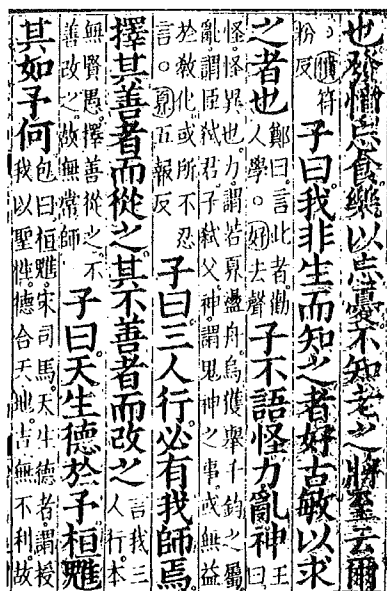


Division of the Humanities
and
Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations
The University of Chicago

A Service in Memory of
Herrlee G. Creel
1905-1994

*The Martin A. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus
Departments of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, and History*



Bond Chapel
The University of Chicago
November 3, 1994

Speakers

Mr. Edward L. Shaughnessy	1
Mr. Anthony C. Yu	2
Mr. Tsuin-hsueh Tsien	5
Ms. Sydney Rosen	8
Mr. David N. Keightley	12
Mr. Michael Loewe	14
Mr. Edward L. Shaughnessy	16

Edward L. Shaughnessy
The University of Chicago

Friends, Alumni, Students, Colleagues:

We gather today to honor the memory of one of the giants of our University and of our field of sinology, Herrlee Glessner Creel. Professor Creel, born in 1905, began to work at the young age of sixteen as a newspaper journalist, a job for which he was well equipped with skill and intellect. His skill, of course, was an ability to write clearly and interestingly about virtually anything, a skill that he never lost in a lifetime of writing, even when his subjects turned academic. I am sure that I am not the only one here today who was first inspired to the study of ancient China by reading Professor Creel's *The Birth of China*, a book written in such a lively way that it brought ancient China to life for its readers. The intellectual trait that suited Professor Creel for journalism--and for academe as well--was an insatiable curiosity for new knowledge, a curiosity that led him both to Anyang in the 1930's, and also--when last I spoke with him person to person--to tell me that he regarded the last article he ever wrote to be the most interesting of his life.

But of course Professor Creel in his eighty-nine years went well beyond his early days as a journalist. Matriculating at the University of Chicago, he learned to take a longer view of knowledge. Like Confucius, whose thought Professor Creel was introduced to at our University and to which he devoted his life here, Herrlee Creel recognized that there are certain eternal verities, and he strived to transmit these. Transmit them he did--to forty years of students at the University and to a wide reading public throughout the Western world. While I suspect that Professor Creel would be little impressed with our humble attempt today to pay honor to his memory, I am quite sure that he would be very pleased indeed with the honor that we--students and scholars alike--do him everyday by continuing to read both the works that he transmitted as well as those that he created.

Anthony C. Yu
The University of Chicago

In the late nineteen-forties when I was studying the Chinese classics with a private tutor and my grandfather in Hong Kong, I was given a set of books by my father upon his return from his first visit to the United States. He told me that he had bought these books on the information that they represented the most up-to-date approach to teaching wenyan, the literary language of China's antiquity. "I have no idea who Herrlee Creel is," my father said, "but I notice that there seem to be many pages of Chinese texts with large characters and a lot of notes and annotations in English. Since you are now learning the Confucian classics, I thought you might find some use for them. And they might help your English."

When I examined those three big and heavy tomes, I found indeed therein the full text of the *Xiaojing* or *The Classic on Filial Piety*, a text which, as was customary to the education of countless young Chinese men and women before me, constituted the beginning of formal studies of my own ancestral writing. At the time I received my father's gift, I had already graduated to the simple explication and rote memorization of the Confucian Four Books, and I found to my delight that there were in the set as well big chunks of the *Analects* and *Mencius* printed in large, regular script in contrast to the tiny graphs that crowded the pages of my school text. That physical feature alone of the publications spurred me to read and re-read the Chinese texts thus presented. It would take some years before my knowledge of English became sufficiently proficient to make sense of some of those notes and annotations and still many more seasons before I began to appreciate the painstaking labor of those three volumes that sought to provide a luminous textbook for the inductive method of learning classical Chinese. When I finally had the opportunity to meet in person the author and editor of that set of books, I rejoiced that they had already been my companion and teacher for more than a quarter of a century.

My good fortune in having this early and beneficial contact with Herrlee Creel, if I could make a bold but not presumptuous suggestion, may perhaps be considered as a sign of the

transnational and transcultural excellence of his scholarship. As far as the American academy was concerned, he began his career during the infant days of sinology, and he had the enviable courage and determination to plunge into the difficult, daunting fields of classical philology, history, archeology and thought. Yet it was apparent as well that the very first works of his would reach beyond his immediate English readership to impress and move a part of the collegial audience in the land and culture which his scholarship strove throughout his life to serve. According to the archives of our University, the academic study of China on this campus had begun before Creel, but there could be no dispute that his presence and labor had made the local endeavor come of age, so to speak. It was thus no surprise that many Chinese students were among those who would journey across land and ocean to sit at his feet over the years of his distinguished career.

Although I never had enjoyed that privilege of working with him as my formal mentor, I was lucky enough to become a young colleague of his not long after I joined the Department's faculty. I still remember quite vividly the occasion of our first meeting, when the gentleness of his demeanor and the genuine interest he showed in my work quickly dissipated any unease I derived from his formidable reputation as a blunt and even abrasive scholar. I had already been told not long before then by another senior member of our department that my projected plan to spend some time in studying a work of vernacular fiction and attempting a complete translation was a waste of time. In Herrlee's presence, I was sorely afraid that I would meet with a similar response now from a colleague whose published scholarship that I had encountered hitherto was literally millennia removed from the subject and time period of my interest. Imagine my delight and surprise when he not only refrained from such censure, but he displayed positive enthusiasm upon being told of my plans, beginning at once to bombard me with all sorts of unexpected questions. It was not until much later that I learned from him that *The Journey to the West* was, in fact, the text used by a hired tutor in Peking to teach him his first lessons in Chinese. Herrlee added, moreover, that he had always considered the classical Confucian documents to be considerably easier to read than the first chapters of the novel!

From the day of our first meeting, Herrlee had proved himself to be ever a kind, attentive, and supportive colleague--eager to chat about affairs of the department or scholarly topics of our mutual interests, generous in the dispensation of time and discerning criticisms for drafts of writing or translation submitted to him, and patient in agreeing to repeated requests for testimonial letters to grant agencies. When the news of another scholar having a much greater headstart in carrying out exactly the same project as mine made me so despondent that I thought of giving up the *Journey* altogether, Herrlee (along with Elder Olson of the English Department) pleaded with me--indeed, demanded that I keep going. The mark of scholarly fortitude, they both averred, is not to quit but to work harder and make the scholarship even better when faced with increasing odds. It is an advice that I hope I'll never forget.

I shall miss him immensely. After his retirement, he would still drive to Hyde Park regularly, and there would be occasional visits with him that turned what purported to be a brief lunch into a couple of hours of hearty and stimulating discussion. Until his eyesight failed him, an offprint or a typescript sent to his home would inevitably elicit a note or a telephone call in return, always begun with the announcement: "This is Herrlee Creel. I think you've an interesting problem there . . ." When I once expressed to him my anger and embarrassment over another colleague's vicious attack of him in several footnotes, Herrlee comforted me with this observation: "But the criticism is not entirely unjust. I may have overlooked something there." Even in a community dedicated to fostering a collegial spirit that breaches all boundaries of discipline or age, the example of Herrlee's integrity and humanity will endure. As a final tribute to him and his memory, I can think of no better words than those of an admonition found in a text that he loved and by which he sought to live: "Learn widely and be steadfast in your purpose, inquire earnestly and reflect on what is at hand, and therein is benevolence" (*Analects* 19:6).

Tsuen-hsuein Tsien
The University of Chicago

Forty-seven years ago, in October, I came to Chicago from China and met Professor Creel for the first time. He was then a young man, attractive, well dressed, powerful and energetic. Over the years, he became my boss, teacher, colleague, and close friend for almost half a century. I owe him tremendously not only for his kindness to me and my family, but also for teaching me how to do research, and for his guidance in whatever fields I have worked in at this University. He was my mentor and the most influential person in my career and life.

My original plan for coming to Chicago was to work and study for two years. But after the first year, Mr. Creel asked me to stay and also to teach. I hesitated because, first, I had no teaching experience. Second, my family was left behind in China. Third, I held an official passport which was issued to me by the Chinese government for travel to Washington, D.C. to take back the Chinese rare books sent to the Library of Congress for safe keeping before World War II. My temporary visa did not allow me even to draw a salary from the University and Mr. Creel paid me from his own pocket for a whole year. After much persuasion by Mr. Creel, I agreed to stay. He then made arrangements with the University administration to introduce a special bill in Congress to grant me residence status, enabling me to work and teach at the University and to bring my family to Chicago. For all this, my family and I will always be deeply grateful to him.

Since then, I worked full-time in the Library, teaching part-time in the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, and studying part-time under a joint program between the Department and the Graduate Library School. I had a few seminar courses with Professor Creel, learning much research methodology from him. He was very strict with all of his students, but patient and kind with me. Some of you may have read my recent article on the transmission of the ancient text *Chan-kuo ts'ue*, which has just been published in a monograph called *Early Chinese Texts*. This article was actually based on a term paper written in one of Professor Creel's classes some forty years ago. My dissertation, which was later published as *Written on Bamboo and Silk*, was also prepared

under his supervision. It was his scholarship and teaching that inspired me to shift my interest to the early period of Chinese civilization. I usually sent my papers and book manuscripts to him and to Mrs. Creel for criticism and comments. I am most indebted to both of them for their constant encouragement and help in my work.

The China program at that time consisted of a small faculty and staff engaging in teaching, research, compilation of textbooks, and operation of a library. Besides Professor Creel, this initial group included the late professors Edward Kracke, Jr., Teng Ssu-yu and Tung Tso-pin, a visiting professor from Academia Sinica, and Ms. June Work, research assistant and secretary. I mention their names here today because I enjoyed friendship with all of them and received much help from them too. Unfortunately, none of them is alive today.

The establishment in 1936 of the Far Eastern Library is one of many significant contributions Professor Creel made to East Asian Studies at this University. This collection grew rapidly during its initial decade and already had a holding of 100,000 volumes when I came to Chicago in 1947. Although this Library has grown to almost half a million volumes today, the basis of its resources is still the core collection built up by Professor Creel. This collection covers not only all of the major fields of classical literature, but also contains many rare and unique editions not found elsewhere. They were systematically selected item by item to support the teaching and research program in this University.

Professor and Mrs. Creel spent the year 1939-40 in China personally supervising the acquisitions, and later entrusted the selections to a member of the National Library in Beijing for specialization on ancient China. Especially noted is the collection on Confucian classics, which has been the largest and best of its kind outside of China. This legacy should be credited to the far-sightedness, unusual knowledge of Chinese literature, and love of books of Professor Creel, who we are commemorating today.

I had the good fortune of working in this Library under his guidance for over thirty years. Friends often ask me why I have stayed at Chicago for so long. Yes, without my deep respect for Professor Creel, and the wonderful friendship of Professor and Mrs.

Creel with me and my family, I would perhaps not be here to tell you my story today. Let us always remember a great scholar and pioneer, who deserves our respect and tribute--Professor Herrlee G. Creel.

Sydney Rosen
San Francisco, California

The most exciting and enlarging course I ever have taken, at Chicago or elsewhere, was the first year of Chinese language, especially in the winter and spring quarters. Day by day those classes stretched the imagination as far as it would go--at eight o'clock in the morning yet. In an atmosphere of rising tension, we sat before god and translated, or tried to translate, with god prodding and pushing, offering an occasional hint, but no real rescue until the hour was nearly over. It was painful. I lost twelve pounds that year. But the class also was totally absorbing and stirring.

In the winter quarter, when we started reading the thin red book, the Creel, Rudolph, Chang version of the *Lun Yu* (largely the Creel version, I suspect, though he denied that), China in the sixth century B.C. became immanent in a small room in the Oriental Institute. The selected passages are a rearrangement from the original classic and this version incarnates and humanizes the icon that is Confucius. Gradually the picture builds of a dedicated and caring teacher with a complex theory of the good life and the good society, passionately seeking to persuade a mostly indifferent world to live his way and aching with the pain of failure when the world goes its own way.

To know this man and to penetrate his language, we worked our butts off. Those who didn't--left. In later years I proposed to Herrlee several times that he publish an annotated bi-lingual edition of his *Lun Yu*, but he never was interested. It's a shame, because it would have been a wonderful introduction to pre-modern China in undergraduate classes. However, for us graduate novices, the book and the Confucian professor merged in the classroom to forge a unique learning experience, and pre-Han China entered the blood stream.

It wasn't always a positive uplifting experience to work with Herrlee Creel. Sometimes it could be numbing. Professor Creel was capable of rage--he used it like a maestro to achieve his ends. I came back to the University to take a doctorate when I was in my mid-thirties, after ten years as a newspaper reporter. Except in the language class I wasn't modest or awed by anyone. When I wrote my first seminar paper I thought it was good and I read it to the

class with, apparently overt, pride. Professor Creel decided to take care of that--in a private critique session.

Prowling around his office as he talked, with a voice oozing sarcasm, he picked apart every idea, every line, every word. He had never seen anything so stupid as this paper. I sat there stunned. When he announced that nobody had ever given him such a badly written paper, I suggested there was nothing more to say and walked out.

For two days I simmered, and then, without an appointment, I walked back into Professor Creel's office, sat down opposite his desk and with all the bite I could muster I responded point by point to his slanders. Then I told the professor, in carefully chosen words, how I could be taught--or how I could learn--and how I could not. Herrlee didn't say a word. Not a muscle moved in his face. He just sat there and looked at me. Suddenly my own behavior struck me as bizarre and I started to laugh. I proposed that we start over, asked if I could register for a course the following quarter and I suggested that we make a deal never to lose our tempers with each other on the same day. Herrlee grunted--maybe the sound he made was a Brooklyn raspberry--and he wished me luck. But we had a deal. For more than thirty years it worked--and I think the support and the friendship that marked those years started that day. As he walked out of the office in back of me, I heard him say--very softly--"You wouldn't want me to make it too easy for you, would you?"

He need not have worried. It never was easy. Herrlee's expectations exerted a subtle pressure on his students to work with nearly total concentration. But Herrlee worked harder. He expended prodigious energy in the classroom. He was a slender man, not tall, not physically designed to dominate a room. And yet when he walked through the classroom door, he did dominate the room. Compressed energy and passion for his subject made itself felt. If classroom teaching is performance, for Herrlee it was a star turn every time. He was equally intense for fifty in a lecture hall or for one in an office tutorial. And for the individual students specializing in his field, time and effort had no limit.

When Herrlee accepted a student to major in his field, his support was generous and very public. He fretted when a student lacked money for a much needed winter coat. He discussed at the departmental lunch table a translation that struck true in some

original way or a paper that he liked. He fought for adequate fellowships. Three times when I was in the hospital for major surgery, once as a student in Chicago and twice as an alumnus in California, Herrlee telephoned to ask if I needed money. I never borrowed from him, but I know of two young men each of whom was tided over a financial crisis by a personal loan from Herrlee Creel, and I am sure there were others.

One quarter, when I was taking a tutorial course on the *Chuang Tzu*, a close friend of mine suffered a massive stroke. She was totally paralyzed and, though obviously alert, was unable to speak. I missed my Tuesday class because I was with her in the hospital and arrived for the Thursday class straight from her bedside, in the clothes I'd been wearing for three days. This was my first experience with major illness, and the inability to make a sound had particularly horrified me. The shock, I guess, was on my face. I told Herrlee what had happened. "Could you just talk for a few minutes?" I asked. "I just want to hear a voice." And for two and a half hours Herrlee talked non-stop about the *Chuang Tzu*. He stood staring out the window into the tree tops, with one foot propped up on something--a chair, I guess--and he talked. I huddled in my chair and let the sound wash over me. I recall thinking that he was saying something important that I should remember, but I was only listening to the sound. Finally he turned to look at me, told me I was all right now and to go home and get some sleep. Later neither of us remembered what he had said that day, and both of us were sure we had lost some important thought. In the next class session the passage designated for us to sight read together and discuss was changed. We skipped to that passage in which Hui Tzu pays a condolence call on Chuang Tzu and they discuss death. We talked long about that passage.

Occasionally Herrlee would say to me, "I'm really a Taoist" and I always would laugh at him and assure him that he never would make it if he lived to be 200. He was too committed--to China, which he really loved; to Confucius, who was a close friend; to his expectations of his students, to scholarship, to teaching.

The teaching never stopped. It was quite some time after I'd received my degree that I read a conference paper on Kuan Chung's administrative contribution to Chinese unity. A student in the audience rose to claim there was a passage in the *Tso Chuan* that he

said I had skipped, which he claimed would put a hole in my theory. I replied that I hadn't found that passage, but if he would send me a citation I would look at it and reconsider. Immediately after the session, standing at the door as we left the room, Herrlee laced into me. "You know you have covered all of the *Tso Chuan* and you know there is no such passage. Now you've left a question hanging," he stormed. "That's not scholarship. You work thoroughly and carefully, you use your imagination to see all that is to be found and express it accurately, then you have the courage of your knowledge. Wishy washy wavering is not scholarship." Then the mood changed, his eyes warmed and he invited me to have a drink with him and Lorraine.

Through the years we stayed in touch by letter and, after he lost his sight, by telephone. We wrote or talked and argued with great zest about books, politics, social issues, the University of Chicago (in which he never lost interest). Herrlee's opinions often were extreme and always strongly held. But when one pushed him, made him reason back to the sources of those opinions, one found that, almost invariably, they stemmed from his particular sense of integrity.

Integrity as a central principle of living was at the core of almost everything Herrlee Creel did, as a scholar, as a teacher, as a man. When his sense of integrity clashed with his kindness, integrity won. When his sense of integrity was at odds with his affection, integrity prevailed. Maybe he drew that focus from the *Lun Yu*. Or maybe that's what first drew him to the *Lun Yu*.

I think he was Confucian and so could not achieve the Taoist detachment he sometimes wanted. But in his attitude toward death Herrlee was a Taoist. If it were possible for him to send his shade into this room now, the shade would instruct me to get a copy of the *Chuang Tzu* and reread that passage in which Hui Tzu pays a condolence call on Chuang Tzu. Hui Tzu is shocked to find Chuang Tzu beating a drum and singing. His wife's death, Chuang Tzu explains, was just like birth, growth and the change of seasons. It was a natural and inevitable occurrence. "Read that and think about it," Herrlee's shade would say. "Everybody dies. One way or another, everybody is going to do it. It's a necessary culmination of life, a part of living." And here his voice would take on a familiar note of asperity, "So why don't you stop mooning and mourning and get on with things!"

And I would answer: "That's easier said than done."

David N. Keightley
University of California, Berkeley

I did not know Professor Creel well, personally. But I feel that I knew him well through his scholarship. In preparing these remarks I was moved to reflect on the way Creel's world and mine have almost intersected at least twice, long before I knew of his impressive scholarship.

The "Introduction" to the *Hopkins Collection of Oracle Bone Inscriptions* was written in 1939 in the town of Haslemere, in England. That was precisely the year in which I was sent to boarding school in Haslemere at the start of World War II. Little did I know then that I was so close to the oracle bones, which Creel did so much to introduce to the world of Western scholarship, and which was to become so central to my own work. (It was in this year, in fact, that Professor Creel would have been in Peking, buying books for the University of Chicago Library.)

Ten years later I was graduating from Evanston Township High School, the same year in which Professor Creel published *Confucius, The Man and the Myth*. Once again, however, I had no inkling that what was happening in Chicago, just to my south, was to play such an important role in my later career.

When I entered graduate school, at Columbia University, I spent three rather boring years studying modern China and the writings of Chairman Mao. It was then that I realized that the really big questions lay far back in the past. And when I turned to the past, it was a pleasure to discover Professor Creel's writings waiting to enlighten me. Indeed, I remember an AAS meeting in the 1960's at which I had the privilege of hearing Professor Creel present his "Birth of Bureaucracy in China" paper; I found it a revelation, for its richness, its sense of significance, its originality.

The world of scholarship has certainly changed since Professor Creel first started to write. It has become far more technical, with a secondary literature that is enormous. Professor Creel was a pioneer--he dealt with big issues, he made them significant. His scholarly life was a life well lived. He produced a body of scholarship--much of it increasingly technical too--that was well respected and that continues to have influence today.

To invoke a Chinese model, Professor Creel is very much of the

ta tsung, the great line of scholarly descent in which the great enterprise of cultural understanding in which we are all engaged is rooted. He is a model for all of us.

Michael A. Loewe
University of Cambridge

Only twice did I have the good fortune to meet Herrlee Creel in person: once in 1967 at Ann Arbor, Michigan; once a few years later in Taiwan. But brief and rare as these meetings were, they were sufficient to provide an insight into the scholar with whose works I was well familiar.

Herrlee Creel was a pioneer; one of the few pioneers of the Western world who set themselves to discover and assess the bare facts of a civilization with which the academic circles of the West were almost totally unfamiliar, or even deliberately oblivious.

We talk of the 1920's-1930's. It is difficult perhaps today to bear in mind how limited the outlook was of many of those who took decisions in high places, guiding the affairs of nations, moulding ways of thought, supervising the education of the next generation. These were times when the peoples of East Asia had yet to show that they could exercise a commanding influence on the policies of other lands; when few academics of the West possessed sufficient intellectual imagination or professional facilities to bend their minds to the achievements of the humanities that arose outside Europe. Herrlee Creel, we say, was a pioneer and an exception, fired by an interest with which he was born to take a hard, cool look at the origins of a people whose works of art were readily seen in the museums but rarely explained, whose literatures were gradually becoming known through translations into English and French.

The concern with China hitherto had been mainly of two types. There was that of the dilettante, or amateur scholar, convinced that a golden age of Chinese culture lay some 3000 years back, unable or unwilling to distinguish fact from fiction, or to analyze the value of mythology. There was also the interest expressed by the active missionary, businessman or journalist, whose success in life depended on a comprehension of the China that met his eyes. Herrlee Creel was one of the very few who saw the need to study China's cultural history in its full depth, with the same rigor and criticism deemed essential and normal for a study of Biblical texts, Sumerian tablets, Greek philosophy, or the tombs of Egypt.

Herrlee Creel was not simply content to stand in awe before

the beauties of the Chinese bronzecaster or potter, or to accept without query the news of excavations and discoveries that was beginning to find its way into the journals of a European language. Such evidence, Creel knew, must be backed by that of literature and philological study; it must be seen as a part of a whole, whose various elements could give a comprehensive view of a civilization and could dispel some of the current misapprehensions.

Creel's learned research and publications of the 1930s accompanied the fine scholarly work of masters such as Eduard Chavannes, Paul Pelliot, Bernhard Karlgren, Arthur Waley, to name but a few. In addition to setting out a theme within which the origins and growth of Chinese civilization could be set, Creel supplied a further invaluable contribution--publication of his findings in a form that would attract the interest of the non-specialist, that would engage the attention of newly aroused students, and that would display to the academic world that Chinese studies merited an active disciplinary approach. In recalling with deep respect and thankfulness his work, we do well to remember what few facilities were at his disposal and how bare his bookshelves were. Monographs in Western languages would scarce have filled a row upon his desk; the Chinese dictionaries and works of reference which we today take for granted had yet to be written; contacts with the intellectual world of war-torn China were anything but easy; collaboration with Japanese scholars had yet to come. By working in such conditions and leaving his contributions to students of the future, Herrlee Creel bequeathed the learned world a legacy. We stand today upon his shoulders, grateful for his achievement.

Edward L. Shaughnessy
The University of Chicago

Although we have come now to the close of this memorial service, we do not today close the book on the life work of Professor Creel. Indeed, I think that Professor Creel would take very great pride today at the people who have come here to the University of Chicago to pay their respects to him. We have in the first place twelve of the very finest scholars of early China, scholars from Beijing, Oxford, Cambridge, and from throughout these United States. More important for our University, and doubtless for our field of sinology as well, I see another dozen or more graduate students who are here day in and day out studying the cultural history of ancient China. I am pleased also today to be able to announce the inaugural lecture in the Herrlee G. Creel Memorial Lecture series, which has been made possible by the generous donations of many of those in attendance today: Professor Cho-yun Hsu of the University of Pittsburgh, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Academia Sinica in Taipei, one of Professor Creel's preeminent students in the field of early China studies will visit campus to speak in May of 1995.

Now and in the future, to do honor to Professor Creel, let us all, students and scholars alike, take heart from the words of Confucius, who said:

"While a man's father is alive, you can only see his intentions; it is when his father dies that you discover whether or not he is capable of carrying them out. If for the whole three years of mourning he manages to carry on the household exactly as in his father's day, then he is a good son indeed" (*Analects* 1/11).

Taking heart, let us rededicate ourselves to the study of classical China.