigong introduced that to me to read.

11. See note 5 above.

12. Ka izuka Shigeki 貝塚茂樹 and Itō Michiharu 伊藤道治, *Kōkotsubun daidaihō*

SA: So, how did you come about your own periodization?

LXq: From the beginning, my method of periodization was not entirely the same as that of Chen Mengjia, though I did learn a lot from his articles. I never discussed this question with him—he would not have discussed it with me; I was just a young student. But my opinion was different from his because I had discovered a type of oracle bone which is now called the “Shi 𠄎 (師) and Li 歷 intermediate diviner group” My discovery was that this group formed a linked between the Shi diviner group and what we now call the Li diviner group—after I saw a lot of this type of inscription, I determined that they must be from the same period. Because their sequential position was clear, I felt they should be considered as late. I was certain that they should be together and, that being the case, that Dong Zuobin’s periodization should be correct. My reasoning all followed from my thinking that these inscriptions had to go together. So, I stood on the side of Dong Zuobin. But, later, I wondered why this type of calligraphy didn’t fit. I’ve already written about my recollections of (the processes by which I developed my periodization)—it’s in my *Wenji*.¹³

In *Yindai dili jianlun* 殷代地理簡論, I was influenced by Dong Zuobin. Dong Zuobin made the *Yin li pu* 殷曆譜 (“Historical Chart of the Yin”), arranging the oracle bones calendrically. I had a new idea: to arrange them geographically (according to the place names mentioned in the inscriptions), but making a chart is making a chart. That part was the same. As I say in the preface, it was finished in 1954. When I was working in the Institute of Archaeology, I couldn’t just sit and join oracle bone fragments all the time. It was better to produce a manuscript early on. But after I went to the Institute of History, it was not easy to publish it, so I put it aside but continuously worked on revisions. After the anti-rightist campaigns were over, it was finally published by the Science Press in 1959.

As you know, I also did a lot of work on Warring States period inscriptions in that period too. I did this in the Peking Library. This research, in contrast (to my work on oracle bone inscriptions), was completely my own. Wang Guowei 王國維 was the first to write a study devoted entirely to Warring States characters, but no one followed him in doing this type of research. At that time, I read all day, especially *Sandai jijin wencun* 三代

no saikentō: Tōshi no Bunbutei jidai bokuji o chūshin to shite” 甲骨文斷代法の再検討—董氏の文武丁時代卜辭の中心として, *Tōhōgaku hō* (Kyoto) 23 (1953), 1–78.

13. Li Xueqin 李學勤, “Wo he Yin Xu jiagu fenqi” 我和殷墟甲骨分期, *Li Xueqin wenji* 李學勤文集 (Shanghai: Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Xueshu Weiyuan Wenku, 1999), 127–133.

吉金文存, which had a lot of Warring States characters at the end of the book.¹⁴ Some were from weapons and weren't yet deciphered. I gradually began to learn to read them and discovered that each state's characters were different. So, I had an idea, which was different from what other people thought: that they were written according to the styles of different states. I analysed them into five systems.¹⁵ Everyone today uses this. Actually, I made a lot of mistakes, but it's always like that when you're the first. There were also a lot of fakes, but they weren't recognized as such at that time. And a lot of things I got completely wrong. This was my most important work at that time.¹⁶

SA: What other work did you do for Hou Wailu?

LXq: Before and after the anti-rightist campaigns, the main parts of Hou Wailu's *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中國思想通史 were published, but it was missing a section. The first section was "pre-Qin," the second was "Han," the third and central section was "Wei Jin and the Southern and Northern dynasties." The fifth was on the Qing dynasty. So there was nothing for the Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. At that time, there were hardly any people researching this period, so he wanted to add this, fourth, section. Later on, this period was divided into two parts. This is what Hou had us young people write collectively and then he invited some famous scholars (to do it), including Yang Rongguo 楊榮國 from Zhongshan University, who became famous during the Cultural Revolution (in the anti-Confucian campaigns), Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎, etc.

This was the manner in which the book was completed and how I became Hou Wailu's assistant. I don't usually say I was his student, though, of course, he took me as his student. This is because I never took his classes. At that time, I spent a lot of my time working on the history of philosophy, but none of the opinions that I wrote in any of this work were my own because I wrote as his assistant. The principle was that we wrote following his ideas. If you had an idea of your own, you could bring it up to him and he would agree or disagree.

14. Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, *Sandai jijin wencun* 三代吉金文存 (Beijing Zhonghua, 1983 [repr. of 1937 ed.]). See also Wang Guowei, *Tong Xiangxu shi yin pu xu* 桐鄉徐氏印譜序 (1926), cited by Li Xueqin in his preface to *Li Xueqin wenji*, 4.

15. See Li Xueqin, "Zhangguo qiwu biaoian" 戰國器物標年, *Lishi xuexi* 1956.2; "Tan jinnianlai faxian de jizhong Zhanguo wenzi ziliao" 談近年來發現的幾種戰國文字資料, *Wenwu* 1956.1, 48–49; "Zhanguo shidai de Qin'guo qingtongqi" 戰國時代的秦國青銅器, *Wenwu* 1957.8, 38–40; "Zhanguo diming gaishu" 戰國題銘概述, *Wenwu* 1959.7, 50–54; 1959.8, 60–63; 1959.9, 58–61.

16. This early interest in the Warring States period is reflected in Li Xueqin's major work in English, *Eastern Zhou and Qin Civilization*, trans. K.C. Chang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Hou Wailu had studied abroad in France—he originally studied law and he was a senior party member. He was the first to produce a complete translation of the first volume of *Das Kapital*. There were some earlier translations of the first part, but they were incomplete. At that time, he was very unusual—he was famous as a translator, translating from German, French, English, and Japanese. Actually, he also translated the second volume, but because someone else also translated it and he thought they did a better job, he didn't publish it. He gave the manuscript to the Peking Library.

After that was the Cultural Revolution. In the Cultural Revolution, at the Institute of History, the first to be knocked down (*da dao* 打倒) was Hou Wailu. It was because he best fit the Cultural Revolution criteria of people to be overthrown—"capitalist persons in authority" and "reactionary authorities." So, we young people who worked under him were very much in danger. As soon as the Cultural Revolution began, it was Hou Wailu who was the target. Because he wrote so much, he was easy to criticize.

SA: What happened to you then?

LXq: The fall of Hou Wailu was very early. The journal *Red Flag* (Hongqi 紅旗), which was the core journal of the Chinese Communist party, published an article devoted to attacking Hou Wailu. He was extremely frightened by this. Not long after he was attacked by the central authorities, he had a stroke and once he was ill, he never really recovered. After the Cultural Revolution, he did do some things, but he was in a wheelchair and they were things that he directed other people to do.

SA: Did you go to work or what did you do?

LXq: In that period, 1966, we had struggle sessions all day. There are a lot of things that I tell you that you may not understand. You've probably heard many such things, maybe even more than me, but you haven't had this experience.

SA: Right. I only know a few things.

LXq: The earliest I knew of the Cultural Revolution was Yao Wenyuan's article, "Ping xinbian lishiju *Hai Rui ba guan*" 評新編歷史劇海瑞罷官 (Criticizing the New Historical Play "Hai Rui Dismissed from Office"). In December of 1965, I was in Shanghai. Hou Wailu had made a decision: we would write a history of thought after the Qing dynasty, starting with the establishment of a constitution. I was assigned to write about how Western thought entered China, including religion. I had gone together with He Zhaowu 何兆武 to Shanghai to look up books in the Christian

Library, which was a very good library. At that time, next to the Christian Church was the *Wenhui bao* 文匯報 (newspaper) and on that morning, when we came out of the Christian library, we saw the *Wenhui bao* had been put up. It was Yao Wenyuan's (article on) *Han Rui ba guan*. We didn't understand it then because it was criticizing Wu Han 吳晗 (the author of the play). Wu Han was a teacher at Tsinghua, though, to tell the truth, when I was at Tsinghua, he was almost invisible because he was so revolutionary. He seldom taught classes. And when he worked in Beijing, he quickly became deputy mayor. At that time, we thought he was the most revolutionary person, so when he was subjected to criticism, we didn't know what it was all about. I said to He Zhaowu, "This is a problem." Then, we took the two boxes of books that we had borrowed and returned to Beijing. Fortunately, these books weren't destroyed in the Cultural Revolution. After the Cultural Revolution, I gave them back to the Shanghai Church. They were all very standard English books.

I was very confused then. I couldn't figure it out. In 1964, we had the "four cleanups" (*siqing* 四清) and I went to a farming village in Shandong. Originally, we were still supposed to be doing this in 1965. It had been determined that to graduate, members of the Academy of Sciences would do two periods of *siqing* and one period of labor. In 1960, I did one period of labor and in 1964, I did one "cleanup." The "four cleanups" campaign meant that one went to a village and directed (*zheng* 整) some cadres. In 1965, our second child was born, so I didn't go. I was supposed to go in 1966. It was at Mentougou 門頭溝, on the west of Beijing. A lot of the members of the Academy of Sciences went there for thought reform education. Fortunately, I hadn't gone yet. The Cultural Revolution changed at that point. Those who had gone already couldn't come back. After that, for a number of years, it was impossible to do any (scholarly) work at all.

In 1972, we went to May 7 Cadre School. The whole Institute of History went, except for a few people who were ill that were protected. People like Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 and Hu Houxuan didn't go, but everyone else, including Zhang Zhenglang 張政烺 and the entire Institute of Archaeology went.

SA: What did you do when you were at the May 7 Cadre School?

LXq: The first thing we had to do was build the Cadre School. Of course, we also had to do farm labor, but the main thing was building the school because when we went there, they just gave us empty land. You had to build your own housing. Because the archaeologists were used to digging earth every day, they were responsible for firing bricks. We took responsibility for taking the bricks (to the building site). I had

a very good job—building houses. Since I had already done all of this in 1960 as part of “tempering through manual labor” (*laodong duanlian* 勞動鍛煉), I wasn’t afraid. The houses were (only) so tall (gesture) and not completely made of bricks because there weren’t many kilns, so we had to use earth around them, that was yellow earth and straw pressed together and dried in the sun. I was able to return once to Beijing, together with Xie Guozhen 謝國楨.

SA: How did you get to return that time?

LXq: It was because it was the Spring Festival. Very few people could get permission to return, but I was able to go back once for a couple of days, because my children were very young. The time I spent at the May 7 School was unusually short—I only stayed for a year and three months. Then, Guo Moruo wanted to revise his *Zhongguo shigao* 中國史稿 (“Outline History of China”). This book was a required text book in universities and based on historical research. There had been two volumes, but later, during the Cultural Revolution, the content was not appropriate and he said he wanted to revise it. Guo Moruo gave this responsibility to Yin Da, who gathered the people to make the revisions, beginning with the pre-Qin period. There were four of us—me, Lin Ganquan 林甘泉, Tian Changwu 田昌五, and another person who was in charge of the library.

SA: So, it was Yin Da who made the selection?

LXq: Yes, Yin Da chose us. I was responsible for the Shang and Western Zhou part. It was relatively late (in the Cultural Revolution period), the winter of 1972. When I came back from cadre school, (my family) did not know I was coming. What’s more there were no telephones. They just told you in the evening and then the next morning you left. It was supposedly a military method, but even army troops aren’t treated like that! At that time, the (Mao Zedong Thought) propaganda troops were in charge of us and we didn’t know why the soldiers came to get us. Only Yin Da knew what it was about; no one else knew. The day that the propaganda soldiers came, the leader said, “I have something to inform you, which I think you won’t want to refuse.” What was it? The next morning we were to return to Beijing. We would no longer be at the Cadre School. I didn’t sleep at all that night. No one else was supposed to know for fear it would influence other people. We all lived in a big house; the members were called a “platoon” (*pai* 排). The Institute had three such platoons. So what did they do? They sent the rest of our group to study in the fields and had us stay in the room and gather our things. In the afternoon we took the train.

1973 was better; the campaigns eased up and Yin Da sent me to Hebei, Shanghai and some other places to see some things that had been excavated. But in '74 and '75, the campaigns started again. However, at that time, something very important happened. This was the discovery of bamboo-slip books at Yinqueshan 銀雀山 and silk books at Mawangdui 馬王堆. These discoveries were taken very seriously by the government. This was attributed to Premier Zhou Enlai 周恩來. In 1972, Guo Moruo wrote to Premier Zhou about work on cultural relics and archaeology. Premier Zhou issued a memo which led to the resumption of publication of journals on archaeology and cultural relics, and the organization of teams of scholars, including people for the Cultural Relics Bureau. At that time, work on cultural relics and archaeology started anew. This was a very difficult feat, but if it had not been done in this manner, the cultural relics would have been destroyed. This was a very important matter and it had a lot of influence. The revision of Guo's *Zhongguo shigao* was related to this (resumption of archaeology). There was also an exhibition. The catalog was called *Wenhua dageming qijian chutu wenwu zhan* 文化大革命期間出土文物展 ("Exhibition of Cultural Relics Excavated during the Cultural Revolution").

SA: I have that book—I bought it at the time. It's quite large.

LXq: Right. In 1972, when (bamboo-slip) texts were discovered at Yinqueshan 銀雀山, the find didn't get much attention. The authorities just got Luo Fuyi 羅福頤 (the son of Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉) and Gu Tiefu 顧鐵符, who were at the National Palace Museum, to work on them. But in 1973, when (silk) manuscripts were discovered at Mawangdui, those people weren't enough (to do the work), so they selected a number of other people to work together. This (group) had a precedent—the punctuated editions of the twenty-four histories. That project had been decided on by Chairman Mao, so no one had opposed it. They had gathered a lot of people at Zhonghua Shuju Press to do the punctuation, with Gu Jiegang as the leader. So, they decided to make a similar small group to work on the Mawangdui texts. We called it the "Small Group for Processing and Transcribing" (*zhengli xiaozu* 整理小組). These events happened in 1974 and the decision was that I was to be part of it, but the propaganda troops of the Institute of History wouldn't agree. They said I still had to participate in campaigns. Actually, there was really no (campaign) activity, so I could have gone home and slept except that we had to go to three meetings every day—morning, noon, and evening. You could go home to eat, but after dinner, you had to go to a meeting.

Things were not so bad then. I could do some work on Sunday. Some members of the Cultural Relics Bureau brought some photographs to me,

and I worked on them at home. The articles I wrote were all published.¹⁷ It was January 1975 before I could actually (join the Small Group). I was informed in the same way as the time before. The day before I was to join the group we had the usual three meetings. There was really nothing to do in the evening one and we read the paper. When the meeting was about to conclude, a propaganda soldier called me out and said, "Tomorrow morning at eight, go to such and such building where you will receive a communication. You will not participate in the campaigns anymore; you will go to the Cultural Relics Bureau Publishing House." So, the next morning I went off there and from that day until 1978, I didn't return to the Institute of History.

SA: You just mentioned Guo Moruo. Did you have any direct contact with him?

LXq: I did have the opportunity to see him on a few occasions when we were editing his *Zhongguo shi gao*. Actually, from my personal position, I didn't have much chance to see him since he was the Head of the Institute of History One and the Head of the Academy of Sciences, as well as Deputy President of the State Council. He also had such positions as Chairman of the Cultural Federation and was a writer and a poet and scientist, so there weren't many opportunities. However, Guo did have a very close relationship with the Institute of History as he was first the Head of Institute One and later, after Institutes One and Two joined together, he was also Head. That is, in name, he was Head, so when the Institute called on him (for assistance), he couldn't refuse, and he was, after all, an historian. He was also very interested in oracle bones and had written a lot about them. His work is still very good, is still worth studying. When Hu Houxuan edited the (*Jiaguwen*) *heji* 甲骨文合集, it was because of the connection with Guo. If it weren't for Guo, that project wouldn't have happened.

SA: Yes, when Hu Houxuan was still alive, he talked to me about this.¹⁸

17. In this period, Li wrote under pseudonyms, including Jiang Hong 江鴻, Ling Xiang 凌襄 and Du Heng 杜恒.

18. In 1984, I interviewed Hu Houxuan about his work on the *Jiaguwen Heji*. Hu told me that Guo gave an order at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution that the materials should not be destroyed. As a result, they were able to quickly send them out of Beijing for safe-keeping. Then, in 1970, Guo wrote to Hu that he should continue his work on oracle bones. Hu replied proposing to continue work on the *Heji*. Guo passed on the letter with his commendation and so Hu and his students at the Institute of History were able to renew the project. See Sarah Allan, "Hu Houxuan and the *Jiaguwen heji*," *East Asian Civilizations: New Attempts at Understanding Traditions* 3/4 (1990), 252–57.

LXq: In fact, the reason why Hu was transferred (to the Institute of History) from (Fudan University in) Shanghai (1956) was also because of this. So, even though Guo wasn't often there at the Institute of History, in his role as the head of the Institute he knew everything about its affairs.

When I went to take part in the work at the Cultural Relics Bureau, there were already a lot of people working there. The senior ones included Tang Lan 唐蘭 and Shang Chengzuo 商承祚; the younger ones included Zhu Dexi 朱德熙, Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, and myself. A lot of us met for the first time there. Later we gradually formed an association for the study of paleography. So, that's how I returned to the study of paleography and archaeology and didn't go on doing history of thought and history of philosophy.

In 1978, the Institute of History formally resumed its research work and I returned to the Institute together with Zhang Zhenglang. We formed a "Research Section for the Study of Paleography and Ancient Texts" (*Guwenzi guwenxian yanjiushi* 古文字古文獻研究室). Zhang was the chair and I was the deputy chair. There were quite a few people, including the famous writer, Shen Congwen 沈從文, who was also in this seminar. Not long afterwards, the Academy of Social Sciences was separated off from the Academy of Sciences and the (internal) structure changed, so this Research Section was abolished. The Institute of History then gave me a choice of two assignments, as the senior members were about to retire. One was to be in charge of the Research Section on Pre-Qin History (先秦史研究室); the other was to be in charge of the Research Section for the History of Thought (思想史研究室). I said that I would go to Pre-Qin History, to replace Hu Houxuan, rather than to History of Thought to replace Hou Wailu. The reason? Because it was my own academic specialty and I would be able to do certain research in a public manner. Also, I knew that Hou Wailu did not need me as an assistant because he could no longer do any work. He was completely destroyed by the Cultural Revolution. You never met Hou Wailu. He was a very tall and very imposing person, but after the Cultural Revolution he was unrecognizable. He hardly had any muscle left on him. He did still manage to do some work though.

After I went to the Pre-Qin History (section), I continued doing some work for the Cultural Relics Bureau for many years.

The influence of Gu Jiegang and the *Gushi bian* 古史辨

The problem of how to interpret the historical information found in early Chinese texts has been a core issue for Chinese historians since the early twentieth century. The central text of what was known as the "Doubt Antiquity" (yi

gu 疑古) movement is the *Gushi bian* 古史辨 (“Disputations on ancient history”), edited by Gu Jiegang and published in Shanghai from 1926–41. Even though they are often taken as the signature work of the Doubt Antiquity movement, these volumes include a wide variety of viewpoints from many different scholars. How we should regard the contribution made by these volumes is today one of the major fault lines between Chinese and Western scholars. One reason for this is historical. After 1949, most Chinese scholarship that dealt with theoretical problems was focused on Marxist development theory (i.e. the evolution of social forms from matriarchy to patriarchy and from a slave to a feudal society), so that the issues of historical authenticity that were critical in the early twentieth century were no longer discussed. Moreover, Gu’s works were banned in Taiwan. In the West, on the other hand, many of the scholars who taught in the 1960s and 1970s had studied in China in the 1930s and there was no such rupture. Moreover, the Chinese Doubt Antiquity skepticism towards traditional accounts of the ancient past was re-enforced by that of Western scholarship from the same period which took a more anthropological approach to the ancient texts, as in the works of such scholars as Henri Maspero, Marcel Granet, and Wolfram Eberhard.

Because my own scholarship is deeply rooted in this early reevaluation of the classical texts that took place in the first half of the twentieth century, Li Xueqin and I have often discussed these questions. In these discussions, I have found that he too was much influenced by Gu Jiegang and his school. However, he understands the significance of the *Gushi bian* somewhat differently than I do. Whereas I am impressed by its skeptical attitude and the insight that historical accounts in ancient texts are usually ideological in nature, he considers its challenge to ancient history as primarily a challenge to the ancient texts which were the foundation of historical knowledge before archaeology had developed in China.

In recent years, Li Xueqin has advocated an approach to historical analysis, which he calls “Coming out of the Doubting Antiquity period” (*zou chu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代). Although he is sometimes accused of returning to the position of “believing antiquity” (*xin gu* 信古), i.e., of accepting uncritically the historical accounts of the ancient past, he denies this and argues that neither “believing” nor “doubting” are an appropriate attitude. Rather, one should attempt to construct an understanding of antiquity through a combination of historical texts and archaeological materials (the so-called “two-types-of-evidence method” (*er zhong zhengju fa* 二重證據法); and thus to “interpret antiquity” (*shi gu* 釋古).¹⁹ SA.

19. For a recent interview with Li Xueqin on these matters, see <http://www.csstoday.net/Item/29600.aspx>: “Yi ‘erzhong zhengjufa’ tuidong lishixue he kaoguxe de fazhan—fang lishi xuejia, guwenzi xuejia Li Xueqin” 二重證據法推動歷史學和考古學的發展——訪歷史學家、古文字學家李學勤, from *Zhongguo kexuebao* 273 (October 31, 2012).

SA: I remember that you once told me that you met Gu Jiegang very early on.

LXq: My relationship with Gu Jiegang was very important to me. After he died, I spoke about this at his memorial. The time of my meeting him is very precise. It was in 1955. After 1949, Gu Jiegang was not affiliated with a university. He was living in Shanghai. Gu was a very imaginative person. He was planning to establish a school, a library, and also a publishing house. By this means, he could launch his work. But, how could he manage the financial aspects? In reality, it was very difficult, and he couldn't accomplish much of it. After the Institute of History was established, they wanted to invite the best specialists and to invite Gu Jiegang, who had been the head of the Association of Chinese Historians before 1949. However, it was particularly difficult to invite him because his family was very large and many people relied upon him for their jobs. It's said that in Gu's family there was never an occasion where someone ate by himself; there were always a lot of people there. He was a very generous person and was extremely fond of helping other people. If he were invited to come to the Institute, the first matter was what to do about his books. He had tens of thousands of volumes. So, they gave him the large house on Ganmian Hutong 干面胡同, and also built a library for his books behind it.

In 1955, he came to look at the situation at the Institute of History and Yin Da received him. I was in a small place in the library reading. We had heard that Gu Jiegang would be coming, but none of us had seen him except in photographs. He entered by himself. I looked up and recognized him. I stood up and said, "Hello, Mr. Gu." He looked to see what book I had—it was the *Yin li pu* 殷曆譜 ("Chart of the Yin Calendar," by Dong Zuobin). He said, "Are you reading that?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Have you studied calendrics?" I said that I hadn't formally studied it. He said, "Are you interested in studying it?" I said, "I would really like to." He said, "Good." Then he took a small notebook-size object out of his pocket. In my whole life, I have only seen this type of thing that once. He took out what looked like a notebook from which he tore out a card with a name and address on it. It was a name card, but it was not like the ones we use today. He said, after a few days go to see this person called Wang and he will teach you calendrics. I was delighted.

Gu didn't know me. I was only 22, only a kid. But he was like that. I went. It was near Jianguomen. When I went, the old gentleman was expecting me. He was too old—when he talked to me, water drooled out of his mouth. He said, "You want to study calendrics?" I said, "Yes." He asked me if I had studied astronomy. I said that I hadn't. He then opened up an English book on astronomy for me. It was probably written by an

astronomer of the nineteenth century. Later, I found that I just couldn't study with him; he was too old. So I said that I was sorry. Actually, he was still working. When I met him he was over eighty and he continued to work until he was over ninety. His name was Wang Yingwei 王應偉. His son was a famous scientist. At that time, I didn't know what it was all about. Later on, I found out. He was Gu's uncle (husband of his father's sister) and he had already contacted him for me. Gu was someone who was particularly helpful to people, even people who opposed him. That included Qian Mu 錢穆. Qian Mu was the one who opposed him the most strenuously. Academically they were completely different, but he helped him.

SA: When did you first read the *Gushi bian*?

LXq: I read the *Gushi bian* very early, when I was 13 or 14. When I was in primary school, I often bought old books and once I bought a volume of *Gushi bian*. It was volume three, part one, on the *Zhou Yi* 周易. I didn't understand it very well, but it was very interesting. I especially liked reading it and then when I was in high school, I got all seven volumes to read. At that time, I was very influenced by him and was in agreement with him. Only later when I researched silk and bamboo books did I begin to have some areas where I wasn't in agreement.

SA: The *Gushi bian* is a very complex work; it's not easy to have a very clear attitude towards it. You say were very influenced by the *Gushi bian* scholars to start with. What was the nature of the influence? How did you change later on?

LXq: Right up to before the Cultural Revolution, I was very "Gushi bian." Looking at my early works, you can see this. It was only when I worked on transcribing the silk books (from Mawangdui) that I changed. In fact, the *Gushi bian* includes a lot of different opinions, many of which are diametrically opposed to one another. "Gushi bian" is just the name of the work. However, Gu Jiegang is its representative, with Hu Shi for the early period. In reality, the most fundamental aspect (of this work) is just what the name implies. The *Gushi bian* consisted of arguments about ancient texts; that is, the core of the disputations about ancient history was a dispute about the ancient books. At that time there was no other means (of studying ancient history), so you can't blame them. Most (Chinese) archaeology had not yet begun. In disputing about the ancient texts, they continued many ideas that had developed since the Song Dynasty. Some of these ideas that they developed, especially some of the later ones, are from our vantage point today clearly in error. The reason is that they didn't understand how ancient texts changed over time.

Gu's research method was to use (historical) legend to trace historical changes. But, Chinese history is not legend; there is a transmitted tradition. In this regard, there are many aspects of what (the *Gushi bian* scholars) wrote which are incorrect, and these are what we correct. This is not something recently discovered. For example, Wang Guowei had already pointed out: there is "believing antiquity" and "doubting antiquity"—I don't know who first used these expressions, though Wang Guowei was relatively early. He said that those who "believe" have errors. For example, it is correct that the "old script" version of the *Shang shu* is fake but the "believers" all accept it as genuine. Wang Guowei also criticized the people who believe in the (authenticity of) the *Bamboo Annals*, which, in his opinion, was assembled in the Warring States period and not worth reading. The "believers" made mistakes. But, the "doubters" also made mistakes and their doubts were excessive. Moreover, they didn't construct anything very much.

How then can we approach ancient history? According to Hu Shi, there was no history before the Eastern Zhou. So what should we do? He said that because we have things from below the ground (i.e., archaeological discoveries), oracle bones, and bronze inscriptions, we can join the study of archaeology and the study of history. This is not the approach of the *Gushi bian* group; this is (what is meant by) "Coming out of Doubting Antiquity" (*zouchu yigu* 走出疑古).

SA: You just brought up Gu Jiegang and said that the ancient history of China is not legend (*chuanshuo* 傳說), but surely there is legend within it?

LXq: These questions—how to understand historical legend and how to interpret later texts and scholarship—has been the subject of a lot of discussion and research; for example, by Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 and Yin Da. Yin Da wrote his own book, which not many people have read, called *Zhongguo xinshiqi shidai* 中國新石器時代 ("The Chinese Neolithic Period"). Books by both authors came out in 1943, but their opinions are similar. They were both concerned with how to link archaeology and historical legend. Su Bingqi 蘇秉琦 and Xu were both at the Beiping Yanjiuyuan 北平研究院 and they collaborated on research of this type.

Actually, my article "Coming Out from the Doubting Antiquity Era" (*Zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代), later published in the book of the same name, was originally a lecture at Beijing University.²⁰ Afterwards, Li Ling 李零 and Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光 took notes and it became quite famous. It has brought me no end of trouble!

20. See Li Xueqin, *Zouchu yigu shidai* 走出疑古時代 (Shenyang: Liaoning Daxue, 1994, rev. ed., 1997), 1–2.

SA: I am very interested in how the thought of *Gushi bian* influenced you. The attitude to ancient history was very different than in the period before Hu Shi. There were many debates about ancient Chinese history when you were young; you are a man of that era. How, specifically, did it influence on you?

LXq: This is related to Tsinghua University. That we talk about “believing” and “doubting” antiquity can be traced back to Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, who was my teacher. I attended his classes as a student in the Philosophy Department at Tsinghua, so it’s right to say that he was my teacher. Feng wrote a preface for the sixth volume of *Gushi bian*. There, he said that “believing” antiquity was the Chinese tradition and “doubting” antiquity was the opposing viewpoint. He was using what Wang Guowei had said, but he said that this alone is not sufficient. We must *interpret* antiquity (*shi gu* 釋古). I agree with Feng Youlan. Regardless of whether our sources are texts, archaeological finds, or myths, they all provide material with which to interpret the ancient period. You can’t just say “doubt antiquity” and stop at that. Then you have nothing. So, Feng progressed and said you should “interpret antiquity.” This is correct. “Doubting Antiquity” doesn’t mean anything by itself; it is a means of analyzing (historical) materials. All means of examining materials are always useful. Frankly, (in interpreting antiquity) we—including myself, do not examine historical materials any less (rigorously) than other people. But once you have examined them, there should be a result, not just a rejection of the materials. You should construct something. Li Ji 李濟 was a pure archaeologist and he didn’t talk much about texts, but he did talk a lot about reconstructing history in many of the lectures he gave in Taiwan. For example, he said the contribution of Anyang was that it allowed (archaeological) material from underground to be linked to the (textual) material transmitted above ground.

SA: But I still have a question with regard to legend. What is legend and what is history? If you don’t know that it is really history, how can you put it together with archaeology? It may be possible to link archaeological materials and transmitted texts from the Shang and later periods together, but what about the earlier period? Are there any historical materials for earlier times?

LXq: My opinion in this regard is just the same as yours. In fact, European archaeologists have been excavating for about two hundred years, but they have been almost entirely unsuccessful in putting the stories found in legend together with archaeology. I don’t think there will be success in the future either. For example, with regard to the period of the “five thearchs” (*wu di* 五帝時代) in transmitted texts: if you ask whether there

was such a period, I would say there undoubtedly was—this period certainly existed. How could the period not exist? But can we determine (its history) with archaeological materials? Certainly not. That period is like that—we can look at it from various angles, legend, archaeology, and so on, and we will gradually learn more. For example, I still think that there was a Xia dynasty—in this we disagree—but we do not know much more about it. When researching the Xia, Shang, and Zhou, there is a great deal of mythology (in the texts). This is something we need to research more in the future.

SA: I agree that there was a relatively developed political entity in that period, i.e. Erlitou culture, but did they call themselves “Xia”? We have no means of knowing.

LXq: We should say only as much as we know, but we should not say that because we don’t know about it that it didn’t exist. These are all issues that are open for discussion and research. It’s not that doubting antiquity is wrong, but that it can have a negative side effect, which is to totally discredit many ancient texts. Before the twentieth century, when you got a book about ancient history, it didn’t have any (substantive) content. Yenching University had a famous teacher called Deng Zhicheng 鄧之誠. He wrote a general history called *Zhonghua erqianshi* 中華二千年史 (“two thousand year history of China”). He could only write about the two thousand years of (imperial) history. The research methods of that period and those of today are very different.

SA: There is something that I feel is very important—this is that if something appears late, it always has an earlier source. But what it was like in the earlier period and when it appeared—that is the crux of the problem in interpretation.

LXq: Right. We can use various methods of research. These matters are very troublesome and the further back you go, the more unclear they become. When I teach, I often say, I can see what the first row of students looks like. I don’t see the tenth row clearly, but I can tell whether they are girls or boys. As for the last row, I can’t even tell that (though I know that there are students there).

First Travels Abroad

SA: When and in what circumstances did you begin to go abroad?

LXq: I went to Australia in 1978. At that time, the Academy of Social Sciences had just been formed and I had just returned to the Institute. They

organized a delegation to look at their education system. It very good going with that group. The head of the delegation was called Liu Yang-qiao 劉仰嶠. He was Deputy Director of the education ministry and also Deputy Director of the Academy of Social Sciences, a very good person. Even though he didn't do scholarship, he had a very good attitude to people. There were five or six of us and we went many places, Sidney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide.

SA: What was it like? Did you meet Australian sinologists?

LXq: Of course, we met a lot of people. As you know, they have three academies: Science, Humanities, and Social Sciences. They weren't very clear about what we mean here by Social Sciences because we include the Humanities and they separate them. At the beginning, there were people in finance who came to see us. Then they discovered it was completely wrong. But I did meet Noel Barnard and Zhang Guangyu 張光裕 then. The two of them came to our hotel to see us. I was very pleased. At the end of the trip, we also stopped in Hong Kong for a while, which was the first time I went to Hong Kong. I also met Zheng Liangshu 鄭良樹, with whom I became good friends later on.

SA: And later, you went to the US.

LXq: Right. In 1978, a delegation of American sinologists came to the Institute of History, I was one of the people who received them. The head of the delegation was Yu Yingshi 余英時 and the two deputy heads were Hans Frankel and K.C. Chang. So I got to know them. Other members of the delegation included Hans Bielenstein and Derk Bodde. Professor Bodde was very unhappy because he hoped to meet Feng Youlan and they did not let him. The reason was that at that time people were very angry with Feng Youlan because they considered him to have been the footman for Jiang Qing 江青. I heard that Bodde cried because he was not able to see him.²¹

SA: Although you received this delegation, this didn't have any connection with your going to the US, did it?

LXq: I went for two purposes. One was the Mawangdui conference (at U.C. Berkeley, chaired by Jeffrey Riegel, who had been in the 1978 del-

21. While studying in Beijing from 1931–37, Bodde took Feng Youlan's course at Tsinghua University and then translated his *History of Chinese Philosophy* into English. The first volume, Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy: The Period of the Philosophers (from the beginnings to circa 100 B.C.)*, translated by Derk Bodde, was published in 1937. Later, in 1946–47, he invited Feng Youlan to the University of Pennsylvania to work with him on translating the second volume, which was first published in 1953.

egation). Also, the ICA, International Communication Agency, provided a sum of money which allowed me to travel for a month. On that trip I met Li Fanguai 李方桂 (Li Fang-kuei). I only met him that once. I also met Zhao Yuanren 趙元任 (Y.R. Zhao). I am very happy that some of these older scholars were still alive and I was able to meet them. I also met Yang Lien-sheng (Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞) at Harvard.