Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

University History Series
Department of History at Berkeley

David N. Keightley

HISTORIAN OF EARLY CHINA, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, 1969-1998

With an Introduction by
David Johnson

Interviews Conducted by
Frances Starn
in 2001

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

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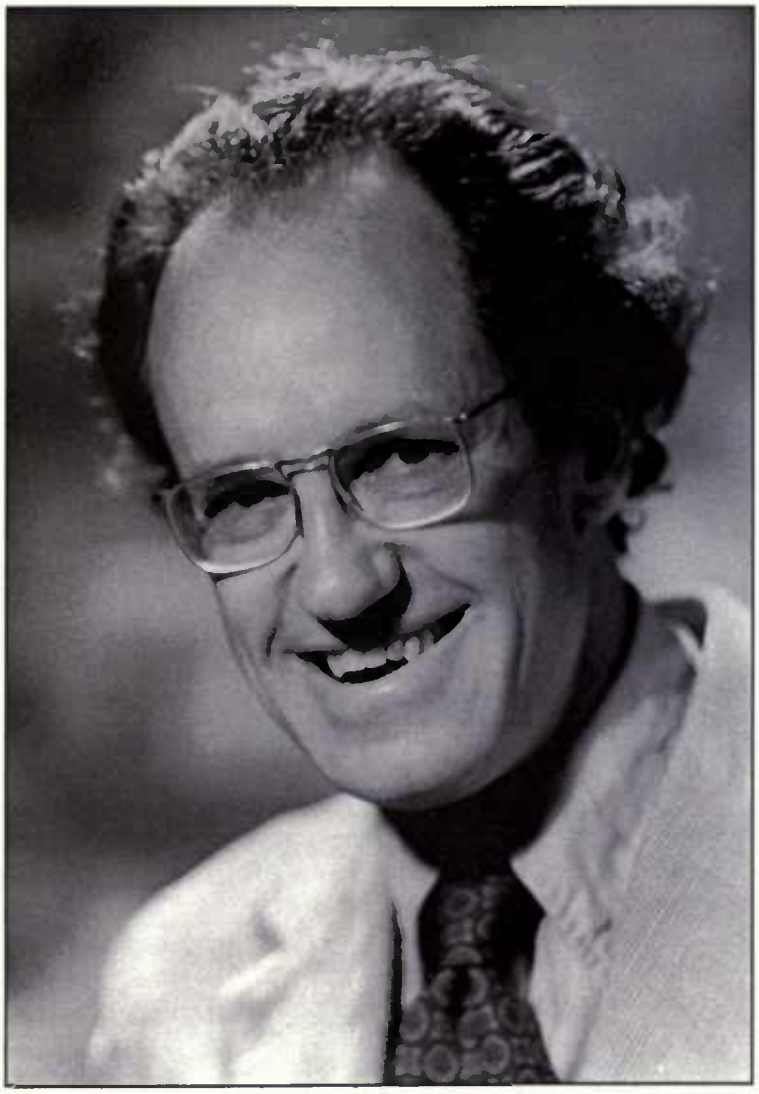

David Keightley, Visiting Fellow, Cambridge University, 1978.

TABLE OF CONTENTS--David N. Keightley

PREFACE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AT BERKELEY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

The Department of History at Berkeley oral history series grew out of Gene Brucker's (Professor of History, 1954-1991) 1995 Faculty Research Lecture on "History at Berkeley." In developing his lecture on the transformations in the UC Berkeley Department of History in the latter half of the twentieth century, Brucker, whose tenure as professor of history from 1954 to 1991 spanned most of this period, realized how much of the story was undocumented.

Discussion with Carroll Brentano (M.A. History, 1951, Ph.D. History, 1967), coordinator of the University History Project at the Center for Studies in Higher Education, history department faculty wife, and a former graduate student in history, reinforced his perception that a great deal of the history of the University and its academic culture was not preserved for future generations. The Department of History, where one might expect to find an abiding interest in preserving a historical record, had discarded years of departmental files, and only a fraction of history faculty members had placed their personal papers in the Bancroft Library.[1]

Moreover, many of the most interesting aspects of the history--the life experiences, cultural context, and personal perceptions--were only infrequently committed to paper.[2] They existed for the most part in the memories of the participants.

Carroll Brentano knew of the longtime work of the Regional Oral History Office (ROHO) in recording and preserving the memories of participants in the history of California and the West and the special interest of ROHO in the history of the University. She and Gene Brucker then undertook to involve Ann Lage, a ROHO interviewer/editor who had conducted a number of oral histories in the University History Series and was herself a product of Berkeley's history department (B.A. 1963, M.A. 1965). In the course of a series of mutually enjoyable luncheon meetings, the project to document the history of the Department of History at Berkeley evolved.

In initial discussions about the parameters of the project, during which the varied and interesting lives of the history faculty were considered, a crucial decision was made. Rather than conduct a larger set of short oral histories focused on topics limited to departmental history, we determined to work with selected members of the department to conduct more lengthy biographical memoirs. We would record relevant personal background--family, education, career choices, marriage and children, travel and avocations; discuss other institutional affiliations; explore the process of creating their historical works; obtain reflections on their retirement years. A central topic for each would be, of course, the Department of History at Berkeley--its governance, the informal and formal relationships among colleagues, the

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[1] The Bancroft Library holds papers from history professors Walton Bean, Woodbridge Bingham, Herbert Bolton, Woodrow Borah, George Guttridge, John Hicks, Joseph Levenson, Henry May, William Alfred Morris, Frederic Paxson, Herbert Priestley, Engel Sluiter, Raymond Sontag.

[2] Two published memoirs recall the Berkeley history department: John D. Hicks, *My Life with History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968) recalls his years as professor and dean, 1942-1957; Henry F. May reflects on his years as an undergraduate at Berkeley in the thirties in *Coming to Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

connections with the broader campus, and curriculum and teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

Using the Brucker lecture as a point of departure, it was decided to begin to document the group of professors who came to the department in the immediate postwar years, the 1950s, and the early 1960s. Now retired, the younger ones somewhat prematurely because of a university retirement incentive offer in the early nineties, this group was the one whose distinguished teaching and publications initially earned the Department of History its high national rating. They made the crucial hiring and promotion decisions that cemented the department's strength and expanded and adapted the curriculum to meet new academic interests.

At the same time, they participated in campus governing bodies as the university dealt with central social, political, and cultural issues of our times, including challenges to civil liberties and academic freedom, the response to tumultous student protests over free speech, civil rights and the Vietnam War, and the demands for equality of opportunity for women and minorities. And they benefitted from the postwar years of demographic and economic growth in California accompanied for the most part through the 1980s with expanding budgets for higher education. Clearly, comprehensive oral histories discussing the lives and work of this group of professors would produce narratives of interest to researchers studying the developments in the discipline of history, higher education in the modern research university, and postwar California, as well as the institutional history of the University of California.

Carroll Brentano and Gene Brucker committed themselves to facilitate the funding of the oral history project, as well as to enlist the interest of potential memoirists in participating in the process. Many members of the department responded with interest, joined the periodic lunch confabs, offered advice in planning, and helped find funding to support the project. In the spring of 1996, the interest of the department in its own history led to an afternoon symposium, organized by Brentano and Professor of History Sheldon Rothblatt and titled "Play It Again, Sam." There, Gene Brucker restaged his Faculty Research Lecture. Professor Henry F. May responded with his own perceptions of events, followed by comments on the Brucker and May theses from other history faculty, all videotaped for posterity and the Bancroft Library.[1]

Meanwhile, the oral history project got underway with interviews with Delmer Brown, professor of Japanese history; Nicholas Riasanovsky, Russian and European intellectual history; and Kenneth Stampp, American history. A previously conducted oral history with Woodrow Borah, Latin American history, was uncovered and placed in The Bancroft Library. An oral history with Carl Schorske, European intellectual history, is in process at the time of this writing, and more are in the works. The selection of memoirists for the project is determined not only by the high regard in which they are held by their colleagues, because that would surely overwhelm us with candidates, but also by their willingness to commit the substantial amount of time and thought to the oral history process. Age, availability of funding, and some attention to a balance in historical specialties also play a role in the selection order.

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[1] The Brucker lecture and May response, with an afterword by David Hollinger, are published in *History at Berkeley: A Dialog in Three Parts* (Chapters in the History of the University of California, Number Seven), Carroll Brentano and Sheldon Rothblatt, editors [Center for Studies in Higher Education and Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1998].

The enthusiastic response of early readers has reaffirmed for the organizers of this project that departmental histories and personal memoirs are essential to the unraveling of some knotty puzzles: What kind of a place is this University of California, Berkeley, to which we have committed much of our lives? What is this academic culture in which we are enmeshed? And what is this enterprise History, in which we all engage? As one of the project instigators reflected, "Knowing what was is essential; and as historians we know the value of sources, even if they are ourselves." The beginnings are here in these oral histories.

Carroll Brentano, Coordinator
University History Project
Center for Studies in Higher Education

Gene Brucker
Shepard Professor of History Emeritus

Ann Lage, Principal Editor
Regional Oral History Office

INTRODUCTION by David Johnson

The following pages were written a few years ago for a special issue of *Early China* published in honor of my old friend David Keightley. I have removed passages that referred to a few matters that are no longer relevant and some celebratory language appropriate to a festschrift but not to the preface to an oral history, and have tinkered here and there, but otherwise left the piece intact. It has very little to say about his later years at Berkeley, but those are covered fully in his own recollections and certainly need no additions from me. I hope what I do say will give readers some sense of David both as a scholar and a unique human being.

I first met David in Taipei's old International House, late in the summer of 1965. We were about to begin what turned out to be two years of study at the Stanford Center. Both of us had begun the study of Chinese history in graduate school after having majored in something else in college, both of us had married recently, and we both were in Taiwan for the first time. We were pretty green, though David was somewhat wiser in the ways of the world (and would remain so), since he had spent five years in publishing in New York before deciding that Chinese history was too important to be left entirely to others. That decision tells you all you need to know about David's self-confidence and fundamental seriousness.

Pedicabs—heavy-duty bicycles with a two-wheeled seat welded on behind the seat—were still common in Taipei then, though motorbikes and motorcycles were rapidly increasing in number, heralds of a new age. There were also a few Datsun taxicabs (not Nissan yet), usually painted what I always thought of as nail-polish pink. Finding ways to get their drivers to slow down, or stop, was one of the earliest challenges to our language skills.

At that time a graduate student couple on a National Defense Foreign Language fellowship stipend could rent an entire house, hire a live-in servant, and have money left over to buy furniture and take pedicabs or even taxis instead of the bus. But beyond the essentials there was little enough to buy, even of pirated books. The maelstrom of commerce that is today's Taipei was undreamed of; the buildings of the central business district were still almost entirely two- or three-story structures dating from the Japanese period. There was always the "noodle circle" for nighttime adventures, but the most exciting night out for most of the young married couples was dinner at the MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) compound, just down Hsin Yi Lu from International House, where we could get as much middle-American chow as we cared to eat for next to nothing.

The memory of those years will never fade, though the neighborhood where we lived has changed beyond recognition. International House has been demolished; Hsin Sheng Nan Lu, in those days two narrow lanes separated by a big drainage ditch, is now a six- or eight-lane boulevard packed with cars; and the Niu-jou Mien Ta Wang ("Monarch of Beef Noodle Soup"), whose shack with its oil-drum stoves supporting tall stacks of little bamboo steamers was located smack in the middle of Hsin Yi Lu, has long since been swept away by the tidal wave of change. David says that the last time he visited the neighborhood only half of his old house was still standing, the rest having been replaced by a large apartment building. The very *lane* on which I lived for two years has vanished.

Memories come crowding back: the hard work and camaraderie of the Stanford Center; the never-solved mystery of how to deal with our amahs; shopping for "antiques" at what the foreigners call Haggle Alley, and expeditions into the countryside. Of these, by far the most enjoyable and exciting were to O-luan-pi, at the southern tip of the island, a long day's trip by train and bus from Taipei, the last leg over gravel roads. In those days there was nothing at O-luan-pi besides a few farmhouses, a small monument, and a lighthouse. But on a plateau well above the lighthouse, reached by a steep paved road, there was a U.S. military radar installation. The radar station had a "hostel" where American students could stay for a few nights if they had a connection. I expect it was as close to Shangri-la as I will ever get. The view was unobstructed to the horizon in all directions—ocean to the west, south, and east, and to the north miles and miles of the empty, rugged eastern coast. A wind was almost always sweeping strongly over the cluster of little buildings and across the close-cropped grass. The sky was very high, the sunlight powerful, the air humid and intensely clean. From the hostel a steep path ran down to some sheltered beaches on the west coast, where our little group of young couples—always including Ken and Judith DeWoskin—swam (with a careful eye out for sharks), hunted for shells, and tried to find shade for our picnics among the coral outcroppings. The climb back up in the hot sun was always a challenge, but we could look forward to having a cold American beer in the tiny lunchroom in the building where the technicians lived, a special treat since in those days Taiwan beer was of very uneven quality.

After our two years in Taiwan David returned to Columbia and I to Berkeley. He finished his dissertation in time to be considered for the position in Chinese history at Berkeley that came open when Woodbridge Bingham retired. I can recall explaining to Joe Levenson just how good I thought this fellow Keightley was as we walked through Faculty Glade one day when the search was still on. I don't think the department had made an offer yet, and it amuses me sometimes to imagine that my enthusiasm had some slight effect on the outcome. In due course David, Vannie, and Steven arrived in Berkeley, were taken to favorite picnic spots and restaurants, introduced to friends, and advised on apartments and cars. (An elderly light grey Mercedes that I strongly recommended became the Keightley family albatross for a while.) The next year I finished up, and got a job at Columbia.

We proceeded on parallel courses for about ten years, during which time David published *Sources of Shang History*, founded *Early China*, and laid the deep foundations of his later work. Then another position in Chinese history opened up at Berkeley, and our paths rejoined. I have always assumed David had a substantial role to play in that decision (which kept me from having to leave the profession in the great crunch of the early 1980s), but he is too much of a *chün-tzu* to have ever brought it up.

This will not surprise anyone who knows him, since David tries to play by the rules. The most important of those rules, I think, is the one that dictates hard work, on his own behalf and on behalf of his department, his university, his profession. However, David also just plays: he is the greatest master of conversational repartée I have known; he is a devotee of Gilbert and Sullivan and has written (often in collaboration with Jim Cahill) numerous skits of the Savoyard persuasion for campus festivities; and he is a passionate bicyclist, one of the leaders of a group of fellow enthusiasts known fondly (to themselves, at least) as the Yuppie Bikers. But work or play, everything is approached with intensity and focus; David Keightley tries not to waste his time.

I believe I introduced David to the saying (attributed to Aby Warburg) "God is in the details." He made this motto his own, as his students and colleagues can attest, and it does sum up an important

part of his scholarly credo. I think that it was not just the lure of origins that pulled him back to earlier and earlier periods; I suspect that the very scarcity of data in early history, where every fact has a provenance and where every interpretation is constructed of such facts, also made it appealing. Concrete evidence, especially the tangible, nonverbal details that are the archeologists' stock in trade, is deeply appealing to him. He is of course interested in words as well as things, and in interpretive schemes as well as technical detail, and is extremely good at finding large themes and writing about them with precision and elegance. Yet it seems to me that his instincts always pull him back from the general to the specific, from the broad generalization to the concrete particular. To want rock-solid answers to broad questions sets up a substantial tension, one that is I think visible in much of his work.

Though he has been retired for several years, and has had more than his share of medical adventures, he is as active and intensely disciplined as ever. He is now, as he has been as long as I have known him, a remarkable man, as this oral history will show.

David Johnson
Professor of History
University of California, Berkeley

June 18, 2002
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--David N. Keightley

David Keightley did not travel the most direct path to become a distinguished scholar and teacher of early Chinese history. Born in London to an American father and Anglo-French mother, he was educated--variously, but often well--in wartime England and postwar America. He first embarked on what soon became a flourishing career in publishing and writing in New York, which he then abandoned, with due consideration, to focus on the study of China. His ensuing work, completed mainly during his twenty-nine years in the Berkeley history department, opened new perceptions of ancient Chinese culture around the world.

David Keightley's research and reflection concentrate on the Late Shang era, 1200-1045 B.C., blending history, archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, and paleography. He was largely responsible for the creation of a society of scholars of early China, and their eponymous journal. At the same time, he played a central role in the professional and social life of the Berkeley history department, as well as in East Asian Studies. His colleagues have known him as a lively, congenial man with a gift for friendship and celebration as well as for hard work. His inventive lecture courses were heavily subscribed and recalled by his students with much enthusiasm and affection.

When a MacArthur Fellowship recognized the originality and potential of his research on early China, he did not therefore withdraw from his community to pursue his own work. He became chair of the history department in 1992 during the painful early years of reduced funding of the university, when no hiring was taking place. During a strike by the graduate student employees in the early months of his chairmanship, he suffered a major heart attack, but continued with his duties for two more years. Since his retirement in 1998 he has been working to complete his major work on kingship and religion in Bronze-Age China, but he also lectures and participates in conferences and international scholarly projects.

David's unusual distinction as a scholar and his service as a teacher and as department chair made him a natural subject for the Regional Oral History Office's Department of History at Berkeley series. However, he requested--for characteristic reasons of modesty and efficiency--a relatively compact oral history, and we agreed to meet in four closely-spaced sessions in July 2001. We talked in the breakfast nook in the Keightleys' Kensington home, with a view of San Francisco Bay on one side and on the opposite wall pictures of two buxom, cycling goddesses by a local artist, Mayumi Oda. The contrast of the cool Pacific panorama from the west window and the effervescent corporeality on the east wall was nicely balanced. David is a great raconteur as well as a serious historian, and our interviews were very enjoyable. At the end of August we met for a final session to incorporate some of my dangling questions and David's additions and reflections. His comments then, especially on the part wars had played throughout his life, took on a special depth and poignancy since they were made only two weeks before September 11, 2001.

David, who has donated the files from his years as history department chair to the University Archives, has reason to lament what he calls the "lack of institutional memory" of his colleagues. In his own history he has been both generous and articulate, not only about himself but about his discipline and his university. Very few changes were made in the actual content of the transcription, but David, himself an experienced editor, engineered some reordering toward more narrative continuity.

David Johnson, a Sinologist who has known David Keightley longer than any of his Berkeley colleagues, kindly agreed to provide an introduction. Vannie Keightley read and approved the transcription and helped in photo selection. Jessica Ross Stern was a diligent and thoughtfully engaged transcriber, and Shannon Page dealt resourcefully with my electronic editing as it arrived unevenly from Rome. Ann Lage was always ready to consult and advise from her long experience and special knowledge of the Berkeley history department. Thanks are owed to all of them, but especially, of course, to David Keightley.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Richard Cándida Smith, Director, and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Frances Starn
Interviewer/Editor

Berkeley, California
May 2002

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name KEIGHTLEY, DAVID NOEL

Date of birth 25 OCT 1932 Birthplace LONDON, U.K.

Father's full name WALTER ALLISON KEIGHTLEY

Occupation PETROLEUM ENGINEER Birthplace BELLEVIEW, IL.

Mother's full name JEANNE GABRIELLE KEIGHTLEY

Occupation DRESS DESIGNER Birthplace LONDON, U.K.

Your spouse/partner VANNIE LOUISE TRAYLOR

Occupation ARTIST Birthplace MARYVILLE, TN

Your children STEVEN TRAYLOR KEIGHTLEY
RICHARD DURET KEIGHTLEY

Where did you grow up? ENGLAND TILL 15; THEN EVANSTON, IL.

Present community BERKELEY, CA.

Education B.A., AMHERST COLLEGE, 1953; M.A., NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, 1956; Ph.D., COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, 1969

Occupation(s) EDITOR, TEXT- AND TRADE-BOOK PUBLISHING; FREE-LANCE WRITER; PROFESSOR OF CHINESE HISTORY

Areas of expertise ORIGINS OF CIVILIZATION IN CHINA; ORIGINS OF CHINESE WRITING; EARLY CHINESE RELIGION, DIVINATION, LABOR ORGANIZATION; THE LATE SHANG DYNASTY (CA. 1200-1045 BC) AND ITS ORACLE-BONE INSCRIPTIONS

Other interests or activities BICYCLING; SINGING

Organizations in which you are active SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF EARLY CHINA

SIGNATURE David N. Keightley DATE: 8/1/01

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID KEIGHTLEY

I BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION, 1932-1948

Early Years in England

[Interview 1: July 16, 2001]##[1]

Starn: David, we should begin at the beginning. Could you tell us a little about your parents and the circumstances of your birth?

Keightley: I was born in London on the twenty-fifth of October, 1932--born in a nursing home on Bentinck Street, which is of interest because, as I later found out, this is the street where the historian Gibbon lived for many happy years. [Gibbon at #7; Keightley at #19]

My father was an American petroleum refining engineer who had been living in London for a couple of years. An American friend of his had advertised in the paper that he wanted to live with a French-speaking family, but then the friend's fiancée came over from the States, they got married, and there was nobody to take the room. So my father took it, and essentially married the landlady's daughter. My mother was the oldest daughter of a large French family. She had five younger brothers. Her father, Louis Albert Desoutter, was a very distinguished watchmaker, a jeweler. Her mother, Philomène Duret, was a dress designer, someone who made clothes for the aristocracy. My father lived with them, and they got married--in 1930, I think.

Starn: Having an American father and a French mother, and living in London, put you in an interesting situation during the beginning of the Second World War. Could you talk a little bit about your early childhood?

Keightley: It has occurred to me that, in a sense, I was never really a full member of English society. My father was an American; he was an only child. His father died of tuberculosis when he was only about fifteen months old, and his mother had a very hard life. My mother's family, on the other hand, was French, and again had not fully integrated with British society--at least she and her siblings had not.

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[1]## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Starn: When did she come to London?

Keightley: She was born in England in 1897, but she didn't speak English, I think, until the age of eight or ten. This was a family that spoke French. I don't mean to say that we were excluded, in any way, but we weren't really deeply involved in English society. But my mother was very British, I certainly felt very British, and when the war broke out in 1939, all of the forty engineers who worked with my father for Universal Oil Products returned to the United States. My father decided to stay, "to see what will happen," was one way he put it--but also because he knew my mother wanted to stay in England, which is where her family was. By that point, with five brothers, she had many nephews and nieces. It was a large family. So we stayed on in England during the war, even though we were afraid that bombing would start.

English Schools

Keightley: I still remember that Sunday, September 3, when [Neville] Chamberlain announced we were at war and the air-raid sirens went off five minutes later. It was a false alarm, but it was a taste of what was eventually to come. I think within eighteen days of the war breaking out I was sent off to boarding school.

Starn: In the country?

Keightley: Branksome Hilders was in Haslemere, Surrey. Haslemere, we later discovered, is where Hitler planned to make his summer retreat, his country retreat.

Starn: When?

Keightley: When he got there.

Starn: When he owned England.

Keightley: The school itself was a small prep school--I think not a very good prep school. It was situated in what had been the estate of Lord Aberconway. I didn't know this at the time; I've looked it up since. There were about forty boys. I wasn't yet seven years old; I was still six when I was packed off there, and it was a hell of a shock. I was really very unhappy there for quite a while, I think--stunned by what was happening.

Starn: Have you any brothers or sisters?

Keightley: No, I am an only child, no brothers or sisters. Then, when the bombing started, my mother also moved down to Haslemere. She found a place in a hotel there, the Haughton Hotel, and my *grand-mère*, my French grandmother, also came down, which meant that at least on weekends I could sometimes get away and see them. By that time I was getting used to the boarding school. I was there between 1939 and 1945. I read--subsequently, I think this was in John Wain's memoirs, that you don't want to be in a boarding school during a war, because all the good teachers are drafted and you get left with the dregs. I suspect that was true both

at my prep school, Branksome Hilders, and also at my public school, Aldenham. The quality of teaching, for the most part, was not particularly good.

Teaching was done largely by drill, and memorization, and also by intimidation. For some subjects that worked quite well. They taught me, I think, to read and to write English very well. My French was very good; the headmaster at Branksome loved France and put a lot of effort into making sure we learned our French. But for subjects like mathematics it was a disaster. My qualifications as a math student just kept declining all the way through my career in my English schooling.

Stam: While your linguistic abilities were encouraged?

Keightley: Yes. The quality of the instructional staff was not very high, but--I think in about 1943--a young man arrived by the name of H.P. Crutwell, who was rather anomalous in terms of the general culture of the school. He had an antic sense of humor, very lively, imaginative. He astonished and amused all the students when he walked into the class for the first time and announced he was going to grade us on a scale of 1,004, which he proceeded to explain. He took a great interest in the students, and in entertaining and educating us. He would come up to the Top Dormitory in my senior year and he would read to us from various novels. He introduced us to P.G. Wodehouse's "Psmith" stories. He even read us a novel that he himself was working on, which we thought was great fun. When we asked him what the H.P.C., his initials, stood for, he assured us it meant Highest Personal Charm.

He was an amusing man, and for some reason he took me, and another student called Wilson--I have no idea what his first name was--under his wing. And he, and one of the other teachers, a Miss Williams, took us off to the Lake District over a couple of summers for maybe ten days. These were wonderful vacations, because in England during the war, travel had been virtually impossible. My father was frequently traveling, and I didn't go very many places. These trips--particularly to the Lake District with its beautiful landscape, its association with the "Lake Poets", and so on--were very important to me. I was very grateful to Mr. Crutwell. He left the teaching profession, went on to become the director of the Theatre Royal at Windsor. He then married an actress, whose name, I think, was Geraldine Brooks, though I'm not up on the London stage. Then, alas, I lost touch with him.

Partly under Crutwell's inspiration I also remember that I established, or helped establish at Branksome, something we called the History Club. This was not, I think, a very serious enterprise. We wrote Winston Churchill a letter and asked if we could have an autographed copy of one of his cigar bands. We never got a reply. The History Club--again, with Crutwell's assistance--arranged a school outing to go up to London on the train, the Southern Railway, and see Laurence Olivier play Richard III at the Old Vic. That was a quite extraordinary experience. I still remember this moment of high drama as the curtain rises and Olivier limps onto the stage and glares at the audience and announces, "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of York." So again, it's curious that I should have been involved in a history club, since I had no sense that I was going to become a historian. Those are good things about Branksome Hilders.

I also remember I was introduced to the novels of Arthur Ransome there, *Swallows and Amazons*, and so on--again, focused on the Lake District, interestingly. Branksome was not all bad by any means.

Starn: Glad to have those clarifications, because it did sound rather bleak. Memories flooded in after you began to think it over.

Keightley: That's true. Some of the positive things flood in. The culture of the place was a little harsh, certainly. There was a fair amount of bullying. Students were not particularly kind to fellow students. But the school certainly had virtues. We used to put on plays once or twice a year, and not just plays in English but also plays in French. We went through a whole play in French; parents would come and listen to this. I remember one of the plays--and this play was in English--I was the Saracen knight and my adversary, I think, was Saint George, and we were to have a sword fight on stage. Miss Williams, who had directed the play, was extremely keen that we not prolong the sword fight, so it had been agreed that when she thought the fight had gone on long enough, she would cough. Saint George, at that point, was to drop his sword, and apparently yield himself to the Saracen. So we're fighting away, hacking away at each other with our wooden swords, Miss Williams coughs, and Saint George, my adversary, did not hear her cough--went on fighting. In a moment of what I now regard as considerable initiative on my part, I took my sword and I whacked him hard on the hand so that he had to drop his sword, and the fight stopped, and the play went on. [laughter]

I find that impressive, that Branksome was able to train students sufficiently well that we could do plays in French. I still remember part of that, that French play. It was very valuable.

Starn: You certainly have filled out the picture of Branksome to the school's advantage.

Keightley: Yes, that should be done.

Starn: It was very Dickensian, or almost Dickensian, at the beginning, and now it's beginning to sound like quite a decent place.

Keightley: Even Dickensian groups have their virtues, and this was one of them.

My father was a great stamp collector; he had been doing this for twenty, thirty years, and as he traveled all over Europe he would collect stamps. One of the very precious gifts he gave me was a Penny Black; they were the first stamps ever issued in England. The registrations on the stamps were letters; there were two letters, and this one had D and K, for David Keightley, and so it was very precious to me. Then to my horror, in my senior year at Branksome, somebody stole it, and I have no idea where that stamp went. I was quite heartbroken when that happened.

Starn: You were there until 1945. At that point you began to think about coming to America?

Keightley: No, not at all. I think my parents picked Branksome Hilders out of a catalog in Selfridge's department store. Of course, they had to get me out of London rapidly, and I'm sure a lot of other boys were doing the same thing; girls too. But then, in 1945, it was time for me to go onto public school. I went to a school called Aldenham, which was founded in 1597 by Richard Platt, a brewer. It was a fourth-rate public school. There were about two hundred and twenty boys. I think I went partly because a friend of mine from Branksome Hilders,

John Davis, had gone there a year or so ahead of me, so I followed him there. Again, many of the same complaints about the instruction would apply.

Starn: Was it a boarding school?

Keightley: Yes, it was also a boarding school. This was in Hertfordshire, about an hour outside of London. It was a school very much based upon hierarchy; that is, the students were divided into first termers, second termers, third termers, fourth termers, and so on. I think you weren't allowed to put your hands in your pockets until you were a third termer; you were allowed to unbutton the top button on your jacket when you were a sixth termer; lower could never speak to upper termers until spoken to, and then the more senior had to initiate the conversation, and so on.

Starn: Were there paddlings and harassments?

Keightley: There were a certain amount. It was what was called fagging, in which the junior term boys had to work for prefects, and so on. It was intensely hierarchical, and I know my life was made hell for the first year or so by a snotty young man called Hicks, who thought that somehow I had insulted him when I first arrived. I certainly hadn't; I didn't know who he was. It took about a year or two to get that worked out and then we became, in fact, quite good friends. But I resisted this sense of hierarchy, and deference, and obligation, and servitude. The headmaster would call me in on a number of occasions and accuse me of truculence.

Starn: That was a category?

Keightley: That was a category, in my case. He advised me to get over it. So I was there for a couple of years. My favorite story was of an American student who had come to the school for a year. There were all sorts of rules, like lower school boys can't walk across the grass. Well, he would walk across the grass, and he was a great big hulking football player, and nobody dared lay a finger on him. I thought that was quite marvelous.

I started to work my way up the hierarchy. I was there for two years.

Starn: Did you do that through application to your studies or a persistence--?

Keightley: No, it was absolutely automatic. You were a first termer, second termer, and third termer, and up you moved. The new first termers came in and you treated them just as badly as you had been treated.

Then, in the spring of 1947, the end of my sixth term, I had just taken the School Certificate exam and flunked Latin, but did well in most of the other subjects. I don't know how I did at math, probably not very well. We were in the ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] also. We used to march around in uniforms, and carry guns, and have maneuvers and things.

Starn: You were in your early teens at this point?

Keightley: Let's see, in 1947, I would have been fifteen. The sergeant major who ran the army corps there said, "Keightley, give me back your rifle." I had no idea why he wanted my rifle back, but I gave it to him. That was the first intimation I had that I was not coming back to the school in the fall, that we were going to America. My parents had decided not to tell me; they didn't want to upset me. My housemaster knew, my sergeant major knew, but it took me a while longer to figure that out. I think that was a mistake; I think I should have been told right away.

Starn: Did your parents tend to shelter you in that way, when they could, from shocks and change?

Keightley: I wouldn't have said so, not particularly. But in this case they thought I should get through the school year. On the whole I was quite overjoyed. England in 1947 was not an easy place to live. There were fuel shortages, food shortages; we were cold; we didn't have much clothing. My housemaster, Fred English, was appalled at the thought that I was going to leave England to go to the United States. He very kindly offered to adopt me as a member of his own family so that I could finish my education.

Starn: You must have had quite a good relationship.

Keightley: Well, I wouldn't have thought so. I was quite surprised by this. His argument was that all the great men in history have had narrow upbringings--he cited George Washington to me--and if I was spread around between England and the United States I wouldn't become a great man in history.

Starn: You wouldn't have enough focus.

Keightley: That's right, I would be a wishy-washy intellectual. Now, I wasn't very happy at Aldenham, I didn't particularly like Mr. English, and my parents and I just laughed at the offer, although I appreciated it; it was very kind. Many years later I met the man who had succeeded English as housemaster, and we had a wonderful conversation about Aldenham, and he characterized Fred English as a psychopath. To give you an idea: English taught French, and he taught it well. One reason my French was good was thanks to Fred English. But he was the kind of teacher who, if he didn't like your answer in class, he would grab the desk and say, "Keightley, get out of this room before I do you some mischief." Then there would be a sprint for the door; as I would head for the door he would be after me trying to kick me. There was one story--I didn't see this--where apparently he kicked the bannister and instead hurt his foot, and we were all delighted by that. But there was that kind of threat, of coercion. Well, it lent a little excitement to learning, but I think that learning was not particularly efficient.

Starn: He was the most memorable teacher you had?

Keightley: Well, his personality made the greatest impact. The other problem I had there was Latin. As I said, I flunked Latin on the School Certificate.

Starn: How did that happen?

Keightley: That happened partly because at Branksome I had had five years of Latin, but we were using what I think was the church pronunciation, so citizen, *civis,* was pronounced "sighvees";

when I got to Aldenham that became "keeways", and I was still struggling with the pronunciation. Every time I opened my mouth, Mr. Jackson, the Latin teacher, would say, "Keightley, you are a barbarian!" He was of no help. And I didn't particularly want to be in Latin; I didn't appreciate the virtues of it. Nobody ever taught us that this could be fun, that there was literature in there. I suppose in my second year you had a choice between doing Latin and Greek classics or doing German and Science. I and my parents chose German and Science. The Latin wasn't well taught; the math wasn't well taught. I was so at sea that I couldn't even ask intelligent questions. I just didn't know what was wrong. This will have a sequel when we get to the United States.

I do want to thank my English teacher at Aldenham, Mr. Parren. Donald, his name was, though I certainly didn't know his name was Donald at the time. I can't tell you exactly how he did it, but his main teaching device used to be to walk through the classroom saying, "The right word, gentlemen, the right word." Then he would flick you with the corner of his gown if he didn't like what you were doing. That could be quite painful, especially if he got you in the eye. But he took us through English literature. The way the School Certificate worked in those days was that you prepared a particular play, two plays, I think. One was Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Starn: The class as a whole prepared it?

Keightley: Yes, the class as a whole, because the School Certificate exam was going to be on *Macbeth*. So I memorized whole swatches of *Macbeth*: "What bloody man is that? He can report, as seemeth by his plight, of the revolt the newest state," and so on. Then we did Bernard Shaw, *Saint Joan*: "No eggs, no eggs, what do you mean no eggs? Sir, sir what can I do? I cannot lay eggs." This sort of thing.

Starn: Each of you was responsible for the whole play?

Keightley: No, I think we all had to learn particular chunks of it. Maybe we all learned the same chunks, I don't remember. I am, again, very grateful for this stress on memorization because those things stick with you, and it's very nice to have some Shakespeare in the head, or Bernard Shaw.

The Habit of Writing

Keightley: I said a moment ago that I didn't know how Mr. Parren taught us English, but that is unfair, because he used to make us write three essays a week--this is certainly my memory. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I had to turn in an essay. In a sense, they were always the same essay. We were studying Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, so I would write "Saint Joan was the first Protestant," "Saint Joan was the first nationalist," "Saint Joan was the first patriot," and so on. The great virtue of this was it certainly got you into the habit of writing, and writing with some facility and some confidence. That was important to my training as a handler of the English language.

Again, I found Mr. Parren in 1978-79, when I was on sabbatical in Cambridge. He had retired to Cambridge and I was able to buy him lunch and thank him for what he had done. That was very nice.

A rather sad note here again, my father, knowing that I had to study *Saint Joan*, went out and bought me a copy of Shaw's play, but all he could find was the first edition. This was a very valuable book; far too valuable for me to take to school, in fact, but I was very touched by his attempt to assist in my education. The book market in England during the war was just appalling. There were virtually no books, because there was no paper. The second-hand book market flourished a great deal, and I used to spend quite a bit of time down at Foyles on Charing Cross Road. I went back there a few months ago and was just astonished; there are virtually no secondhand books in the store now. It's all brand-new books and flashy chrome lighting, and it used to be so funky. I had a great deal of fun.

Starn: This all carried into your high school?

Keightley: Yes, I was a good English student in high school.

Starn: Music, however, began--?

Keightley: I shouldn't short-change Branksome on music. We had singing every week, maybe a couple of times a week. We went through the *Oxford Book of English Songs*, or whatever it's called. I came to love the music, yes. The music master was Welsh, as I recall. No, I loved to sing. That did carry on.

Also, I would like to pay tribute to the importance of the King James version of the Bible, because we read that intensively, both at Branksome and then at Aldenham. At Branksome we had chapel, or whatever they called it, services, once a day. At Aldenham we had chapel once a day and twice on Sundays, and always, of course, a lesson from the Bible. In addition, Divinity was a regular course. We would study the Bible two or three times a week, so by the time I got out of my British education I knew the Bible very well, and I'm sure the cadences of the King James translation were well lodged in my head. For that I am grateful, but also this has an interesting postscript, because maybe thirty, forty years later, at Berkeley, when I started to teach this course, "Death and the Birth of Civilizations," where I would compare the treatment of death, eventually I included the ancient Israelites, and the exposure at that point to modern biblical scholarship was just eye-opening for me. I had always accepted the Bible, pretty much, as an account of historical events, but now to see the complexity and the sophistication of the analysis was very instructive indeed and very rewarding.

I'm also puzzled by two things. At Aldenham I have no memory whatever of taking a history course. I find that incredible. At Branksome we certainly did, because you would take the same British history year after year after year, but each year with more detail added, so that it got richer and denser.

Starn: Did it move out into the world gradually?

Keightley: No, it didn't move out at all! It's just that the textbook got thicker and we got more detail, but it was the same series of kings. I'm also baffled because I have no memory at Aldenham, or even at Branksome, of ever reading Homer, that is the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*.

Starn: You certainly would remember.

Keightley: I would have thought so, except that I did read them, but I read them on my own. I would go down to Foyles and buy the Penguin translations, and so on, and I read these things quite intensively. Why I did that, I don't know, but again, this became part of my intellectual upbringing.

Starn: So you're coming away from schooling in London, in England, with some strengths and some weaknesses that are going to find their way to another level.

Keightley: Also, I think, with some sense of how civilized society is organized: hierarchy does play an important role; one is rather deferential to seniors. Evidently I resisted that up to a point, but nevertheless I think some of it got into me.

Starn: I suppose--this is a big leap--but this respect for hierarchy and the involvement in it, may make it a little easier to understand the nature of Chinese society.

Keightley: I hadn't thought of that before. Yes, I suppose it probably plays a role, certainly to understand the impact culture can have on the way societies are organized.

American High School

Starn: Let's leap you ahead to the United States.

Keightley: Okay. We left England in November of '47, got here in December of '47, and we went to live in Evanston, Illinois. Universal Oil Products had its headquarters in Chicago, and we picked Evanston because it had the number four public high school in the country. It was, indeed, a very good high school. I had been warned about American education, but compared to what I was getting in England this was really a vast improvement. Because I had been educated in England, the administrators at Evanston High School immediately assumed that I should be in all the honors classes, which was fine in English and in French. Of course, I was also introduced to coeducation, because until that point it had been all boys. I was put in an honors class for mathematics and I immediately started to flunk out. Then a Mr. Wagner, who was a student-trainee teacher from Northwestern, took me aside for six weeks and he coached me. Very decent, very kind.

Starn: Outside of school hours?

Keightley: I think it was outside; maybe he took me out of class. I don't remember that detail. But he did coach me. I got to ask the questions about what was puzzling me. After that I was an A+ student in mathematics. For years my parents had been saying, "The poor boy has no head for mathematics," but really I had just had bad math teaching. I was eternally grateful to Mr.

Wagner, and I found him twenty, thirty years later, and was able to telephone him and thank him in person. He was very pleased. He was fascinated to know that I was in Chinese studies and he was now getting a lot of students in the Evanston school system who were Chinese or Japanese in origin, the children of businessmen who had come over. He was struck by the contrast. He said, "American parents come in and ask, 'Is my son or my daughter going to get an A?' And the Chinese and Japanese parents come in and say, 'Is my son understanding the material?'" He thought that was a rather telling difference.

Starn: So Evanston, at that point, was mainly American in character, but it has changed since then?

Keightley: Evanston certainly has become much more multi-ethnic. There weren't very many blacks in the school when I was there. I think there are now a great many. I think all of the problems of the inner city have now moved in. Vannie and I visited the school last year; security was just intense. It wasn't like that when I was there.

Starn: You were there throughout high school?

Keightley: Just a year and a half. The last half of my junior year and then my senior year. I had a very good English teacher, too, Mary Taft, who encouraged me to enter a series of competitions. One was for the *Atlantic Monthly*, an essay, and I wrote a comparison of English and American education, making these points: that I thought the American system showed great respect for the individual student, for understanding what the student was trying to learn.

Starn: Do you have a copy of that? Did it win?

Keightley: It did not win, but I can look for a copy. I also sent them some poetry, apparently, and was also a finalist in the poetry contest. And then, music--I was part of the glee club there or the chorus, I think it was called. Sadie Rafferty used to lead us. We did a couple of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas; that was great fun. My love of Gilbert and Sullivan--

Starn: That's where that began? Rather than in England?

Keightley: Rather than in England. Curious, isn't it? That's quite true.

At Evanston High school I was also on the staff of the radio station, and did a couple of radio plays, and was an announcer.

Starn: You had no difficulty adjusting to your new state?

Keightley: Well, I did. First of all, my accent was against me. I really worked quite hard to get rid of that, so that when I first arrived and I would be at the blackboard, I would say, "So you put the letter X here?" [Pronounces it "heah."] That pretty soon became "here," as I put in the R's and E's. No, it wasn't easy for me to fit into Evanston High School society. I think I was regarded as someone without any social standing one way or the other. I eventually fell in with a group of friends, but we weren't particularly close intellectually, we just hung out, played bridge together.

Starn: Bridge?

Keightley: Yes, a game I didn't particularly like, but I took it up because it was an entrée into social life. Then, finally, the last year, when I was in the operetta I got to meet a lot of other people--a girlfriend, and so on, who was in the orchestra. But it took, I would say, at least a year to fit in.

Starn: At that age it's easy to understand. But in the end you did fit in. You were successful academically and had these outlets with music, and writing, and the radio. But no sports?

School Sports

Keightley: Well, yes, let's talk about sports for a minute, because Branksome Hilders was a small school. I thought we had about sixty students, but I've been doing some reading and it was actually about forty. I was on the first eleven in cricket, and soccer, and so on. But to be on the first eleven when there's only forty boys doesn't mean very much. I remember very well getting to Aldenham, which had about two hundred and twenty students, and the first or second day you were there the prefects call you in and you all line up and they say, "What sports teams were you on?" And the second question was, "How big was your school?" The minute they knew that my school only had forty students they just dismissed me. That's all right. I wasn't a great athlete. The one sport that I did do well in was a sport called Fives, which isn't even played here. It's a kind of handball played against and around a gothic buttress. It started off, I guess, in Eton, playing up against the gothic buildings. A great sport. I enjoyed that; I think I would have done well there. But then, of course, when I came to the States--I haven't played Fives since. Soccer, I played on the house teams, and so on. I have kept my love of soccer and I was a soccer coach for a while here in Berkeley. But no, I wasn't really good at sports, and then when I got to Evanston High School--this was a contrast I brought up in my essay for the *Atlantic Monthly*--in England you were always taught to play the game, and to be a gentleman about it. If the ball goes out, and you're not certain whose ball it is, you give it to the other team. Well, I tried that playing basketball once or twice and my teammates nearly killed me. That wasn't the way it was done here.

Starn: You learned quickly.

Keightley: I learned quickly. I wasn't any good at basketball anyway. I did become the manager of the tennis team, but that was trivial. So I didn't do much in the way of sports in high school.

II AMHERST COLLEGE, 1949-1953, AND A FULBRIGHT YEAR IN FRANCE, 1953-54

Parental Expectations: Engineering

Keightley: Here we are, again, in the Midwest, in 1949, and of course, just as my parents had been *deraciné* [French: rootless] in a sense in England, they were also *deraciné* in the United States. My father had been in England for twenty-plus years and had been an only child, half-orphaned when his father died, and so on. He had a remarkable career. He was an Illinois farm boy, joined the National Guard in 1916 to go down and fight Pancho Villa. He didn't do that, but then the National Guard was federalized when the U.S. entered World War I, and he fought in the trenches in Meuse-Argonne in World War I--got a little gas. Came back, worked in the wheat fields, and then discovered there was a G.I. Bill [government subsidy for veterans' education], so he went to the Colorado School of Mines and became an engineer. He then traveled very extensively all over Europe, helping design and build refineries in the interwar years.

Starn: He died when you were--?

Keightley: He was ninety-four when he died, in 1991. The expectation, in part, was that I would become an engineer. I applied to Purdue, I applied to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], I applied to the Colorado School of Mines. But Amherst was one of a number of colleges that had a joint program with MIT, where you could go three years to Amherst, and then two years to MIT, and get degrees from both. You had the liberal arts and would also get the science degree. A friend of mine, John Hitchcock, in high school, had told me about this. So I also applied to a couple of schools which did this. One was William and Mary and one was Amherst. My friend John went to MIT and, I think, didn't like it. I went to Amherst and started down this track, heading for MIT.

Becoming an English Major

Keightley: I was pre-med, I was a biochem major--and then I got won over by the English department. I was impatient as a biochemistry major. I wanted to be on the front lines of research, I

wanted to be thinking for myself, and certainly the first few years as a biochem student you are simply replicating what other scientists have done; you're learning the ropes.

There was one very telling moment, not the only one in my academic career, a kind of Freudian slip where I lost all of the experimental results. I had been feeding rats some kind of special diet, and then I couldn't find the results. I think that was the signal that I shouldn't be doing this--whereas the English department was very strong. There were people there like Ted Baird, Cesar Barber, G. Armour Craig, Walker Gibson. They taught, I thought, very exciting courses. Most of my intellectual friends were in English. There you could read a poem, and you could make something of it of your own right away, and I found that very appealing. So I became an English major and a biochem minor. I gave up the idea of going to MIT.

Starn: So you stayed fairly strongly involved with the English department and your English colleagues? Were there literary magazines, newspapers?

Keightley: There was a literary magazine which I think I helped run and I certainly contributed to--*Context*, I think was the name of it.

Campus Politics

Keightley: I was also fairly deeply involved with campus politics because the fraternity situation at Amherst was not good when we got there. They had rushing in which ninety or ninety-five percent of the freshman class would be rushed and joined a fraternity, but the five percent who were excluded felt awful. This was an era when there were still some veterans from World War II around--not many, but one or two. There was a group of them who had founded something called the Jeff Club, which was an alternative to the fraternities. I joined that. The Jeff Club, at that point, was immensely successful at attracting a lot of bright people, and we were a threat to the fraternities. In fact, by the time I graduated I think the college had a hundred percent rushing, that is, nobody was to be excluded anymore. I was a member of the Jeff Club; I became president of the Jeff Club; I served on various fraternity committees, and so on, running the social organizations. But again, most of my intellectual friends were in the Jeff Club, and it was the best place to be if you wanted an intellectual life.

Starn: How many members were there?

Keightley: I would guess in the Jeff Club there might have been fifty or sixty.

Starn: And Amherst at that point?

Keightley: Let's say a thousand. I think there were about two hundred and fifty in my graduating class.

Starn: Were there any other campus issues, political issues, that came up while you were an undergraduate?

Keightley: I will have to think about that. No. This was 1949 to 1953.

Starn: In between the wars.

Keightley: The Korean War broke out while I was there and several of my friends were drafted into the army and went off to Korea.

Starn: Drafted out of college?

Keightley: Yes, drafted out of college. I was 4-F because sometime in my sophomore year I had a series of lung collapses, spontaneous pneumothorax, which was quite frightening the first time it happened. I thought I was having a heart attack, because you get an immense pain in your chest.

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We were talking about political issues and I was saying, no, I don't think there were any in '49-'53. This was very much the era of the man in the gray flannel suit. I think a lot of people from Amherst seemed to go down to New York City and work for BBD&O Advertising. There wasn't a very high political consciousness on the campus. The Korean War was not an issue, I think, for most of us.

Starn: It was a quiescent time, politically.

Keightley: It was a quiet time.

Amherst's English Program

Keightley: In my senior year, for some reason, I became interested in Anglo-Norman.

Starn: It must have been through a particular professor?

Keightley: No, it wasn't, because nobody there handled Anglo-Norman. I wanted to write my honor's thesis on a writer called Thomas, the Anglo-Norman, whom I had stumbled on, apparently, through a translation by Dorothy L. Sayers. Then I got hold of the original text; I think it's thirteenth-century.

Starn: How did you get hold of it?

Keightley: I think the library must have had it.

Starn: Amherst had that kind of library?

Keightley: That's a very good question. I now have my own copy. I certainly did get hold of the text, yes, and saw that I could handle it. It was part French, part Latin, but a wonderfully complex psychological interior drama. It was very unexpected to me, quite marvelous. So I wanted to write my honor's thesis on Thomas, the Anglo-Norman, and they wouldn't let me because nobody on the faculty could handle it, which is perfectly proper, I think. I was somewhat at

loose ends. I had to write an honor's thesis and I wrote it on Christopher Marlowe, whom I liked, but it was a very dutiful thesis, and my heart, I think, was not in it. Reuben Brower was another faculty member. I wrote the thesis for Reuben Brower, in fact. He went on to Harvard. I should put this in, because Reuben Brower wrote the book, *Fields of Light*, I think, which was about literary criticism and how you read texts.

Amherst, at this point--its English program was distinguished for two things. One was English 1, which was a very unsettling course, which nobody understood, I think, including the faculty. We would meet three times a week. We would write short papers, but essentially the focus was: what do you think you were doing when you were doing this? What do you think you were doing when you were reading a map? What do you think you were making a telephone call? You had to write this down, very precisely, with considerable self-awareness.

Starn: A sort of deconstruction of your consciousness?

Keightley: I wouldn't have used that word. Certainly precision and self-awareness.

Starn: Can you give an example?

Keightley: No, I can't, right now. Dissertations have been written about this course; a book has been written about the course. I didn't do very well in the course. I had an instructor--in fact he was from MIT, I know that--but why he was teaching English at Amherst, I don't know. I don't think he understood it. But colleagues of mine, friends of mine from Amherst who read some of my scholarship twenty or thirty years later, say they can see the influence of the English 1 in what I do, so I take it that it did some good.

The English department also was very much in the camp of the New Criticism--Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn,* I think-- where we read texts very closely. Much attention to metaphor, much attention to what the text said rather than the cultural background of the text; the New Historicism was not yet with us. I found that, again, extremely valuable training for a historian, because I really now do look at texts with great care, and the text is where it all starts. I'm immensely grateful to Amherst; I think it gave me a good training in what I was eventually to do.

I had little interest in history at the time. The history department, I thought, was rather weak and didn't always attract the best students.

Starn: Foreign languages were not--?

Keightley: I took French, did some French literature, and also did a German reading course, got my German up to at least minimal speed. That was about it.

Starn: You were reading French on a high level, I would think.

Keightley: Fairly high.

A Fulbright at the University of Lille, 1953-54

Keightley: Towards the end of my senior year I applied for a Fulbright grant. I don't really know why. It seemed to be what everybody did at that time. Of course I had this project, Thomas, the Anglo-Norman, just sitting around, so I put in to do that.

Keightley: I got the Fulbright grant, and was sent to the University of Lille, up in northern France, which, in terms of studying medieval French, was a disaster for two reasons. First of all, the professors all lived in Paris. They only came up one day a week, so on Thursdays I had classes from eight in the morning until eight at night. The other days of the week were completely empty. Secondly, the French scholarship was still very much in the grips of *explication de texte*. We would start with the text and we would take the first word and we would take the second word, "*Qu'est que ca veut dire, ce mot?*" and so on. It was very sterile and very dull, and I quickly discovered that if I really wanted to do medieval French, I should have gone to the University of Chicago; that's where the exciting work was being done. Nevertheless, I had a good year, not good academically, but a good intellectual year--improved my French, read a lot of history, read some philosophy, and then did a lot of bicycling, in fact.

Cycling through Europe

Starn: It began there--your bicycling?

Keightley: It really began there. I have a piece of gravel in my hand from a bike accident in England back in 1947. But I didn't have a bicycle in London; you couldn't do that. It started in France. I took a very splendid bike ride with Neil Hertz, a classmate from Amherst. He's a scholar of English. He taught at Cornell, now at Johns Hopkins. He was a Fulbright student in Bordeaux. We met in Grenoble and biked down through France and then to Florence. The following summer I took a very long bike ride throughout Europe. I also went biking in Spain with old Amherst friends, like Neil Hertz and others. At Easter we went down to Spain. I biked through France, I biked through Italy, I biked through Switzerland, I biked through Austria, I biked through Germany, and Belgium. It sounds crazy now. I was out of touch with my parents for weeks at a time. Nobody ever made trans-Atlantic phone calls in those days. I didn't have a helmet. Very bizarre, very bizarre.

Starn: It sounds like a very happy memory.

Keightley: Well, it was. Everywhere I went, people would call out, "*Tedesco, tedesco!*" [Italian for "German"]" because they thought I was German. Only the Germans were crazy enough to do this long-distance bicycling. Also, I should say just for the record, that I have a lot of relatives in France, because my grandmother, Philomène was the eldest--again I think, of eleven brothers and sisters. I have about forty second cousins in France. She grew up in the *Haute Savoie*, and then she went to London to work, where she met my grandfather, the

watchmaker. I love going back to the *Haute Savoie*. I really feel at home there and I enjoy my French relatives. So that was really nice.

Starn: And you continue to do so?

Keightley: Yes, I have. [pause] There we are in Lille.

Starn: You have to leave France and think about what's next?

Keightley: I had come back from this long bike tour through Europe and I was very happy in Lille. I was reading; I knew the town; I was living with a French family. Then my father wrote me, cabled me--I forget--and said, "I'm going to Algeria in two weeks; would you like to come with me?" I thought, "Yes, this is marvelous." I packed up everything in Lille; I closed out my Lille digs, shipped everything down to Paris, went down to Paris to meet him, and then the whole trip fell through. He never went to Algeria, I never went to Algeria.

Starn: Were the reasons the world situation--or health?

Keightley: No. Business decision. I don't even know what the issues were. Interesting you should ask that, in view of what was to happen in Algeria, but I don't know the reason for it.

Coming to Terms

Keightley: I found myself in Paris, suddenly at loose ends. I used to live in a hotel on the Left Bank, Hotel Jeanne d'Arc, which I went back to look at. It's now very high-scale indeed, but in those days it was just a hole for students that was right in the center of intellectual life, museum life, and so on. But a friend of mine from Amherst--his father was a banker in Paris, American---had a big house out in Neuilly. They were away for the summer so they offered to let me stay in the house. You can call it housesitting. They had a permanent butler there, so he looked after the house. I went out to live in Neuilly. This saved me a lot of money, but it had the unfortunate effect of, in a sense, pulling me out of the center of Paris. I now had to get on my bicycle and bike all the way down the Champs d'Elysées and so on.

I had already been over to England once or twice, for Christmas or Easter break. I had been up to Cambridge, again where one of my Amherst friends was. I met Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, attended a seminar with F.R. Leavis. This was all heady and exciting stuff. But I was increasingly restless; I wasn't doing anything. I then went over to London and stayed with some of my relatives in England for a while. Then one day I said, "This is it. I'm wasting my time. I'm not doing anything." I got on the boat and came back to the States, in December of 1954.

III AN EARLY CAREER IN PUBLISHING AND WRITING, 1954-62

Editorial Work at Row Peterson

Keightley: So I came back to Evanston and started looking for a job. I didn't like most of the jobs that were available. I remember one very keenly, where I was to be a baby-footprinter. I was to go around to hospitals where babies are born and they take the footprint for ID purposes. I was to sell the device which did this job. I didn't like that. The Amherst Alumni Association put me in touch with some businessmen in Chicago and I expressed an interest in publishing. They called somebody at a firm called Row Peterson in Evanston, Illinois. I started work there as Associate Editor in their newly formed college textbook department. Row Pete was a very successful grade school and high school textbook publisher. But it was a publisher which really operated primarily at that level. I remember the vice president was called Dooley Hites, and one had the sense he had all sorts of contacts with school boards across the country and could get your book chosen rather than another book, and so on. They had decided, I suppose following the population shifts, to expand into the college market. They had hired a man called Donald A. McPherson; they had hired him away from Wiley, and he was to establish this new college division and he hired me to assist him. My job was to go around the country, knocking on faculty doors, and saying, "Hello, we're a new college department, we have these four prestigious books." They were prestigious books, but I didn't have to sell them. They weren't large-sale items. *The Voter Decides*, was one, and *Social Dynamics* was another. I would then say, "What are you writing? What are your colleagues writing?" We had a very efficient information system.

Starn: Networking.

Keightley: Networking. I would write reports every night when I went back to the motel, typed them up, mailed them into Row Peterson. I would say, "So-and-so at Georgetown is writing this. So-and-so at Harvard is writing this." These were all xeroxed--I take it they had xerox machines in those days--and they were all put in various folders. So when I next went to Harvard or Georgetown, all the information from the other travelers was right there. I wish I had my reports now, because I certainly came through the history departments and knocked on doors. I had been following Riasanovsky [Nicholas Riasanovsky, emeritus professor of Russian history, former chair of the Berkeley department of history] all over the country. He had been at Iowa and I had been sent to find him at Iowa. I forget whether I found him here [at Berkeley] or not.

I did that. I came out to California and ran up the biggest expense account in the history of the company because I was doing a lot of traveling. Dooley Hites was not happy. But after nine months or so of this, or a year of this, I began to feel, "I can write better books than most of these people that I'm talking to."

Starn: You not only solicited them; you also read their works?

Keightley: Certainly I got a sense of what was going on.

An M.A. in Modern European History at NYU, 1956

Keightley: That summer, while I was in Evanston, I went to summer school. I guess Row Peterson must have given me the time off. I took a couple of courses in history, at Northwestern. One was European history, the other American economic history. The man who taught American economic history was Vincent P. Carosso, who was visiting for the summer from New York University. He liked me, and I liked him, and he persuaded me I should go to NYU and get an M.A.--which I did, in modern European history.

Meanwhile, the plot thickened at Row Peterson, because Donald McPherson quit to go and work for Arthur Rosenthal at Basic Books. He and I drove to New York City. I guess I was on a sales trip and he was going to New York, too, for business. He spent the whole trip trying to convince me to join him and go work for Basic Books. And I said, "No, I'm going to NYU." Then the whole thing blew up in his face. Basic Books changed their mind: they didn't want him. Nobody would hire him because he had tried this game of jumping from one publisher to another and taking authors with him each time. No publisher would hire him now. He had built in a fail-safe contract, so I think Basic Books had to pay him a lot of money. Then he went into real estate and did quite well.

I then moved to New York City and got an M.A. in modern European history. That was instructive.

Starn: This was with your parents' backing, presumably?

Keightley: It must have been, presumably. I honestly don't remember how that was paid for-- I think I probably got a fellowship. No, and I had my own savings. I had been working for a year, so I could do this. My parents, for sure, were really tearing their hair out.

I went off to NYU, and it was instructive because this was the kind of education I had not been exposed to before. A lot of my fellow graduate students had come out of Jesuit schools, I think, in the New York area. Very clever debaters, very sharp. I could hold my own, but this was a kind of intellectual dialogue that I had not been exposed to. I studied French history, I studied with Leo Gershoy, and some other distinguished professors. I got my M.A.

Starn: Who were the most important among them in influence, as far as you remember?

Keightley: Brooke Hindle taught me U.S. history, Carosso taught me U.S. economics, Leo Gershoy taught me French history, A.W. Salomone taught European diplomatic. I wrote an M.A. dissertation called "Montoire: An Account and Evaluation". As I remember, Montoire was a diplomatic meeting that took place in October of 1940 between Hitler and Franco. Montoire was on the border between France and Spain. My job, in the dissertation, was try to figure out what actually was said at this meeting. We have various translators' accounts, and so on.

At the end of the year and a half--I got my M.A. in 1956--I didn't feel, "I can write better books than most of these people," but I did feel, "There are plenty of good people in modern European history who can write very good books. They don't need me." I mean, there were good modern Europeanists who were writing this stuff. But I wanted to be of service, I wanted to use my background, so I thought I would join the foreign service, the U.S. State Department.

Misadventures with the State Department and a French Engagement

Starn: It's an interesting choice. I'm just trying to follow, given your abilities--

Keightley: I had studied modern European history; I thought this was a noble thing to do. We didn't want another world war, and so on.

Starn: You did have a very strong service streak?

Keightley: Well, I hadn't thought of it that way, but it seemed like an attractive career. I had grown up in England, I had spent a year in France, I had studied modern European history, and so on. So I took the exams, I passed the exams, and then in the summer of 1956-- having finished my M.A., and I guess I was waiting to hear from the State Department--I became a group leader with the Experiment in International Living, and took a group of college students over to France. The Algerian War was in progress at the time. The French were finding it very difficult to find a young man who could serve as my corresponding group leader. The family that I was to stay with was the Troubat family. The brother, Nicholas, was to be my opposite number, but was taken into the army to fight in Algeria. A week or so before, in fact just when I was getting on the train to go to New York and get on the boat, I got this letter from Marianne Troubat, his sister, saying, "Nicholas is going off in the army. I will be the group leader." Fair enough.

I met the group in New York. We took the Holland-American line, the Grootebeer, off to Cherbourg, I guess, or maybe, Le Havre, and went on down to Burgundy. We were situated in Burgundy. I was in the little town of Flavigny-sur-Ozerain. I don't know if you've ever seen the movie *Chocolat*, which I don't recommend as a film, but it's filmed in Flavigny, a quite charming medieval hill town. Our group was scattered over the Burgundian countryside. They had a good summer; we had a good summer. I learned a lot of French, a lot of slang, a lot of songs, and so on.

Starn: How many were there in the group?

Keightley: I suppose there might have been ten or twelve others.

Starn: On each side?

Keightley: Yes, so we were a group of about twenty. Then we took a camping trip with them. We rented a bus, traveled around France camping. For some of them--I'm still in touch with at least one of the group--it was really a defining experience. As in a way it was for me, because Marianne and I kept telling the members of our group, "Whatever you do, don't fall in love with your French opposite number." But Marianne and I were in close proximity. She was a lovely young woman, and--pow! So by the time I left, at the end of that summer, we were talking about getting married. I went back to the States. I must confess, I'm not quite sure what I was doing at that point.

Starn: Looking to see the results of your exam?

Keightley: I was certainly waiting for the results of the exam. Yes, that's what I was doing. But it was very hard for Marianne to get to the States. The McCarran Act was in full force; there was a long, long waiting list for people who wished to come. We exchanged letters, and so on. I really must look and see what I was doing in the fall of '56. [I was studying and teaching at NYU.]

That Christmas I went over to see Marianne, in Burgundy, and we got engaged. I had passed the exams and was now waiting for clearance with the State Department. But I didn't know what to do. Should I tell the State Department that I was engaged to be married to a French girl, or should I wait and see? Well, Mr. Gerry, who had had this house in Neuilly where I had stayed several years ago, had a friend in the American Embassy in Paris, Mr.Hughes, who was the vice-consul. He said, "I'll get you an appointment with Mr. Hughes; why don't you ask his advice?" So Marianne and I went up to Paris, and we saw Mr. Hughes, and he said, "Yes, well this is what you do: you wait until you're appointed vice-consul, and then you tell them that you are engaged to marry a French girl." That was his advice; he knew what he was doing, so we accepted it. But apparently, the moment we left his office, he got on the cable and sent a message to Washington: "Keightley's just come to see me. He's engaged to marry a French girl." He betrayed me. It was very bad and Mr. Gerry was very angry when he discovered this. I was angry too. It didn't seem like the proper thing to do.

I was waiting and waiting in Evanston for the State Department to call me and they never did, they never did--and when I called I would get the runaround. Finally, I just got on an airplane and flew down to D.C. and appeared in the State Department and said, "What is going on?" That's when I discovered they knew I was engaged to Marianne. They said, "Mr. Keightley, do you know the word '*gestalt*'?" I thought to myself, "I probably know it better than you do." They said, "Your whole *gestalt* is against you. You grew up in England, you studied French, you went to school in France, you got an M.A. in modern European history, and now you want to marry a European woman! You're not American enough." Fair enough, but why didn't they tell me? They just wanted me to go away. They wanted me to die on the vine. There I was in Washington D.C. with no job and no prospects.

Starn: A nasty business, and a loss for the State Department, too.

Keightley: Possibly, yes. I sympathized with these guys. They were not personnel people, they were vice-consuls themselves, who were on duty in Washington. They weren't experts. It was like meeting with a bunch of retired dentists.

Starn: What did you do then?

Keightley: I honestly don't remember. I either went back to Evanston or I went straight to New York. Anyway, I headed back to New York City and found myself living in an apartment which was owned by William Cole. I don't know if the name means anything to you; he was an anthologist, Bill Cole, who had a lot of publishing contacts. I think he worked for Knopf at the time.

Starn: That's a good connection.

Keightley: It was a good connection. I again went out on the job market. I remember, I could have got a job with Massey Ferguson because of my French skills. They wanted me to go and sell tractors in Africa.

Starn: Like John Deere or Caterpillar?

Keightley: Absolutely, yes. Apparently Africa was where my French would be useful, but I didn't find that attractive.

Addendum: I was talking last time about being turned down by the State Department in March of 1956. I have just gone through my diary entries from that period and I would like, if I might, to read a few of them, because they capture a certain moment in my life very well. So I was in Evanston, Illinois on March 15, 1956. "I phoned Richardson at the State Department. My case is still upstairs, he said. He will let me know in two or three days, to which I said, 'Ha!'" On the seventeenth, two days later: "I took TWA and flew down to Washington, put up at the YMCA, phoned the State Department, walked around town all day visiting my old haunts." On March 18: "I saw Dennis, who was the Foreign Service Officer, and the Visa Office in the morning, and had an hour long talk with Jean Fales Richardson, and then they told me they would let me know." Then the next day they did indeed let me know that the decision was negative.

Meanwhile, I had gone to hear Frank Brewster testifying at the Senate committee on labor activities--I don't know why. I talked with Mrs. Knowland in the office of Senator Douglas, trying again to get a visa again for Marianne. I visited the Canadian embassy to see if I could get a visa for her, and then I got that unfavorable decision.

I then tried to get a job in Washington. I had forgotten this. I went to the U.S. Employment Agency; I went to the Army Overseas Administration; I went to the ICA; I went to the Navy Offices Procurement; all to no avail. The next day, the twentieth of March, I got on a Greyhound bus and went up to New York City. Then I really walked the pavements trying to find jobs. I went to many banks--American Express, Standard Oil, sent off a lot of letters, Singer Sewing Machine, rejected by National City, McCann Erickson, International Harvester, J. Walter Thompson, International Nickel, W.R. Grace, IBM.

Starn: You really did make the rounds.

Keightley: I really did, and by March 29, my rather forlorn diary entry says, "No job to look for." Then, eventually, as you know, I got a job in publishing, and I was very happy as an editor.

Starn: I can see why that period might not have come immediately to your mind. You probably repressed it. [Laughs]

Working as an Editor at World Publishing

Keightley: Bill Cole started asking around and I got an interview with World Publishing and got the job there as an editor. My main job was to read all the manuscripts that came in over the transom.. We would get twenty to thirty a week. It's a job which people would like to have, and it was fun for a while. World was the world's largest publisher, I believe, of Bibles, and they also published *American New World Dictionary*. They have a massive printing plant in Cleveland where they employ about six hundred people to crank out the Bibles and the dictionary. I remember at sales meetings, the sales personnel couldn't have cared less about our trade list, about our fiction and nonfiction. Who cared about them? It was the Bibles that counted. They were very strong in the Bible Belt and so on. Nevertheless, it was very reassuring to have the Bibles and the dictionary because that helped support whatever we did in fiction and nonfiction. I was a fiction and nonfiction editor for a year or two.

Starn: Did you find any manuscripts of interest to you?

Keightley: I wouldn't have said I found any of interest to me. Well, I take that back. One person I'm very proud to have published is William Appleman Williams; he was the radical diplomatic historian. His manuscript, "The Tragedy of American Diplomacy" had been turned down by a couple of publishers in New York as too hot to handle. I read it and said, "Yes, this seems to be respectable." I became friends with him, and that was very nice. I remember meeting Carl Sagan, the UFO extraterrestrial guy. I would have liked to get a book out of him. What impressed me, talking to Sagan, was--this was a man who went to the University of Wisconsin, I think--I wished, now, that I had gone to a large state university. It seemed to me that Amherst had been awfully constricted. Now that certainly had its virtues. But I could see there were all sorts of opportunities at large state universities. It's rather nice I ended up at one. I hadn't thought of that.

I got a book out of Sylvia Porter, the financial columnist. The president of the company liked Sylvia Porter, so he assigned me the task of getting the book out of her, and I did. We became friends, and I worked with her, and put the book together. I was asked to do a book for teenagers about submarines, so I got in touch with the U.S. Navy.

Starn: You were versatile.

Keightley: I was. Commander Rush was sent my way, and we became good friends. I was invited to go out to Hawaii and ride in a submarine anytime I wanted. I never did it.

I was doing work like that. World was doing all right. They published *The World of Suzie Wong;* they published Harry Golden. I got to meet people like Sir George Weidenfeld;

we had close links with Weidenfeld & Nicolson. I got to meet Skira. I was invited along to dinner with Skira and his art books, because I could speak French and that might be helpful. But, at the end of two years, I thought, "I could write better books than most of these people I'm editing." Also, I realized that the nature of publishing was changing. Increasingly, it was a matter of contacts, lunches, agents. There was no time left for editing.

Stam: I was wondering whether you did hands-on editing as well as acquisitions.

Keightley: I did some, but not a great deal, and clearly that was not the wave of the future. We were publishing works that increasingly I thought were miscarriages. They should have been nurtured much more before they came out.

End of the Engagement

Keightley: Just to finish out the story, Marianne finally came over, I think in the summer of '57. We had been apart for a year and a half, or over a year. She got off the boat, we were going to get married within a week. That was a very difficult week, because it became very clear to me that I didn't want to do this. I simply wasn't in love anymore. This was devastating for both of us. My parents were in New York for the wedding. Marianne had just arrived; she knew nobody; she didn't have much English. She had the honesty, bless her, to say to me, "Look, this isn't going to work out."

Stam: Do you understand why, in retrospect? Your lives had gone in different directions?

Keightley: I think, in part, that the romance of being in the French countryside, thrown together every day, all of this had been terribly important. Marianne was French; I was dutiful, I thought my mother would be very pleased if I married a French girl. And I liked Marianne. She was a lovely, lovely person. But just the year apart, and writing letters all the time--it just didn't work. I can't tell you more than that.

A Serious Accident ##

Keightley: Shortly after we had broken up, and I was feeling very, very down, depressed, I was invited to a couple of weddings up in New England. One in Cambridge, and one in Northampton, Massachusetts, or Amherst, Massachusetts. I went up with a couple of friends to take my mind off things. After the second wedding in Amherst, we stayed overnight with one of my old professors, Joe Barber. The next morning, we got in the car to drive back to New York City. This was one of these little decisions which shapes your life. We were giving a lift to a third student who was going back to New York City. He was far junior to me; he was several years behind me--this is British education coming out. [laughter]

Stam: Let's make these distinctions clear.

Keightley: I said, "Look, I'll sit in the front seat." I wanted to sit in the front seat; it had a better view--so I put him in the back seat. We had only been on the road for about twenty minutes, it was raining, and my friend who was driving missed the curve, the car skidded, went into a tree, totally demolishing the car. The car collapsed, like an accordion, in front, and my leg was caught between the dashboard and the rest of the car. I was there with a broken femur, a broken thighbone. My friend, who was driving, had a dislocated hip. He was in the hospital for about three weeks. Holyoke Hospital. The guy in back walked away from the accident; there, but for the grace of God, go I. We crashed, in fact, right on the doorstep of Dr. Bandean, who was a surgeon in the hospital. The ambulance came and took us off to the Holyoke hospital. I spent over three months in that hospital. I was feeling bad about the broken engagement, and here I was, incapacitated.

Starn: Bad time in your life.

Keightley: Very bad. Those were the days when they didn't pin bones like that. They were afraid of osteomyelitis. They couldn't handle that. So I was in traction for almost three months, which I don't recommend.

Starn: That's a long time.

Keightley: It was a long time.

Starn: When you're depressed.

Keightley: I shouldn't exaggerate that, but nevertheless. I became the oldest inhabitant in that hospital. I knew that hospital better than anybody else. World very kindly kept my job for me, which I much appreciated. I think I flew back to Chicago by Christmas time, with a walking brace, and eventually got back to New York City on crutches, and then carried on with my job. Then I was an editor at World for a couple of years.

Freelance Writing in New York City

Keightley: As I said, at the end of two years I felt I could write better books than most of those books I was editing, so I became a freelance writer. I took a year off, and again I did this on savings. I had been working for a couple of years.

Starn: You didn't burn your bridges, then--you took a year off?

Keightley: Actually, I think I did burn my bridges. I didn't want to go back to World anyway, I don't think. I had plenty of other contacts in publishing if I needed them. I took a year off and I wrote a novel. In fact, I think I wrote two novels. I just discovered another manuscript the other day which I had entirely forgotten about. It was great fun to read it; I had no idea how it was going to come out. I wrote two novels, neither one of them publishable, thank God.

Starn: Did you really shop them around?

Keightley: I did. One of them was so bad my agent wouldn't even handle it. I take it he knew what he was doing. I should read that again.

Stam: You had an agent at that point?

Keightley: I had an agent handling other things for me but not the novel; he didn't want to do the novel.

At the end of the year two things happened. First of all, I was stuck up in the country one day in a great heavy snow storm. I was housesitting and couldn't get out. I went to the local library and they had a good collection of science fiction at this library. I went through these stories and pulled out every story that was to do with first contact with aliens. I put this together in an anthology of short stories called *Contact*, and my agent sold it to New American Library, and I got paid $1,400. I thought that was quite nice.

Stam: What was the genesis of this?

Keightley: I think just being in the country and noticing there was this strong collection of science fiction. I was not a reader of science fiction, particularly. I wrote an introduction to it. I published it under a pseudonym, not under my own name.

Then, having written my novels, unsuccessfully, I went out and I bought every commercial magazine that published fiction. There were still quite a lot of them at that point. I read all the stories; I got down the formula; I sat down and wrote a short story and sent it off to *The Saturday Evening Post*. Within a week or so, back came a check for $1,000. I thought, "This is marvelous. I just do this forty times a year and I'm set." *The Saturday Evening Post* set it up in galleys, and then they went out of business.

Stam: Just at that point.

Keightley: That's all right. I have no regrets, it was pulp fiction. I had published another short story with a journal called *Cavalier*, which was sort of a low-grade *Playboy*. Jane Fonda was there in the buff, and I was there in prose. [laughter]

To pay the rent, I was also writing book reviews for *Time Magazine* on a freelance basis.

Stam: Did you specialize in your book reviewing?

Keightley: I think it worked this way: I would go in once a week and they would offer me a range of books, books that other people hadn't wanted to handle, and I would pick one I thought I could handle. That was very nice. It paid a hundred dollars per review, and my rent-controlled apartment was only a hundred per month.

Stam: That was then.

Keightley: That's right, that was then. Then, I had a contract with Doubleday and a co-author to do a book about the stock market, because I was quite deeply involved in the stock market. I was paying my way partly through stocks, which were going up. That was a boom market in those days. Then, I began to think, I suppose, I began to think, "I can write better things than I am writing now." [laughter] What I really began to think was: this was not a way for a

grown man to live. I am spreading myself very thin: the stock market, pulp fiction, book reviews for *Time Magazine*. I really want to be more of a specialist. I had known this, I think, since Amherst days. When I was doing biochemistry I thought I really wanted to be a specialist in some particular field.

As I mentioned, I was writing book reviews for *Time Magazine*, and didn't like myself for doing this because here I was, writing rather smart-alecky, jokey reviews, which is what *Time* tended to favor at that time.

Starn: *Time* preferred that style, yes.

Keightley: And about subjects about which I was not well informed. I hadn't been trained in this; the author knew much more than I did, and so on. The straw that broke the camel's back was a book about the Indian philosopher Tagore. I had written the review, and then I said to myself, "This is ridiculous. I don't know Tagore's work. I haven't done the work the author's done." I withdrew the review and I stopped doing it. I stopped writing book reviews, and decided, of course, to focus on China.

I would also like to stress how terribly excited I was by the study of China when I took it up. It seemed to me so important. I couldn't understand why everybody in the world wasn't studying China--it seemed to be just absolutely essential.

Starn: And they weren't.

Keightley: And they weren't. But that spirit of excitement really got me through five, seven years, hard years, of graduate school. I think I had that to a degree that many of my younger fellow graduate students did not, and I was very grateful for that.

Starn: It was a sense of a mission and excitement that moved you on, and not that dutiful professional lockstep.

Keightley: Absolutely. As I said, I thought it was one of the frontiers of our time, and it was going to become very important, as indeed it has.

IV GRADUATE WORK AT COLUMBIA AND IN TAIWAN, 1963-1969

Choosing a Frontier: China

Keightley: I wanted to be on one of the frontiers of our time. I thought there were two frontiers: one was Latin America, and the other was China. I found Latin America more attractive, I think. But I had been hurt in this car smash and my back was causing me a lot of trouble, because one leg had come out longer than the other. I couldn't tramp all over the *pampas,* whereas China was ideal. It was closed: I couldn't go to China. So I thought I would become a freelance writer about China. I got on the bus, went up to Columbia, and took intensive Chinese, first year, that summer. Pretty soon I got sucked into a Ph.D. program. I didn't do this with much forethought. I think money was partly involved, because Chinese was a critical language at this point, and the government was putting a lot of support into it, and eventually built a very good sinological community.

Starn: Columbia was about the best at that point?

Keightley: Well, if I had known more than I did, I would have gone off to Harvard, certainly. I thank my lucky stars I didn't, because if I had gone to Harvard I would have been sucked into [John] Fairbank's trade and diplomacy workshops, and I would have probably done Qing history, like a lot of other people. At Columbia, I was at a certain age--I was now thirty years old. I knew my own mind more. The professors were not particularly strong at shaping the work that I, at least, was to do.

Starn: There weren't major professors?

Keightley: There were major professors, yes.

Starn: Fried--was he there?

Keightley: Morton Fried--he was there, yes, and he was a great professor. I learned a lot from Fried. But I only, in fact, audited his anthro courses. I didn't actually take them. C. Martin Wilbur was there, in Chinese history; Hans Bielenstein, in ancient Chinese history. Gary Ledyard was there in modern Korean history, really. And John Meskill. I started off in modern China, post-1949 China, because that's what a freelance writer would be writing about. I spent three very dull years reading Mao Zedong and Communist propaganda and so on.

Starn: How long did it take you in intensive Chinese study to master it to the point that you could read well?

Keightley: No doubt much of what I was reading at first was from translation. I took intensive Chinese courses all the way through, so that I think I had done five years' worth of Chinese in three years by the time I got through. That included also classical Chinese. Also, I did four years' worth of Japanese, again intensive. This was Japanese for Chinese readers. We didn't have to speak the language; we just had to get to read it. I regret having to do it at that pace, but being thirty years old, I didn't have much time to waste.

Moving Back in Chinese History

Keightley: I started off in the People's Republic of China, found it increasingly boring. I found that I loved reading classical Chinese, as opposed to Mao's very Germanic modern Chinese, so I started to go back. By the time that I was ready to write my dissertation, I was all set to work on opium smoking in eighteenth and nineteenth-century South China. I wanted to know what was happening in the society in that part of China which laid it open to this foreign vice.

Starn: It was a foreign vice?

Keightley: The British imported it. That's what led to the Opium Wars; the Chinese were trying to keep it out and the British wanted to sell it because opium supported the British empire in India, and so on. I think that was a very good topic. Nobody has done it yet, as far as I know. I would like to know why. China had known about opium for centuries, but it wasn't a problem until the British started marketing it.

Then, the night before I was due to go for my interview with the Foreign Area Fellowship people for funding for the next year's research, I had this epiphany where I suddenly realized that the really big questions lay very far back, and if we were going to understand what makes China China, we had better see how our two cultures began to diverge, presumably back in the classical period. So I went down and talked to the examiners. They were all primed to ask me questions about opium smoking, and here I was talking about Confucius and Zhou China. But in those days I guess my track record was sufficiently good. They funded me anyway. I called Bielenstein up, and said, "Would you take me as a Ph.D. candidate?" He had had me as a student both in history courses and in classical Chinese, and he said that he would.

Studying Chinese and Researching in Taiwan and Japan

Keightley: Then I went off for two years' additional language training and research in Taiwan, in Taibei.

Starn: But you already had a good basic command of classical Chinese.

Keightley: Yes, but it can always get better. I had enough to build on, and I spent a year in language school there, and then a year doing research at the Academia Sinica there. I was writing a dissertation--well, I had a dissertation project, which dealt with peasant migration in Zhou China. I had discovered--and I think I'm absolutely right--that opposed to the usual clichéd view of the Chinese peasant as being absolutely rooted to the land, on the contrary, the peasants were very mobile at this time, moving around, being attracted from state to state. The state policies, and state philosophy, in fact, were shaped by the need to attract populations.

Starn: When was this?

Keightley: The period in Chinese history, one would say, from about 500-300 B.C. I wrote a long, I thought very attractive, draft of this, and sent it off to Bielenstein. He didn't like it. He said, "No, this isn't a dissertation. This isn't any good." Many years later, he and I were at a conference together where I presented a version of this paper; it was a revised version, and he said, "Wonderful paper. I like that." [laughter]

Starn: What did he have against it?

Keightley: I don't remember the details now. I was dutiful, and I wasn't going to fight my primary advisor.

A footnote to my life in Taiwan: when I was a student there between '65 and '67, I was working, as I have indicated, on public work in ancient China, and I wanted to find out more about irrigation systems, so on a couple of occasions I went out with the JCRR--that's the Joint Committee on Rural Reconstruction, I think it was called, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, which sent teams out to the countryside. So I went out and inspected irrigation systems and irrigation ditches, which was very instructive. I saw a lot of the Taiwanese farmland that way.

There was one ghastly moment. It was the end of an afternoon and we were walking along a rather large irrigation canal; the sun was in my eyes, and I was wearing sunglasses, and I stepped onto what I thought was a bridge--and in fact there was no bridge there. I tumbled right into the irrigation canal and was swept off down the stream, with all the Chinese engineers running along side me. [laughter] They finally pulled me out. I was again grateful for that opportunity to get out and see how the world worked.

Starn: A more adventurous life than most scholars have. [laughter]

Keightley: For that moment anyway, yes.

Arguing with Karl August Wittfogel

Keightley: My other great project, which is the one I pursued, was what I called "public work in ancient China". I don't know if the name of Karl August Wittfogel means anything to you. Wittfogel had written a very influential book called *Oriental Despotism* [1957], in which he argued that Chinese culture emerged the way it did because of the constraints of the environment, the need for irrigation agriculture in the landscape, which doesn't get enough rainfall, and the need, therefore, to develop a centralized, despotic, agro-managerial apparatus, which would run the dams and the dikes, and control the irrigation works.

It's an extraordinary book, because it's really anti-communist, anti-collectivist. It starts out with a ringing appeal to the Battle of Marathon. We've got to go back and beat back these Asiatics, and so on. I thought Wittfogel was dead wrong.

Starn: He was, presumably, a German.

Keightley: He was a German--though by the time I encountered him he was living in New York City, in fact, on Riverside Drive. Vannie and I went to have lunch with him once. He had heard about my dissertation and had started denouncing it, even though he had never read it. But he did have us come down for lunch and we had a nice conversation.

My argument was: no, if you look at the early Chinese records, irrigation isn't a factor here at all. They are mobilizing manpower, but they're doing it for wall building, in particular. They're building city walls, and then building long walls. The Great Wall of China is, in fact, a fairly late development. There were about 1,800 miles of walls built between the various states before that. So, I did a whole dissertation looking at the mobilization of labor for this particular activity--construction essentially.

Starn: Which was, of course, security rather than irrigation?

Keightley: Irrigation, that's right. I now think some of these city walls may have been built to keep floods out too, so Wittfogel may have some justification. But I was arguing no, that this was part of the way the culture operated. And indeed, they were mobilizing people for agriculture also, getting labor gangs out on the land.

Starn: From great distances also?

Keightley: Well, the states weren't very big at this point. Communications weren't that good. Also, of course, for warfare. They were mobilizing people for warfare. Irrigation didn't play the role that Wittfogel thought. I wrote a draft of this dissertation for the Spring and Autumn period, which goes from 722-453 B.C.

One of the great pleasures of doing these oral histories is that it does encourage you to go back and look at your history in rather more detail than you usually do. I've spent a little time recently looking back at the papers I wrote as a graduate student both at NYU and at Columbia. Two things struck me: first of all, that even at that early point in my career I was interested in what I would call "cultural style." I wrote one paper on "British diplomacy, 1870-1885: A Study in Style and Character." That was at NYU for Professor Salomone.

Then I wrote another paper up at Columbia for Doak Barnett on the administration of Communist China's foreign policy, but again it was very much concerned with the style of Chinese foreign policy, partly because, of course, the documents were not easily accessible.

I think what was happening, in part, was that I was beginning to apply my training as an English major at Amherst to the analysis of historical documents, historical situations. That eventually, and certainly quite a number of years later, was to lead to a much more intensely anthropological interest in the early Chinese evidence that I was looking at.

The second point I'd make about those papers is that there was a certain critical distance between me and what I was doing. I wanted to give you an example of that: a paper I wrote--this was a double book review for professor Leo Gershoy at NYU, on Becker's *Heavenly City* and Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew and Other Works*. On the title page of this paper I wrote the following, "A double dividend for the book report of the month club. A tragical, comical, historical book report in five glorious scenes, twenty-seven unforgettable metaphors, and innumerable brilliant comparisons, in which are introduced fifty-three death-defying footnotes, five never-to-be-forgotten sentences, three semi-original ideas, and one-and-a-half genuine insights." [laughter]

Gershoy was not entirely amused by this. He gave me an A on the paper, but he chastised me for what he called "intellectual diffidence," if that's what it was.

I don't think it was intellectual diffidence, but I think--and this was very clear in my Columbia papers--that I was treating historical analysis partly as a literary endeavor. I was able to write good term papers, and that was largely because of my training at Aldenham in England, and then my training at Amherst. I did pay, again, attention to style, and even to a certain amount of amusement. I enjoyed writing these things and I wanted people to enjoy reading them.

Let me then go back to Columbia where, as I have already told you, I began to question Wittfogel's idea of oriental despotism, and eventually produced a thesis on public work in ancient China, which took a very different approach to the evidence and the conclusions we should draw from it. Here I notice, in retrospect, a theme which is going to crop up several times, I think, in my career: the idea that "That can't be right," is a reaction that I had in reading Wittfogel; it's a reaction I had in dealing with other materials. It was that impulse to say, "No, no, no, there's something wrong here and we're going to have to change it," which I think has led me down the various pathways I've taken as an academic.

Oracle Bones: the Beginning

Keightley: While I was there in Taiwan, I had wondered about the oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty. They have a large collection in Taiwan, which they had shipped over when Chiang Kaishek came, in the late 1940's. All my Chinese friends and colleagues said, "No, no, no, there's nothing of any interest in the oracle-bone inscriptions. These are the dregs of Chinese civilization, mere superstition. All this divination, and so on, in the Bronze Age." I also

think the subtext was, "These things are too difficult for you, a foreigner, to deal with anyway." Well, I was prepared to accept that they said there was nothing there.

After two years in Taiwan, we went on to Japan. I think we spent about seven weeks in Japan, mainly in Kyoto. Again, I was still working on the same public work dissertation. It was on the Spring and Autumn period.

I then came back to the States, and I started to type up the final version of the dissertation. But about halfway through I thought, "Well, I will just do a short introductory chapter on the information on the oracle bones."

[Tape stopped at Keightley's request to show Starn something]

I thought I would simply look at the oracle inscriptions and write this brief preface on what was going on in the Shang dynasty. The moment I looked at the inscriptions, I realized this was a gold mine. There was information here which nobody had known how to deal with; they hadn't been asking the right historical questions. The moment you started to do this, you could produce a great deal of information about labor mobilization in the Shang dynasty. Fortunately, when I had been in Taiwan, I had made friends with a graduate student at the Academia Sinica, called Zhao Lin, who worked on oracle bones. For the next couple of months, he very kindly coaxed me through the beginning steps of the scholarship, how to read these things, and so on. I'm eternally grateful to him. He's no longer an academic, I think.

The Importance of One Book

Keightley: I was self-taught in the oracle-bone inscriptions, which no doubt slowed me down, but was a virtue in some ways. I approached things with a very fresh approach. I got this book, *Inkyo Bokuji Sōrui*, because when I was in Japan, on the way back from Taiwan, I went to the bookstores, and this book was brand-newly published, 1967, sitting there on the bookstore shelf. I looked at it, and I couldn't make head or tail of it. It was about the oracle-bone inscriptions. But I had the good sense to write the title down. The minute I realized I was going to have to work with the oracle-bone inscriptions I wrote to the bookstore and they sent me a copy.

I show it to you because the first entry here is *deng ren*, which is to mobilize men, to raise men. You have all these inscriptions here, all about mobilizing men, three thousand, five thousand at a time, and so on. This was a gold mine, and of course the whole book was filled with valuable information. Indeed, this Shima Kunio book was the first book I ever reviewed. When I got to Berkeley, I wrote this review to let the world know this book existed, and how valuable it was.

Starn: Who did produce it?

Keightley: The book? Well, it's published by a Japanese publisher.

Starn: By a group of scholars?

Keightley: No, no. Shima Kunio produced it himself. He spent ten years doing this. It's a concordance, that is, under every character he gives you all the inscriptions. So any topic you want to study--whether it's attacks or rituals, or so on--you can find every inscription that bears on this.

Starn: Covering what period?

Keightley: 1200-1050 BC, roughly.

Starn: Why did he stop, I wonder?

Keightley: Because the inscriptions stop. That is, they start at 1200, they stop at 1050 when the dynasty is overthrown. It's a 150-year period.

Starn: How exciting for you to find this.

Keightley: It was extraordinary. Nobody in the States was working on this. Nobody knew about Shima Kunio's work. He was a great scholar. I learned a great deal from him as time went on.

Starn: Did you do some work with him?

Keightley: No. I dedicated my first book to him, in fact. His son was deeply recognizant of that, and has been in touch with me, sent me books and so on. I never met Shima.

Starn: Just his production. You were in Taibei and Japan for two years.

Keightley: Two and half, actually.

The Vietnam War and Dissent--in Taiwan and the United States

Starn: You were missing, more or less, the political crises that were going on at Columbia at that point, presumably?

Keightley: Yes and no.

Starn: I don't mean missing, but you were absent.

Keightley: We were absent. On the other hand, Taiwan had a fairly large U.S. military presence, largely for planes on their way to Southeast Asia--also, I think partially for defensive purposes. There were students in Taiwan who were certainly exercised by the Vietnam War as I was. So there was concern, criticism, but not a great deal of political action, no. Partly because Taiwan at that point was pretty much a police state. I was sensitized to this, and concerned, and felt persuaded that America was making a terrible mistake. Amherst College, at that point, gave an honorary degree to Robert S. McNamara. I wrote an angry letter of protest to

the *Amherst Alumni News*, saying we shouldn't have done this. Of course it's rather nice that McNamara has now confessed his errors in his own book, which I respect him for--very much. But no, not a great deal of political activity in Taiwan, no.

Starn: You came back with your dissertation fairly well outlined?

Keightley: Well, no, I came back with a lot of notes and buried myself in the Upper West Side of New York, writing, writing, and writing; and then shifting the whole focus of it from the Spring and Autumn period--I still have the notes on that, I've never done that--and doing it on the Shang and the next dynasty, the Western Zhou.

But in May, 1968, there were indeed a whole series of very angry, confrontational, student demonstrations and meetings at Columbia. I took part in my share of these--some meetings with just graduate students; some meetings with faculty and graduate students. At the meeting of May 3, I see that a strike was voted, twenty-one to nineteen. Clearly, this was a very close vote, and I do not remember on which side of the vote I was. I suspect that I was against a strike, because my general theme in these matters was that it was stupid to shut down the university when much of the criticism of the government policy was indeed coming out of universities, and we should keep on with the work that we were doing, and keep on getting educated.

Starn: That's a tenable position.

Keightley: I would have thought so. I don't know what the quarrels were with the university administration itself. I noticed, too, at the time, at the end of June, I went to see Senator Eugene McCarthy give a talk over in New Jersey. I was interested in that side of the Democratic Party.

Yet, at the same time, in May, 1968, I see I was organizing what was then known as the Society for the Study of Pre-Han China. That is, I was sending off letters to scholars around the country, asking if they would like to join this new society which I was helping to establish. It eventually became the Society for the Study of Early China, which I'm very proud of.

A Letter to the New York Times

Keightley: Finally, in terms of political involvement, on the first of December, 1964--that was four years earlier--Stanley Lubman and I published a letter in *The New York Times* calling for talks on Vietnam. We thought that the war was a great mistake and that diplomacy was the route to follow. Some of my professors at Columbia advised me strongly not to publish this letter. They felt that this was going to damage my career. I didn't accept that for a minute. Stanley Lubman, who's now a lawyer here in Berkeley, eventually used the Freedom of Information Act to get hold of the dossier on him, and the first item in his dossier was in fact a copy of this letter.

Starn: Have you ever looked at your dossier?

Keightley: No, I haven't. I haven't bothered. I suppose I should in my old age. Yes, that would be interesting. It would be.

Then, as a footnote to this, John B. Oakes, who was an editor of the editorial page on the *Times* from 1961 to 1976, sent a letter to *The New York Times* in April of 1995 saying that the first *New York Times* editorial advocating negotiations in Vietnam appeared in the paper on the ninth of February, 1965. That editorial said, "The only sane way out is diplomatic, not military." So the letter that Lubman and I wrote anticipated the *Times* editorialist by a couple of months. I'm very glad we did that, and much good it did us.

Starn: The *Times* editorials do often take off on a particularly well-phrased letter.

Keightley: Maybe, that could well be. I hadn't made that link, but that's very nice.

Marriage

Starn: Somewhere about then, you must have met Vannie.

Keightley: Vannie and I had first met when I had my broken leg. I had come back to New York City. I was on crutches, which she tells me now was very romantic. I hadn't thought about it at the time. But I was dating other people, and she went off to live in Greece--for a couple of years, I think. She didn't come back into my life until I was getting close to finishing my course work in Columbia; that would have been 1964. She came back from Europe and I was delighted to see her. I had always liked her and found her interesting, found her very gutsy. The fact that she went off to Europe for two years independently, I thought again, was attractive. So we eventually got married. That's all I will say about that.

Starn: In 1965?

Keightley: In 1965, married that summer, and then we went off to Taiwan shortly after that. Our first two years of marriage, two and a half years, were spent in Taiwan.

Starn: While you were studying language, she was--?

Keightley: She was doing some language. She was also teaching English. Then she was doing painting and art.

A Job Offer from Berkeley

Starn: We've got you married, working on your dissertation, and very soon thereafter you had the offer from Berkeley. What led to that? Was your dissertation actually finished, or did you come on the strength of recommendations?

Keightley: My dissertation was finished. I can give you more precise dates. I had met Joe Levenson [Joseph Levenson, late professor of Chinese history at Berkeley] at an AAS [Association for Asian Studies] meeting in Philadelphia in March 1968 as I was finishing up my dissertation. They interviewed me. It was a curious interview, because Joe and Franz Schurmann were just publishing a book on early China at that point. The interview was largely Joe telling me about early China. He explained early China to me. I really didn't say very much. When the dissertation was in almost-finished form, in final draft form, I sent him a copy. I take it that the Berkeley history department liked what they saw. David Johnson, in that *Early China* festschrift [*Early China 20,* dedicated to David Keightley], remembers telling Joe Levenson that I was a good student, a good person, as they walked across the campus. David thinks he may have played a role in this. He may, indeed. Berkeley must have formed a search committee, and done what it usually did. That was it. There were a few other job offers out, but not very many. I had a job offer at Rice University, which I found very attractive. I had always assumed that I was going to teach at a place like Amherst, where I would be teaching undergraduates, introducing them to Chinese history. I had not really planned to become a research scholar in the way that I have become. I found Rice very attractive. I thought Berkeley was the kind of place where you end up--not the place that you would start. Then it was explained to me that the place you start is often the place you end up.

Starn: It was explained to you by whom? Some senior person?

Keightley: Senior and junior people both, yes. By people I talked to, for advice. Vannie didn't want to go down to Rice. She didn't want to go to Texas. So I took the Berkeley job, and believe me, it has changed me extraordinarily. I have become a research scholar in a way I had not planned to be.

Studying Early China from a Distance

Starn: Earlier, before you decide where you were going to teach and research, you had pretty much accepted that you weren't going to be able to go to the archaeological sites and the PRC [People's Republic of China]--is that right?

Keightley: That's quite true. China didn't open up until probably '74, for academics. I had been in Berkeley for five years by that point. No, China was still closed. I remember when we went to Taiwan I was reading archaeological journals from the Mainland, but they had to be kept in a locked room, because we weren't allowed to show these to anybody else.

Starn: Controlled substances.

Keightley: Absolutely. Politics was still playing a role there. I wasn't interested in the archaeology at that point, I was simply a historian. I was interested in the inscriptions and the documents. After the Cultural Revolution ended in 1972--I had been here [in Berkeley] three years, in fact--they resumed publication of the archaeological journals and one had enough to keep busy with.

Starn: You felt you had enough to work with, with both the collection of the artifacts available and the inscriptions.

Keightley: The inscriptions, in particular, because these were carved into bone and shell, in 1200 B.C., but that makes a perfect rubbing master. You can make very accurate mechanical copies just by rubbing, so they published the rubbings.

I didn't get to China until 1975. The one point I would make is: it really changed the way I taught Chinese history. Having gone to China I began to see all sorts of continuities that I had not known about before, that I hadn't experienced.

V LIFE AND WORK IN BERKELEY, WITH TIME IN CHINA

Moving West with a New Family in 1969

[Interview 2: July 18, 2001] ##

Starn: We are in Berkeley and you have just finished your dissertation--on the Upper West Side, I believe, of New York--and here you are, moving out with Vannie. Do you have children yet?

Keightley: We had one son, Steven, who was born just three or four days after we got back from Taiwan. He arrived two months prematurely. That was an adventure, because Vannie was in Pittsburgh with her parents and I was still in Chicago with my parents. I had to rush off to Pittsburgh. When we came out to Berkeley, Steven would have been about two years old.

Starn: Had you actually taught at Columbia?

Keightley: No, I had not taught at Columbia at all. My career there was well-funded by fellowships--NDFL [National Defense Foreign Language] Fellowships, Ford Foreign Area Fellowships, and so on. Columbia was also not a place where they laid a great deal of emphasis on experience in the classroom, so no, I was completely green when I got here. I should add that I had taught modern European history at NYU when I was getting my M.A. there. I had to lecture there.

Starn: You weren't totally inexperienced.

Keightley: I wasn't totally inexperienced. That was an eye-opener too. The students were not terribly good at the undergraduate campus, which was up at Washington Heights. I remember a couple of the boners I got on exams. One was that Machiavelli wrote *The Black Prince*, which I thought was very nice. And asked to identify Giotto, one student said, "This is the area of town where the Jews lived." [laughter]

Early Teaching at Berkeley

Starn: I hope things were better at Berkeley.

Keightley: Things were much better at Berkeley. I think my first year of lectures would have been hard on the undergraduates because I was still too much of a graduate student; I was anxious to tell them everything I knew. I had to pack it all in. I was also faced with a group of graduate students--Marxists, left-wing, radical, suspicious--who I think were out to test me. Some of them audited my lecture classes and I found myself increasingly talking to them, to sort of address the people who knew what I might be talking about. I got over that. Gradually one gets the right level.

Starn: When you're almost the same age as the graduate students it's complicated.

Keightley: That, too. I remember one of them came in to see me and said, "Are you a Marxist?" And I said, no, I wasn't. He was just appalled. Everybody had to be a Marxist.

Starn: He wanted to know your excuse.

Keightley: That's right, yes. What was wrong with me?

Starn: What did you teach at first?

Keightley: I would have taught what was then History 184A, which was "The Origins of Chinese Civilization," down to the Han dynasty. I participated in History 19A, this comparative China-Japan introductory course. It was our version of the "Rice Paddies" course.

Starn: Did you teach with Tom Smith?

Keightley: I don't remember Tom being there, but I remember Irv Scheiner was certainly there; Delmer Brown certainly was there; Fred Wakeman was there [Irwin Scheiner and Delmer Brown; professors of Japanese history; Frederic Wakeman, professor of Chinese history]. That's the team I remember. There again the same thing happened--that with Fred Wakeman and Irv Scheiner sitting in the back of the room, one tended to begin to speak to one's colleagues rather than to the students. We eventually gave that course up because we were trying to ask students to compare China and Japan, and of course the students knew nothing about either one of these cultures.

Starn: No material to compare. [laughter]

Keightley: It was rather hard to do this. I found that the lectures were far too textbooky, as you were trying to make broad generalizations which were comparative in nature, but students didn't know what the evidence was to support them. Eventually we split into 19A and 19B--one on China and one on Japan. I think that's worked much more successfully. It's no longer team-taught; one professor does the whole thing. Indeed, History 19, as I understood it, had originally been devised by Woodbridge Bingham, my predecessor in the early China slot at Berkeley; and in those days it had also covered South and Southeast Asia!

I taught classical Chinese language, because at that point, strangely, nobody was teaching classical Chinese--at least not for historians. I worked up an introductory course on that based, on the teaching I had at Columbia.

Starn: There was an East Asian languages department?

Keightley: There certainly was. Professor Boodberg was here, but he didn't deal with the historical courses; didn't deal with the texts that historians were going to have to grapple with. I did that for a while, and then they hired Jeff Riegel in East Asian Languages, or Oriental Languages, as it was then. He took over these courses, thank goodness. In fact, they had hired [John] Cikoski before him.

Culture Shock: Leaving New York and Moving to Berkeley

Keightley: One other point I would make is: moving to Berkeley was an enormous cultural shock.

Starn: Talk a little bit about that.

Keightley: In those days, living in New York City--it was like that cover of *The New Yorker*. Everything west of the Hudson River was very far away and strange indeed. Berkeley was virtually--

Starn: Had you ever been to California?

Keightley: I had driven out to California at the end of my senior year of high school, in the summer of 1949. As a kind of reward for graduation, two friends and I got in a car and drove out to the West Coast and back. So I had come to Berkeley. We were camping out. I remember sleeping in the railway yards in San Francisco at one point, but we didn't spend more than ten minutes in Berkeley, I think. We just looked around and left. Little did I know.

I had also come to Berkeley, of course, as a textbook salesman for Row Peterson, probably in 1955, and had had a good time. I had met some ex-Amherst men--one was a graduate, Andy Gustafson. He was a graduate student in English and he took me to a couple of parties, and so on. That was nice. Little did I know.

We arrived in Berkeley; missed New York City terribly for the first three months.

Starn: Only three months?

Keightley: I think maybe only three months. We got *The New York Times* religiously. Then gradually it fades away and you become partly Californian.

A Northside Apartment and Collegiality

Starn: Did you come to a rented house? Were you settled here?

Keightley: The Lubmans, I think--they were now living in Berkeley--helped us find an apartment. Or maybe Roxane Witke--if you know that name--Roxane Witke? [Roxane Witke was teaching Chinese history at San Francisco State University at that time.]

Starn: Yes, a classmate of mine.

Keightley: All right. Fine. Well, Roxane was here, too, and maybe she helped us find the apartment, but it was at 2234 Virginia Street, Virginia and Arch. Very convenient. A lovely apartment. It had about thirty or forty windows and the sun shone through all of them, whereas we came out of an apartment in New York which was so deeply buried in a courtyard that you couldn't tell whether the sun was shining or whether it was raining. So that was a great pleasure. But as I say, culturally and academically, Berkeley was just a very long way away. One didn't know much about what was going on out here, and I think that's all changed, too. Now communication across America is much more simple.

Starn: Did you find much of a collegiality immediately, in terms of social mixing?

Keightley: Yes, I would say so. I was arriving at the end of a period, I believe, of considerable hiring in the mid-sixties. But it had dwindled away by the time I got here. I think in 1969, when I was hired, I was the only new professor hired in History. I don't think I had anybody else in my class at the assistant level. If Tom Smith came, that would have been quite different. Just glancing at my diary, there were a good number of parties. I found it a collegial and friendly place. It was also a very unusual first year, partly because of the antiwar movements and the riots on the campus.

Scholars in other departments were very friendly too--Boodberg in Oriental Languages--Peter A. Boodberg, who was a very distinguished Sinologist, shaped a whole series of students. He had been an emigré from Russia, I think, in 1917. His family had fled to Harbin in North China.

Starn: Where Nick Riasanovsky was born.

Keightley: Precisely. That's right. And then eventually had come to the States. I don't know whether there's an oral history of Boodberg or not, but there should have been one. In his declining years, he lived just down on Santa Barbara Road, two blocks from here. I would bicycle home every evening and stop and talk with him. We went through his wine cellar together as he gave me accounts of his life. In that movie, *Dersu Uzala,* the high school teacher in the movie who takes in this Siberian herdsman--that was Boodberg's high school teacher, apparently, in real life.

Starn: Interesting.

Keightley: That was nice. Anyway, Boodberg was very helpful, very collegial, and I audited some of his courses to see what he was doing. Wolfgang Eberhard in sociology was again very friendly. In fact, he had met me perhaps for the first time at the AAS meetings in Boston in the spring of '69, the month that Levenson died. He had just died. Janet Purcell [the longtime administrative assistant in the History Department] telephoned me from Berkeley. Very sad business.

Starn: It certainly was.

Keightley: But Eberhard--to my astonishment, because he was in Sociology--knew I was coming to Berkeley, and he had already read my Ph.D. dissertation and liked it very much. He said to

me, he said, "Put in a little feudalism." This has always been a joke between Vannie and me, that when she wants to criticize one of my comments, or advise me, she says, "Put in a little feudalism." I was a little taken aback by that, because that was the whole point of my dissertation, that one shouldn't put in a little feudalism. This was an entirely different way of organizing culture and society. But no, Eberhard was again a wonderful colleague and part of the pleasure of coming to Berkeley.

Stam: When you came, you were immediately recruited to teach this rather difficult course--and then, after that, you did have time to develop your own courses, which were famously successful.

Keightley: That I don't know. I would have to check my records on that, Francie, but yes, I think I taught the standard courses, the 19, the 184--the big lecture course--

Stam: If we don't necessarily use the numbers, there's a course called "The Ch'ing Game".

Keightley: That's a little later. That's more adventurous.

Changing Student Enrollments in Early China Courses

Keightley: One thing I did notice, incidentally, that may be of some interest, is that as long as Mao Zedong was alive, enrollments in my undergraduate lecture course were large, because China was exciting, it was revolutionary, left-wing students saw it as the model, utopia of the future, and so on. Once Mao died [in 1976], and China became a developing country like any other, I noticed a certain decline in enrollments. I think the two things were related.

Stam: I have a question related to that--my curiosity about whether there was any noticeable change in enrollment as the campus had more and more Asian students.

Keightley: Yes, absolutely. Yes. At one point I quantified this, but I think when I started here, perhaps 30 percent of the students in my class were of Chinese origin. I think the last time it was getting closer to 60 percent.

Stam: The university percentage is--?

Keightley: Forty-five? It's up there somewhere. So we do get a lot of the students, and usually they are students in the sciences, or pre-med, and so on, but many of them desperately anxious to get in touch with their cultural roots. They frequently make very good students. I've had engineering students take courses in oracle-bone inscriptions, and in many cases, I think, regretting they can't go on in this--but their parents just push them to get a career in a sensible profession.

Stam: But the kids want to go back to know their culture.

Keightley: The kids want to do that, and they are very good students--yes, yes, yes.

New Courses ##

Starn: There was a famous course called "The Ch'ing Game". Just for the record, what number was that in the curriculum?

Keightley: That was a 103--103F because it dealt with Asian history. "The Ch'ing Game"--in those days we just spelled *Ch'ing*: C-h-'-i-n-g--[*Qing* is the modern Pinyin version]--was based on a book and a game that a scholar on the East coast, Robert Oxnam, devised, in which students spent the first half or two-thirds of the [academic] quarter studying Ch'ing dynasty history and administration quite intensively--the Manchu-Chinese dichotomy, the organization of the government, the western impact, things of this sort, so that they had a pretty good sense of how the society and the government operated. Then, towards the end of the quarter--it was the instructor who played God or Heaven in all this--it was the instructor's role to assign roles to the various students. One student was to be the emperor; one student was to be the head of the foreign office; one was to be a local magistrate; another was to be a merchant, and so on. They were then to be prepared to play out these roles over, I believe, two three-hour sessions, something like that. We would take over part of Dwinelle for a Saturday and Sunday, and one room would be Beijing the capital, and one room would be out in the provinces, and one would be the local market, and the local *yamen*, and so on. It was my role, again as Heaven, to initiate certain plot developments, and the students would then begin to act out, and negotiate, and try to advance their careers, or steal money, or get executed, and so on. The course was, I think, a great success.

Starn: I heard about it from your students--one, Shannon Page, in the Oral History Office, and the other, my son.

Keightley: I remember Orin [Starn] taking it with great pleasure. I forget what role he played; you should ask him, if you see him.

I did this for several years, and it was a popular course, and I enjoyed it, but I finally gave up, because, increasingly, it was becoming like running a Broadway production--that is, everything was directed towards this final opening on Broadway, and I found that less interesting and very draining. As I'm clearing out my office now, I've got a whole box of Ch'ing Dynasty money that I had made: thousands and thousands of hundred *tael* notes, and thousand *tael* notes, and I'm not quite sure what to save, if my successor wants it. Maybe I should burn it, because one does burn Chinese money.

Starn: You mustn't do that.

Keightley: I'll offer it to the ancestors.

So the Ch'ing Game was at one point in my career. Then I replaced it with this; for a while I taught a course on revolutions in Chinese history, trying to suggest that the Cultural Revolution (which was going on at the time) was not the only revolution that had taken place, and it started way back in time. That was a curious course. This was a time when a lot of students were smoking dope, I think, and some of our faculty members--I won't name any--would even permit this in seminars. I would not.

At one point--I thought this was a great triumph--I got a young Chinese student to come in and address the class, because he had been through the Cultural Revolution; he had been sent down to the countryside, he knew what it was like. The class, to my astonishment, was really monumentally uninterested. The fact that he knew more than they did they somehow found unfair; I can't imagine what the reasoning was. It was not a great success, that particular enterprise.

Then I moved on--and I can talk about this more in terms of my own intellectual research, and so on--but I then moved on to this "Death and Birth of Civilizations" course which, I think, was again a great success. I think good students, and good feedback, and good content.

Starn: I'd like to hear more about that course.

Keightley: The course grew out of my research interest in the origins of Chinese civilization, where much of the archaeological evidence is mortuary, out of my English background where I had taken great pleasure as a boy in reading Homer, out of a desire to make early China significant to a wider audience, and out of a desire to introduce Berkeley undergraduates to major classical texts from a variety of early cultures. And it also, I now realize, took advantage of my training as an English major at Amherst, since I encouraged the students to "get their hands dirty" as they wrestled with the language, metaphors, and images of notable primary texts, many of which were literary. The course focused on--and here I am referring to the course description I used when I taught the course for the last time, in the Fall of 1997--

> the different ways in which the cultures of the ancient Near and Middle East, China, and Greece, developed belief systems and institutions to deal with the one certainty that faces us all. Death can, paradoxically, be a lively topic, for, from Neolithic times onwards, the way people have treated death and the dead has been deeply expressive of, and has had significant impact on, the way they have treated the living; the ancestor worship of the Chinese would be one example of this. Furthermore, the general availability of mortuary information--both archaeological and textual--makes this category of human behavior a good starting point for comparative purposes. Study of the religion, myth, and political culture of Greater Mesopotamia, ancient Israel, China, and Greece, focused upon the treatment of the dead during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages will permit the exploration of such strategic topics as (1) the characteristic features that defined and separated these seminal cultures; (2) theoretical models in anthropology, archaeology, and history that attempt to account for the birth of states and for cultural variability; (3) the role played by religious belief, sacrifice, and mortuary practice in validating and shaping characteristic social and political structures; and (4) the possible influence of ancient religious belief on modern culture. Sections from *Gilgamesh*, *The Iliad*, the Bible, *Shujing*, *Shijing*, and *Liji*, will be among the primary texts to be read. Students should have read and be prepared to discuss Sophocles' *Antigone* by the time of the first meeting.

It was a course that gave me great pleasure to teach, and I think the students took much of value away from it.

Teaching Graduate Students

Starn: When you began teaching, did you immediately sense whether you were more suited to teaching graduate students than undergraduate students?

Keightley: No, I don't think I sensed that one way or the other. I think both kinds of teaching made their demands. Because I was new, and green, and faced with hotshot graduate students, that was a constant test. I remember one student I had, again nameless, who just mistranslated Mencius right and left, but insisted that he was right.

Starn: Mistranslated Mencius?

Keightley: This was one of the thirteen Chinese classics. Mencius, the philosopher. That was awkward.

I think every course was a challenge, but over the years, certainly, I came to prefer the graduate teaching; one was on the cutting edge; one was getting one's hands dirty with the actual evidence and the documents. The extraordinary thing in the field of Chinese history is the way it has become richer and deeper over the thirty years or so that I've been involved in it. When I was a graduate student you could read every western-language book on Chinese history. Now it's just impossible; there are so many of them. Keeping up, for the rice paddies course, became more and more of a burden, and increasingly I felt that I was skating on thin ice when I spoke about the Mongol dynasty, or the Ming, or the Qing, and so on; just as I'm sure that my colleagues were on thin ice when they were talking about my period. So that became somewhat less easy and less attractive.

Political Unrest on Campus and Beyond

Starn: The early graduate students: you mentioned some of them were also politicized, and there was a lot going on around campus in terms of political action and protests of various qualities. January of the year you came, in '69 for example--the Third World Strike. Did this interfere with your teaching, or were you able to use it in anyway?

Keightley: Let me think about that. I don't recall using it in the teaching because, of course, I was concerned with ancient China. Certainly I could talk about Confucius, and what the Communists were doing to Confucius, and how this seemed to be totally anachronistic in its vision of what was happening--or what had happened, excuse me--in the Zhou dynasty. My main contribution, I think, to that debate was to go out and speak to the community.

I was looking through my diary; I see I took eight outings in May, and June, and July, 1970.

Starn: What sort of places?

Keightley: The first one was out in Marin County. There was me and a group of graduate students, and we found ourselves addressing hard-rock conservatives. This was a bit of a shock. I

remember one of the arguments they made: "Well, look, forty thousand people are killed every year in automobile accidents in the United States; what's the big deal in Vietnam?" This kind of argument was just appalling. I went out to several Jewish brotherhood centers and Jewish old folks' homes; once I went out with Richie Abrams [Richard Abrams, professor of American history at Berkeley] to San Francisco, San Mateo, Pleasanton. With Delmer Brown I went out, talked about Cambodia, at Live Oak Park, the Oakland Exchange Club, and so on.

Our main point was that Nixon is appealing to the silent majority. I said, "Think about this, and don't be silent. Speak up. Tell them what you think." I was astonished, looking at my diary the other night, to see that my parents, on the whole, supported his incursions into Cambodia. I can't believe it, but clearly there were some people who supported what he did. I'm glad I did this. It was a great strain, because our second child [Richard Keightley] had just been born about six weeks earlier, and I would be out until one o'clock in the morning on some of these trips, but it seemed important to do.

Starn: Did you help organize this group or was it part of a university outreach?

Keightley: The people I went out with were sometimes faculty, sometimes graduate students. I think the History Department organized this. I haven't put any name to the group.

Now there was also the Committee for Concerned Asian Scholars (CCAS), which was a national committee, and certainly an active unit on campus; those were the more radical-left-wing, Marxist types. There was a rather strange incident. I wish I had a videotape of this. The AAS national meeting was here in San Francisco in April of 1970. As my diary entry says, "I blew my cool at the CCAS meeting because I got up and I said, 'You may be concerned, but you are not scholars.'" This was not a politic thing to say, and I'm a little astonished--having just arrived, a fresh, green, young professor here--but what I meant was that these were people who were desperately concerned to influence public opinion. Clearly they were going to have to get in the national press; they were going to have to get in the *Saturday Evening Post;* they were going to have to get on TV; they were going to have to get out where the influence could be felt. They weren't really doing that very well, and yet there wasn't any scholarship going on either, that I could see. There was just political irritation, and resentment, and challenge. I think my comments were meant in a friendly way, but they didn't come out in a very friendly way. I know Fred Wakeman was quite taken aback when I had said that, but I felt it was true at the time.

The first year, yes, was pretty much occupied with the riots on campus, all the windows in Durant being smashed, the tear gas, going out talking to the community, the Vitaly Rubin petitions also took a lot of my time. And then, of course, a new baby.

Starn: Please remind me about Vitaly Rubin.

Keightley: Vitaly Rubin was a Soviet "refusenik." A Jewish Sinologist working in Moscow, he had applied for a visa to emigrate to Israel and the visa had been refused. I helped Frank A. Shulman, then I believe at the University of Michigan, to energize the international Sinological community and, as I recall, in the spring or early summer of 1970 we collected a large number of petitions signed by scholars around the world. The existence of these petitions was then made known to Soviet leaders, like Brezhnev, and to major American

politicians. Frank, I think, handled the letters. And it worked! Rubin was let go. He emigrated to Israel, pursued his career as a scholar of early China, and then, tragically, and not untypically, I gather, was killed in a car smash in 1981. Frank eventually sent me the signed petitions and they moldered in my basement for years. I then passed them on to the University Archives here at Cal and, as far as I know, they can be consulted--and counted--there.

A Young Turk--or Not?

Starn: And there were things going on in the department too, in terms of voting privileges for junior professors.

Keightley: Well, yes, you mentioned that, and Delmer had mentioned this to me in conversation a couple of years ago. I had no memory of it! So I went back and read the section of Delmer's oral history that deals with this. I still have no memory of it; I'm a little surprised that I took it on as a young assistant professor here, to make that suggestion. I'm not entirely sure what the current practice is in the department. My impression is that junior professors are allowed to write their comments, but they don't attend the meeting, but I'm not sure if that's the case.

When I was chair [1992-94], we were in such parlous budgetary straits that we didn't do any hiring for the two years I was there, so I never had a chance to find out. Delmer is very flattering to call me a young Turk. That isn't the way I would have thought of myself.

Problems at the East Asian Library

Starn: Would he have had any other possible reason for calling you a young Turk--that you can remember, from his point of view?

Keightley: Well, he also speaks about my anger at the acquisitions policies of the East Asian Library; I thought there was real dereliction of duty there, and the work I did was to show gaps and to show duplicate purchases. Again, I have no memory of that, but I'm sure Delmer is right.

Starn: You were on a committee headed by Delmer to evaluate--

Keightley: To evaluate and to get a new head in.

Starn: And you hired Don Shively--is that right? [Donald Shively, emeritus director of the East Asian Library]

Keightley: We did. What Delmer doesn't mention, of course, is that Don Shively was married to Beth Berry [Mary Elizabeth Berry, professor of Japanese history at Berkeley] and I don't really know how big a role that played. I think it did play a role in Don's decision to leave Harvard, quite obviously. But Don was a very good head of the East Asian Library. But I'm

afraid that was about twenty-five years ago, something like that---that's buried in the past. Sorry.

Starn: It did, presumably, make a difference that you did look at things.

Keightley: Apparently it did, yes.

Starn: Did you make recommendations for acquisitions and development as well as appointing a new director?

Keightley: I suppose we did. As you know I came to head the East Asian Library after I retired, just for six months, as interim director. There is considerable discontent among some of the faculty about the failure of the library to buy the books that they want them to buy. My feeling is that the fault is largely the faculty's. The library is very open to suggestions. They now have a web site; you can type in your recommendations and so on. The faculty generally doesn't take the time, and then it complains when its wishes are not known. I think the new librarian [Peter Zhou] will improve communications that way; he had a good reputation at Pittsburgh for doing that.

Starn: So the East Asian Library was not a major engagement of yours in teaching; it was just among others?

Keightley: It was among many, but certainly it was major, because the whole intellectual strength of that program depends on what's going on in that library.

Starn: Back to your classes: any more memories of that jointly-taught class on the history of the Far East, with Brown and Wakeman?

Keightley: Wakeman gave very lively, amusing lectures. I remember Scheiner saying once, "That's the first time I've heard Chinese history presented as a picaresque novel," I think that is the term he used. Wakeman was a very good lecturer; he got the students' attention.

Memorable Conferences

Starn: During this time there were also conferences resulting in significant publications, such as *The Origins of Chinese Civilization*.

Keightley: Yes, yes. There were two conferences, in particular, I remember. One was in 1972, on legitimation in Chinese history. I think that was my first conference, and I met some of the great guns in the field.

Starn: Was that in Berkeley?

Keightley: That was in Asilomar [California], actually. It was run by Jack Dull, University of Seattle. He was not a dull man at all, very lively man, good friend, now dead, alas. But the volume never got published because Jack was agonizing so much about his introductory preface on

legitimation; he never got it finished. I think some people published their papers separately. I never published mine; I've just used it for other things. But that was instructive, my first conference.

Then I helped organize this one in 1978 on the origins of Chinese civilization.

Starn: That looks to have been a wonderful conference.

Keightley: It was an important conference because it summarized the archaeological evidence, and the early inscriptional evidence, as we then knew it. It's striking, looking back on it now, that there was nobody there from the People's Republic of China, because we didn't yet have that kind of academic contact. As Bill Boltz pointed out when he reviewed the book [the conference volume]--I mean, a friendly review, but he said, "This book is mistitled. It should not be *The Origins of Chinese Civilization.* It should be *The Origins of Civilization in China.*" The distinction is crucial, because it's premature to speak about Chinese civilization; there were a whole series of local cultures gradually coalescing to form what eventually became Chinese civilization. The whole thrust of archaeological study is now focused on what are called these thousand candles, or these thousand points of light, glimmering throughout Neolithic China, rather than the big-bang explosion from some central point. So our understanding has changed considerably.

It would very pleasant now to hold the second version of that conference, well- attended, obviously, by scholars from the People's Republic. But the field is in such constant change, as new discoveries are made, that it's going to take a while before we can digest all this.

There were conferences also with Chinese scholars in 1986, I think, in Hawaii-- an international conference on Shang civilization where Professor K.C. Chang, as he had in 1978, played a significant role in assembling the scholars. It brought together, for the first time, scholars from Taiwan and the Mainland who had not met for thirty, forty years; they had once been teachers and students. That was very affecting, very moving, a very moving moment. Again, it was a great pleasure to meet some of these scholars. That was 1986.

I had attended conferences in China in 1981, at Anyang, which is where the oracle-bone inscriptions were found. They hold a number of conferences in Anyang from time to time. The quality varies considerably, but it's always a great privilege to go, and be at the site, and see the archaeological discoveries.

An Unexpected Expedition to the People's Republic of China in 1975

Starn: You went to the Mainland first in 1975, didn't you?

Keightley: I went in '75, yes. I was a member of the paleo-anthropology delegation which was sent by the CSCPRC [Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China], which was located in Washington D.C. and played a fundamentally important role in opening up these academic contacts, not just in history, but sociology, economics, political science, and so on. They were sending over a paleo-anthropology delegation in 1975; this was in

May to June. One of the first delegations to go was paleo-anthropology, I think because it was felt to be non-threatening; there was nothing cultural or political about this. It was an extraordinary trip. I got drafted at the last minute because Bill Skinner, who was going to be the academic person attached to this delegation of paleo-anthropologists who were not China experts--for the most part, they were bone experts--Bill Skinner, down at Stanford, fell sick at the last minute, so I was suddenly asked at three days' notice if I could leave. I called Delmer Brown--I think he was chair at that point--and he was very helpful, very friendly, and in fact he drove me to the airport. He agreed to take over my lectures and so on, because I was teaching 19A at the time. So I went off to Beijing on three days' notice and had a splendid time. As I indicated last time, I think it improved my teaching enormously to be exposed to the Chinese landscape and historical sites.

We visited about seven or eight major sites. The paleo-anthropologists were increasingly discontented because they weren't allowed to see the sites that they wanted to see, but part of the time they thought was wasted on the Bronze Age sites, which were just what I wanted to see, so I was rather lucky. At one point we actually had a sit-down strike in Anyang, of all places, when the paleo-anthropologists just were fed up. They refused to budge. The Chinese handlers said, "Look, it wasn't easy getting this delegation approved; we've done our best, but these are not easy sites to get to, we don't have the transportation, and so on, and so on." It was smoothed over, and they gave us three extra days down in Guilin, where the scenery was wonderful, and the paleo-anthropologists were won over, I think.

A Visitor at Peking University in 1981

Keightley: Then I was a visiting a professor at Peking University in 1981 for three months. That was an exchange relationship, which I think [former chancellor Ira Michael] Heyman worked out, and John Jamieson [professor of Oriental Languages] was certainly involved in that.

Stam: Who was your counterpart?

Keightley: I don't know that I had a counterpart. People came over to Berkeley, yes, but it wasn't a one-on-one exchange; they might have gone to economics or chemistry or whatever. In fact, I think that's what happened. We weren't particularly keen to send scientists over there, but we were keen to send social scientists and historians. Did I tell you about my lecture at Beida, or not?

Stam: You did not.

Keightley: Then I will.

I audited the course on ancient Chinese inscriptions, which was parallel to the course I teach here. It was taught by Gao Ming, who became a good friend. That was very instructive. His approach to the bones, his approach to the bronze inscriptions, and the intense focus on memorization; these Chinese students, when they came out of that class, could really write all sorts of archaic graph forms, in a way that I can't, in a way that our students can't. I learned a lot from that.

I was also required, because I was visiting professor, to give a public lecture, which I was extremely reluctant to do, because it was like carrying coals to Newcastle; this is where people really studied Chinese history. But, I felt that I should make my contribution to the modernization of China, so I got up and gave a talk, of which the general theme was, "This is what I would never dare say in China, but this is what I tell my students in the United States." I was speaking directly to these Marxist categories of slave society, and patriarchy, and matriarchy, and so on, which the Marxist ideologues had imposed on early Chinese history. I remember one of the points was: supposing a thousand years from now, a historian looks at the People's Republic of China and says, "Is this a slave society? Is there freedom of movement? Can peasants leave the land? Can you change your job easily, and so on?"

I said, "Is this a slave society?" I said, "No, of course it's not, because we understand the shared values of the culture as a whole; we understand how the whole thing operates. But if we have that sense of sympathy for modern China, then surely we must be prepared to apply it to ancient China and look at the values, the religion, kinship systems, and so on." Well, I was told later that the students were outraged by my talk, whereas the faculty were delighted; I thought that was rather instructive.

Starn: This was brave of you.

Keightley: I suppose it was, but I really felt, what could an ancient China historian do to help China? It seemed to me if they are going to modernize, they have to get out of these ideological straitjackets, and of course they have. The work being done in China now is very up-to-date, I would say, anthropologically. They now look at the evidence in anthropological and not political terms, and that's a great start.

Starn: Over how many years did that evolve? Following Mao's death?

Keightley: I would say that took about thirty years, probably, twenty-five. Certainly at the end of the Cultural Revolution, yes; then the relaxation under Deng Xiaoping, and the increasing opening to the West in commerce as well as in academia. I remember I was there in October 1988, just before Tiananmen. We were there to celebrate the ten years of exchanges--that's right--'78 to '88. A big delegation went over. We had a large series of plenary meetings, large meetings. There was one Chinese graduate student who got up and spoke in the most critical, disrespectful way of the old Marxist categories, and I was just astonished to hear that; I wondered where he would be tomorrow. But nevertheless, there were people who were coming out who were beginning to think in different terms. A number of us on that delegation felt there was a smash coming; we felt that there was so much corruption, there was so much discontent, that there was going to be some kind of blowup, and of course there was, the following June.

I took at least three more trips to China, in 1988 twice, and 1991, representing the CSCPRC. My closing years on that committee were devoted to trying to encourage archaeological cooperation so that American archaeologists could get in and work with Chinese colleagues. That finally has paid off; I don't know how much; I think we just planted some seeds. It took a lot of continued pressure.

Continuing Problems for Sinologists

Stam: The problems in China for scholarly access are not affected in your area by what happens politically?

Keightley: Well, they are to this extent. I knew K.C. Chang at Harvard, who had this dig planned at Chengzhou, a very important dig, and then Tiananmen came along and just everything was put on hold; it all blew up. Nobody was prepared to stick their neck out. When I was in China in '75, Hu Houxuan, one of the great scholars in my field, who lived in Beijing--he knew I was in Beijing, he knew who I was, but he didn't dare come to see me; he didn't dare make contact with me. Since, I became very good friends with him. He was at the Hawaii conference in 1986. In fact, I got him to Berkeley as a visiting professor later, and he participated in some seminars here.

Politics did play a role. You didn't want to risk two years on a pig farm just because you talked to the wrong American. But I think things now are much, much more open.

Stam: Not affected by the most recent--?

Keightley: Well, of course I haven't been back.

Stam: You haven't been back since '91? That was partly a health matter?

Keightley: I would say entirely a health matter. I had a heart attack in '92, and I'm very reluctant to go back: a) where the diet is dangerous because it's slathered in fat; and b) where I'm not certain about medical care if I were to need it, out in the provinces; and c) I'm getting to the stage in my career where: don't bother me with more data--I've got enough to digest. That's an exaggeration. I subscribe to a good number of Chinese archaeological journals. I can write letters to people. Increasingly the Chinese scholars are on e-mail, on the Internet.

Stam: You have, of course, a Chinese keyboard?

Keightley: Well, you don't need a Chinese keyboard; you need a Chinese software program, which will enable you to write Chinese, yes. And Peter Zhou--just to give you an example of this--the new librarian: at Pittsburgh he developed what he calls the Asian Pacific Document Delivery Service. If there's an article published in the Chinese journal, and the journal is not available in the United States, he can e-mail the request to a consortium of Chinese universities, and within forty-eight hours he will get an electronic version of this article sent to him. That's just extraordinary, compared to how bad things used to be. That's very nice.

The Yuppie Bikers

Stam: We should move back a little bit again, zigzagging. Before your heart attack there was the long development of the history bikers--

Keightley: The Yuppie Bikers-- yes, yes.

Starn: Most of them were historians. Can you give me sketches?

Keightley: I would be glad to. [pause] I'm sorry, I'm trying to place this in context. In 1984, I think, I attended a conference, I think it was called, "Death in Chinese Society," at a place called Oracle, in Arizona. A very nice, luxury spread. Tom Laqueur (professor of modern British history and history of medicine, at Berkeley)] was there; he was invited as a discussant, as an expert on the treatment of death. I think he learned a lot there, and we certainly learned a lot from him. On a number of occasions, Tom and I took a walk through the cactuses, before the morning conference started, and discovered that we shared this interest in biking. When we came back, we started biking together. That then gradually developed; Tom Metcalf [professor of Indian and British imperial history] joined us, Stephen Greenblatt [professor of English Renaissance literature] joined us, Carla [Hesse, professor of early modern French history] joined us, Peter [Sahlins, professor of early modern European history] joined us. And various visiting scholars from time to time would come along. Harold Varmus [Nobel prizewinner, professor of medicine at University of California at San Francisco, later head of the National Institutes of Health] was a member for a while when he was here. We would ride through the Berkeley hills two or three times a week, longer rides on weekends, and really had quite splendid conversations; I greatly treasure those. Several of the Yuppie Bikers, as we styled ourselves ironically, thanked their fellow Yuppie Bikers in the prefaces to their books. Finally--what is that journal?

Starn: *Lingua Franca?*

Keightley: *Lingua Franca.* They did a little send-up on the Yuppie Bikers which was amusing. That was a quite splendid period. I suppose the Yuppie Bikers hung together for ten years or so. Then, of course, Greenblatt moved away to Harvard. Carla had a nasty accident; she broke her right elbow. People are getting older. I'm getting older. There's a younger generation of Yuppie Bikers; they don't call themselves that anymore. There's a lawyer there. David Biale [professor of Jewish history] was there, but he's now at Davis. I can't keep up with these people; they're fifteen to twenty years younger than I am. I'm hoping to found an older, senior division.

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Starn: It is possible to converse while bicycling?

Keightley: It is possible to converse while bicycling. In fact, at one point we were even thinking about having our own radio program where we would have microphones attached to the bikes. [laughter] Let the world hear our conversations. Another member of the group was Naomi Janowitz, who also teaches at Davis, and then the novelist John Coetzee, when he came to visit he would bike, too; he was a great bicyclist.

Starn: We took him up once to meet the bikers.

Keightley: That's right. Yes, I rode with him.

Starn: He complained that he had to ride alone, generally, because he couldn't keep up with the younger ones, but was too strong for the older ones.

Keightley: Oh really? I think of him as a strong bicyclist. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet a whole variety of scholars and discuss a whole variety of projects and books.

Starn: Collegiality also included the annual Keightley Christmas expedition and pie party, which has been going on for--?

Keightley: Seventeen years I think. That's been increasingly hard to maintain because as people get more grandchildren, they stay home. As with the Yuppie Bikers, we're getting older. But the numbers have held up fairly well; we have thirty, forty people, and that's been a great pleasure, on the theory that you should get out in the open air if you can, for awhile, on Christmas Day.

Changes in the Field of Chinese Studies

Starn: Maybe we have time today to talk a little bit about--in a general and specific way--about the state of early Chinese studies, the changes over thirty years.

Keightley: There's no doubt that the field of early Chinese studies has changed immensely in the thirty-five years I've been involved in it. Much of the change, of course, is due to new archaeological discoveries. These are of two sorts: some are Neolithic, so that we now understand the variety and the different natures of the Neolithic cultures that populated North China before the Bronze Age; others are Bronze Age in nature, where we now have much better control over archaeological complexes. You must understand, I am not an archaeologist by training; I only use the work that archaeologists produce.

The whole treatment of archaeological excavation has now become much more scientific in China than it used to be. I remember very clearly, in 1975, when I went with the paleo-anthropology delegation, the Chinese were extremely reluctant to let us see a dig in progress. They didn't want us seeing what their excavation techniques were, and they didn't want us criticizing them.

We had several places where we felt we would be looking at a Potemkin [false] dig. [laughter] That is, that they had filled in something they had already dug, and were just re-digging it for us, so we could see them do it. But at the site of Dahe cun, just outside of Chengzhou, we were indeed watching a dig in progress. The American paleo-anthropologists, I think, were quite appalled by what they saw going on, because it seemed very crudely done. They said, "Where are the notebooks?"--because apparently American archaeologists have a notebook right at hand. The Chinese said, "Oh, the notebooks, they're back in the office. We don't bring them out here." Finally, Les Freeman--who was a hotshot paleo-anthropologist from the University of Chicago who I liked very much--just couldn't contain himself any longer and he said to our Chinese hosts--and we had been warned "No photos! No photos!" He said, "May I just take one photo so I can take it back and show my students in America how a dig should be conducted?" And of course everybody, both

Chinese and Americans, knew he meant, "How a dig should *not* be conducted." [More laughter] There was this great diplomatic impasse as the Chinese caucused on one side of the pit and the Americans on the other, all the Americans saying to Lester, "Take it back. Take it back." Finally, the Chinese said, "No, you can't," and that was that. It's a pity; it would have made a wonderful photo. There were all these skeletons lying there and little frogs were hopping around among the bones; the philosopher Zhuangzi would have much appreciated this.

I don't think that sort of thing is likely to happen now, partly because of improved education, partly because there are now a number of Sino-American cooperative digs underway, and a lot of high technology is now being employed, like remote sensing; carbon dating has improved and so on. There's still a long way to go in terms of bone analysis; we could tell a lot more about diet, and so on, than we do. But, as I say, I'm not an expert on this--but yes, I'm optimistic about the future of Chinese archaeology on the scientific and academic level.

Starn: Is there collaboration--collaborative digs--?

Keightley: Yes, there are collaborative digs. Lothar Von Falkenhausen at UCLA has got a large project going on in the Sichuan Basin. K.C. Chang and Robert Murowchick at Harvard, and now Boston University, are working on this very important dig at Shangqiu. George Rapp at the University of Minnesota has participated in the discovery of what seems like a most important walled city at Anyang, just north of the site where the oracle bones came from, which we didn't know was there. But there are, of course, always political difficulties: the Anyang site is right next to a military air field, and I know that they wouldn't have let us get out there in 1975. But great progress, I think, is being made.

The Chinese Brain Drain

Keightley: One of the problems we have had to deal with--and I had to deal with when I was involved in academic exchanges--was the brain drain, because yes, we could bring Chinese graduate students over here to train in America, and then many of them would not go back. They would try to get jobs here. There is indeed a cohort now of junior Chinese archaeologists who are teaching in American universities.

Starn: Does the government make any effort to--retain them?

Keightley: You mean the Chinese government? To get them back? I think it does make an effort. Of course, part of the trouble was that was that if they went back to China, there was no money, there was no opportunity to apply what they had learned; so part of the government attempt to retain them, of course, has been to improve facilities and infrastructure, and I think they are doing that. I think it will be just like it was with Taiwan: for a while there was a brain drain from Taiwan, and then more and more people started going back to Taiwan, and the Taiwanese economy and academic community took off. I think that's happening too now in China. There will be increasing flow back and forth and this will help to improve the situation.

Archaeology in Taiwan

Starn: What about Taiwanese scholars and archaeologists--?

Keightley: And the Mainland? Well, that I'm not terribly well informed about. In my own field of oracle-bone inscriptions, as I think I indicated last time, they brought over this great massive ball of mud and turtle shells which they excavated from Anyang, I think, in 1937. They shipped it all across China as the Japanese were after them, and then they brought it over to Taiwan--a most important repository of oracle-bone inscriptions. Then they devoted the next twenty years to cleaning them up, publishing them, re-joining them. Of course they had nothing else to do, because once that material was gone, they didn't have any fresh material, and the scholars in the Mainland would laugh at them as to why they were taking so long. There is, of course, in Taiwan now an increasing interest in Taiwanese questions, so that Taiwanese archaeology, Taiwanese anthropology, is much more strongly supported than it used to be. But the degree of cooperation between Chinese and Taiwanese scholars, actually on the ground, I don't know the answer to that. We certainly have brought them together at conferences. I believe Mainland scholars have visited Taiwan and vice versa, but I suppose that's ongoing, and it all depends on political developments.

Regionalism Increasing in China

Starn: Can you quantify at all, in terms of how many sites were open thirty years ago, roughly? Is that possible?

Keightley: No, I cannot. I think in my lectures I would say we have at least ten thousand Neolithic sites.

Starn: Ten thousand!

Keightley: Yes. The accompanying political context, though, is this: There has been an increasing move towards regionalism in Chinese politics, in Chinese economics. One can see this in the great economic wealth of the East coast, the poverty of the hinterland, and so on. But most every province now has its own provincial museum, its own archaeological explorations, its own archaeological institute; and they are quite jealous, I think, about the materials they dig up, partly because there can be tourism. There are a lot of places now claiming that they have the capital of the Xia dynasty, or the sage Emperor Yu was buried here, and so on; that will bring in the tourists. They publish their own archaeological journals, so there has been an explosion of regional journals. It's just impossible to keep up with all of them.

Starn: The centralized control by government over "national artifacts"-- that's more or less in the past?

Keightley: Well, again I'm not an archaeologist, and I'm not fully up to date on this--no, I don't think it's entirely over, because if you dig up what would be called a grade-1 artifact, Beijing is very

much going to want that for its museum up in the capital. I don't know who gets to decide this, or how much independence the local authorities have, but this recent exhibition at the Asian Art Museum, "The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology," was extraordinary for the number of grade-I objects that they had assembled. But I believe one of the consequences of this is that if you have a real grade-1 object, you sometimes don't classify it as grade-1 because you don't want Beijing to grab it--so there are ramifications here.

The other question, of course, is funding. I was extremely interested, for a while, in Neolithic sites from about 3000 B.C. just to the south of Shanghai. I am persuaded the Liangzhu cultures here had an enormous impact on later developments in the Bronze Age dynasties in the Central Plains. I've walked all over those sites with a local archaeologist, but they couldn't dig them then, because Beijing was not prepared to fund sites which would indicate that there was an independent, strong indigenous culture down in the Shanghai area around 3000 B.C. I don't know how much this is articulated, but I think Beijing must be sensitive to these kinds of questions. So yes, archaeology advances.

Starn: That area is still not excavated?

Keightley: Work is still being done, but there was a whole valley there just filled with Neolithic settlements; survey work would take ten years and a lot of money, and I don't think they've been able to do it.

Starn: Is there the same conflict we have here, over preservation of extant cultural sites from excavation? In other words, is it hard to open up a site which has a building on it or a shrine on it?

Keightley: Yes, it certainly is. The Shang city at Zhengzhou lies right underneath the modern city, and we simply don't know what's there; we haven't been able to excavate it.

Starn: Modern excavation techniques make it possible.

Keightley: Maybe they do, but it hasn't been done yet. And the village of Xiaotun, where the oracle bones have been found--there are oracle bones to the north, there are oracle bones to the south, I'm sure there are oracle bones right under the village. We haven't been able to get in there.

The question you asked touched off something else and I've forgotten what it was. What did you ask, exactly?

Starn: It was about excavation on occupied sites.

Ancestral Bones

Keightley: One thing that has struck me in China, and I don't fully understand this, is that there is never any fuss about messing with the bones of our ancestors.

Starn: Unlike our Native Americans--

Keightley: That's right. I mean, they're digging up skeletons in the millions, and nobody ever says, "Hey, hey, this is desecration," or sacrilege. I think this may be related to the nature of Chinese ancestor worship in which, as I understand it, the ancestors gradually fade away, their power gradually decreases, so usually after five generations--

Starn: Independent of their bones?

Keightley: That's right, quite independent; it's just a matter of time. You move up the hierarchy, you get fainter, dimmer, and less powerful, and presumably--I would assume this is what's happening--that you just don't care about them. And of course you can't establish the direct genetic link in most cases, the family kinship link.

Starn: It wouldn't be a part of the secularism of Communism?

Keightley: This is a question--again, I'm not an expert on modern China. I am assuming that ancestor worship is going to grow much weaker in China. Woody Watson, the anthropologist at Harvard, wrote a very nice article on what he calls "ancestorcide," in which, if your ancestors have not given you a patrimony, and wealth, and land, they've broken the contract. They haven't lived up to their share of the bargain; you just clear them out of the temple; you destroy the temple. It seems to me that you're dealing now with a younger generation in China, which knows hundreds of things that the parents don't know: computers, international trade, economics, e-mail, and so on. I don't think they're going to feel particularly beholden to their ancestors. This doesn't mean to say that religion isn't going to play an enormously strong role as Taoist and Buddhist sects, and so on, take over, but I'm not sure that ancestor worship is going to maintain itself. We shall see; I could be wrong.

Starn: It could be supported by all these openings of sites, of rituals, and power--?

Keightley: It could be, but you know, "What did the ancestors do? They got us in the horrible bind in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries where we were behind the West." I remember in 1981 I was walking over an archaeological site and we came to a grave mound out on the field, and clearly somebody had been burning paper money on the grave. I said to the archaeologist, "I bet the young people don't do this anymore." And he said, "Oh, yes, they do. Their parents make them." But I'm not sure that the parents are still in the position to impose that kind of value system on the young. We shall see.

Starn: Changes are happening so quickly.

Keightley: They are, yes, they are. It's a modernizing society.

Looting of Excavations

Starn: What about the looting of these archaelogical sites?

Keightley: Looting, yes, that is a problem. There have been famous cases of looting.

Starn: It's probably local looting, rather than organized international heists?

Keightley: Local looting run by the local police, usually, who then ship the stuff out to Hong Kong. There's horror story where there was a set, I think, of ten or eleven Western Zhou bells with an inscription on them that ran all the way across the eleven bells. The archaeologists were able to get one bell out of the ground; the other ten went down to Hong Kong. The Shanghai museum had to go down to Hong Kong and buy them back on the antiquities market.

Starn: They knew how to find them.

Keightley: Apparently they did. That was thought to be a great coup; it was, but it's a great sadness too because, as you know, context is everything in archaeology, and if it's destroyed that's a great shame.

Starn: But it's not possible to protect these? How many sites, I guess, have to be--

Keightley: Well, you look at it from the point of view of the peasants who are poor and starving and suddenly, in their back yard they have something worth a thousand dollars, or a million dollars. It would take a very strong commitment to public good not to sell them. That is the remarkable thing, that when I was in China in 1975, this would have been impossible. The commitment to public good was very strong; Mao was in command; there were no private markets; there was no antiquities market; one would have had no market for this if one had tried to steal it. My favorite story of this is about one of the members of our group, Marie Wormington, who had a watch which was broken. She had tried to get it fixed in the United States and she couldn't. When we were in Xi'an, out in the west, she just threw it in the wastebasket and we left. Well, we got on the train, and headed east, but immediately people got on the phone, and three or four days later, the watch was delivered to her, in Shanghai I think, and not only was it returned to her but it was working. They had also fixed it! [laughter]

There's a very famous saying in the *Book of Lord Shang* about people who were so honest that they wouldn't pick anything up if it was lying on the street--scared, obviously, to do so. That was the ethos in China in '75. Now, capitalism has come in, private enterprise has come in, and archaeology has suffered as a result-- no doubt about it.

New Cultural Nationalism in China

Starn: Is it a false comparison to suggest that there's some new cultural nationalism in China, as there is in other countries?

Keightley: Certainly that's what the press tells me. And there is, undoubtedly, in my view, a rather misplaced interest in documenting the Xia dynasty--this semi-legendary dynasty that existed before the Shang. There is the Xia-Shang-Zhou project where they're trying to establish a firm chronology. I mean, "Other countries have a firm ancient chronology, why don't we?"

I'm sorry to see that happening. It has meant that a lot of government money has flowed into these particular topics. In my view they are topics that we can't yet answer. We can't establish the existence of the Xia dynasty because we don't have any writing from the Xia dynasty, so it's largely guesswork. Similarly with the chronology--

Starn: One excavation could change that?

Keightley: It certainly could, if we could find early writing. Because when we have the writing from 1200 B.C., it's already a well-formed writing system; it's possible there are earlier documents, but we have to find them first. I would wait; I wouldn't invest a lot of money in the question of the Xia. Same thing with chronology: until we get more documents, more evidence, I think it's very hard to be certain of what the dates might have been.

But yes, I think the government is playing up this sense of "proud to be Chinese". That also, I think, may involve some distortion of the historical record. We're back to the big-bang theory, that there was a Xia dynasty that was followed by a Shang dynasty, whereas the sense of the whole variety of local cultures making a contribution...

Starn: Plays against what the government wants?

Keightley: Yes, it plays against the centralizing power of Beijing. Obviously, it speaks well to the local regional powers, so I don't know how this would play out.

Status of the Archaeologist in China Today

Keightley: You ask about new interest by the Chinese government in their past. Another problem is this: I don't think many students in China wanted to study archaeology; there was no money in it. I'm told that faculty salaries have now improved considerably in China, and I'm delighted to hear of it. I believe that at Beida this used to be the case: you were assigned to majors. I got the sense, people telling me, that it was largely the dregs of the entry class that got assigned to archaeology. I hope that's not true. I know some very good young Chinese archaeologists, very good indeed, and very committed. But clearly that's a problem. Until they can make this career an attractive one, in a country that's exploding economically, there will be problems.

Starn: The status of the scholar is higher than the status of the archaeologist?

Keightley: No, I think this may apply across the board to the liberal arts, and literature, and so on. I haven't heard that said; I don't know. I think they want to study computers, they want to study science, as many of our own students do.

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David Keightley

The boys of English's House. I am in the front row, sitting on the ground, third from the right. Fred English, the house master, and his French wife, are in the center of the next row. Spring 1947?

David Keightley

Coming to the United States, aboard the *S.S. America*. Early December 1947.

David Keightley

My first visit of four (1975, 1981, 1984, 1987) to Anyang in northern Henan. The photo was taken from the balcony of the Archaeological Research Station, looking to the northeast over the Xiaotun site where most of the Late Shang oracle-bone inscriptions have been found. 1 June 1975.

The Yuppie Bikers and friends for coffee, fruit, and croissants on the patio of our home at 490 Vermont, Berkeley, at the end of our farewell Sunday morning ride with Harold Varmus (far right), to the Canyon Post Office and back (some 26 miles). I had taken one nitro glycerin for heart pain at 8:34 am before leaving, rode with no pain. From left to right: Steven Greenblatt, Peter Sahlins, David Biale, Tom Laqueur, David Keightley, Naomi Janowitz, Carla Hesse, Harold Varmus. (Tom Metcalf had had to peel off to participate in a PhD orals at Ira Lapidus' house.) 22 August 1993.

Chairmen of the Berkeley History Department: Bill Bouwsma, Nick Riasanovsky, Marty Jay, Jan deVries, Gene Brucker, David Keightley, Sheldon Rothblatt, Reggie Zelnik. On the occasion of Erich and Joannie Gruen's party honoring Marty Jay at the end of his Chairmanship (12 May 2001).

VI CHAIR OF THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT: 1992-1994

Funding Difficulties Foreshadowed

[Interview 3: July 25, 2001] ##

Starn: We're going to begin by examining the years David was chairman of the history department: 1992 to 1994. They weren't easy years. David had written a report in September, 1986, "The Keightley Report," in which it was already becoming clear that more funding was needed to attract the highest-quality graduate students. This prefigured some of the enormous financial pressures during his chairmanship. Could you talk a little about that, David? What do you remember?

Keightley: Not a great deal, but I will go back and read the report. It's very true that one of the major concerns, I think, of the faculty as a whole in the history department had been our inability to attract as many of the top-flight graduate students as we would have liked. The department was frequently ranked number one in the academic comparisons, but privately endowed universities such as Harvard, Chicago, Stanford, were frequently able to lure first-rate students away. I don't mean to denigrate the quality of students we did attract, but nevertheless we sometimes lost students whose training we would have been very pleased to have had a hand in.

I hadn't, when I wrote the report, realized that the university was about to face the enormous financial shortages that were to come early in the 1990s. Like most history department reports, it was rather like being in favor of motherhood; most people were in favor of it, and we had done our best to raise funds. Bob Middlekauff [emeritus professor of history and former department chair] has been enormously active with his Friends of the Cal History Department, in arranging History Day meetings, and so on--which I think has been very productive in terms of raising funds. He has been very insistent that this be reserved for student support, and it has been very helpful both for undergraduates and graduates, particularly in terms of funding their research so they can go to archives, attend international meetings, and so on. At the minute that's all I want to say about the Keightley Report, which had been decently buried until you brought it up again.

Starn: [laughter] I will add that the first point of the report was that the status of the graduate history curriculum was excellent and needed no changes--so there was a positive side to this.

The Associated Graduate Student Employees Strike

Starn: Beginning your chairmanship was that terrible strike. Could you go on with that, too?

Keightley: This was the AGSE [Associated Graduate Student Employees] strike, which was looming in November of 1992. I had been chair for about four months, five months then. My main concern as chair, and I think the concern of most of the faculty, was to make sure that our relations with the graduate students--no matter which side of the fence they happened to be on in the strike--would remain cordial, would remain open.

With that goal in mind we had organized a series of dialogues, conversations, and meetings, in which people could talk out their positions, understand how the other side felt. Reggie Zelnik, [Reginald Zelnik, professor of Russian history] who was my vice-chair at that point, was immensely helpful in orchestrating these meetings. As an expert in labor history himself, I think that he had considerable experience in matters of this sort.

I have gone back and looked in my diary for this period. What strikes me is that even the graduate students themselves were quite badly conflicted over the question of whether or not there should be a strike. A couple of them came to see me on November 9, pointing out that the issue was recognition and a legally enforceable contract in writing. The graduate students had decided on the strike now to avoid disrupting finals later. They wanted faculty support to keep the strike short; they wanted the faculty not to teach; and they wanted graduate students to withhold their own services, and not go to class themselves. I told them, apparently, that I was not particularly sympathetic. I regarded the G.S.I.'s [Graduate Student Instructors] as apprentices. Their benefits were not in danger at this point, and the university's budget was strained to the limit.

As chair I saw it as my primary obligation, in fact, to keep the instructional system running for the undergraduates, and also, of course, without damaging the career or the training of the graduate students. The same afternoon, two more graduate students came in to see me, anxious to establish another way of communicating with those graduate students who were not in AGSE, who were not supporting the strike. They noted that the AGSE meeting had voted to support the strike, but they thought that meeting represented a self-selected pool of students and didn't necessarily represent graduate student opinion as a whole. They felt that all graduate students would support the goals of AGSE, but they were quite uncertain as to what proportion would actually honor picket lines.

I, and the vice-chairs, and other faculty discussed all this. At one point we had come up with the idea of having field meetings in which the students in the various historical fields would meet. Reggie Zelnik thought that was a bad idea; it would be too threatening for the students to face their own Ph.D. professors, he thought. He also noted that the meeting of the U.S. historians would represent three-quarters of all the graduate students anyway, and that therefore we might as well just have one full meeting. He was going to help me think of the agenda. He saw this as a meeting for communication purposes, which indeed it was supposed to be.

Starn: How many students were involved in the AGSE?

Keightley: The person we should ask is Jim Kettner [James Kettner, professor of American history]. I would have guessed thirty or forty, but I really don't have firm figures, and nobody actually used those when I was speaking to them.

That was on the eleventh of November. On the twelfth, again, two more AGSE members came to see me. I won't use any names here. One was an early modern Europeanist--she didn't work as a G.S.I., and I thought she probably felt guilty, perhaps, about that. She came to express her appreciation that I had not issued a call for grade sheets, which had been an issue at that point--that this would be a test whether the students were on strike or not, whether they were going to turn in the grade sheets. She noted that this question of turning in grade sheets had been very divisive in other departments. I had to smile since, as I told her, I had the memo on my desk, ready to go. I thought that indeed they should be turning in the grades.

There was some softening in the AGSE position at that point; AGSE had yielded on the question of bilateral agreements that night, and was now merely asking for a written policy statement. They also agreed not to insist on exclusive representation. These two students did not share my sense that the graduate students were not strongly behind the strike, but one of them felt that the very hopelessness of their cause--to say nothing of the inept way it had been presented, I noted--required the other students to support it out of pity, perhaps.

Then another faculty member came in--again, I won't name any names here--who I would have thought of as rather radical. To my astonishment, he said yes, he was going to cross the picket lines because his union, the AFT [American Federation of Teamsters] told him to. The AFT hadn't liked the way that AGSE was handling the bargaining.

A Heart Attack Intervenes

Keightley: That was on November 12. On the thirteenth, I had my heart attack and was thus removed from the immediate round of negotiations--Friday the thirteenth. I was particularly sorry that it had happened that day because on the thirteenth, that Friday, I had arranged a departmental luncheon in which new members of the faculty were to present their research in an informal way to their colleagues. Susanna Elm [then assistant professor of history of late antiquity and early Christianity] I gathered had been a great success. Unfortunately I missed that. That was one of the initiatives which, I think, fumbled along for a while, and then I didn't have the energy to keep it up.

Starn: The initiative of having lunches with the new faculty?

Keightley: Just of having faculty lunches, in fact, which I think we need very much as a department.

Vannie came to see me in the hospital again on the seventeenth. We heard the AGSE strike had been postponed for forty-eight hours. Alice Bullard, who was one of the graduate students, brought some flowers around to my house. We talked about the strike.

Some Consequences of the Strike and of the Heart Attack

Keightley: And then we move into the month of December. I was now back in the office.

Starn: How soon were you able to return?

Keightley: I would suppose two weeks after the heart attack. They don't encourage you to stay in bed too long; they want to get you up and leaving. I talked with one of the students of the strike, whose own father had been through a series of heart attacks. He expressed his regret over the strike; he thought the cause was good but not worth this kind of disruption. He noted that some 80 percent of the history students were withdrawing their support from the strike. What they feared and resented most would be any administration attempt to exact pledges as to future action. There was the danger that future action--that there would be retribution taken by the administration.

Starn: Wasn't there a memo from the chancellor's office requesting you to note which faculty had failed to meet with their classes because of--

Keightley: I don't remember that, and I don't know how I responded to that. Meanwhile, I was talking with Reggie--

Starn: You responded, saying none of your faculty had failed.

Keightley: [laughter] Well--good. Let's hope that was true. I had continued to talk briefly about some kind of dual chairmanship to get us through this period of my health problems.

Starn: That was a good time to have his support.

Keightley: It was. I was very lucky to have Reggie here as vice-chair. The strike vote was still pending, apparently. Reggie and I then drafted a memo to John Heilbron, the vice-chancellor, urging the administration not to blacklist the G.S.I.'s who had refused to sign the form, or to require a no-strike pledge as a condition of further employment. The Public Information Office called me on the sixteenth of December to ask how the strike was going, and then I had lunch with the vice-chairs and they thought that I should poll the department on a whole series of issues; this was now to do with budget cuts, primarily, which of course were overlaid on the question of the strike. Were we going to get VERIP [Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program] funds back for some of the needs and deficits in our own department?

We also talked about establishing the possibility of an executive vice-chair--again, this would have been Reggie--to assist me.

Starn: This was intended to be just a temporary structure, or you thought it would be a good idea?

Keightley: I thought it was going to last for the next semester. Quite honestly, I don't remember, and I don't remember the formality with which this was done.

Then, early in January, I met with Carol Christ who was vice-provost. We talked about mortgages for attracting new faculty, but she expected no negotiated strike settlement. She

noted that the U.A.W. [United Auto Workers] was keen to claim a victory--in other words that the union had been recognized; and the administration was equally keen to deny them that claim. The G.S.I.'s who were AGSE members who would be teaching in the spring would have to authorize a new strike at their meeting on the twenty-second of January. She wanted as many students as possible to attend these meetings so that student opinion was indeed recognized. She did say emphatically that there would be no sanctions levied against the students who had gone on strike. She had heard one student's tale of a G.S.I. in Rhetoric who was being penalized for supporting the strike by having her spring job taken away--but the truth was, she said, that the G.S.I. had too many incompletes. I don't know if that was true or not; it's quite possible that it was.

She went on about students who did not fulfill all of their teaching responsibilities being billed on a pro-rated basis for their health fees and so on. I won't go on with the details, but it gives you a sense of the minutiae which fill up the chairman's life.

Four hundred and seventy-five G.S.I.'s had not yet answered the form that sought to determine if they had taught, and clearly they [the administration] were having trouble getting feedback from the G.S.I.'s.

We then went on to talk about the budget crunch: we should expect a 5-percent cut in permanent faculty, and a 5-percent cut to the departments, which might not be allocated equally. That's when I put in a pitch for some departments which do more teaching, such as history, who provide a bigger bang for the buck, as it were.

An Argument for Statewide Rationalization of Teaching

Keightley: I also made the argument, which I wish more had been done with, for what I would call statewide rationalization. There is a lot of duplication of teaching effort, sometimes in rather small fields.

Starn: You mean statewide, at the campuses statewide?

Keightley: That's right. I think that in a time, particularly of budget cuts, they would have been very sensible to try to make our teaching more efficient in that regard.

Starn: There was no response on this?

Keightley: Well, I raised it. We used to have councils of chairs meetings, statewide councils occasionally in Oakland--I raised it there. What they say about bureaucracy is very true: it's very hard to move. I was only chair for two years, anyway.

Starn: And too many people's oxes get gored in these things?

Keightley: I suppose they do, but I do think that that's the way to go. The problem was: who was going to make the allocations? People were very suspicious about having the president's office do it, and so on.

Starn: It's like redistricting.

Keightley: You're right. I think that's all I want to say about the AGSE strike, which seemed to fade away in January. I don't have any more entries in my diary.

Starn: Yes, I remember that. Mysteriously, it ended. Did you have any reminiscent feelings, about your attitude toward the strike in Columbia in '68?

Keightley: I didn't really make the connection. The issues were rather different because in the Columbia case the issue was political, on the national level. In both cases, I suppose one could say that I wanted a median position so that people did not get hurt or damaged, and I wanted education to continue--that seemed to me crucial.

I certainly was not unsympathetic to the graduate students; I think probably they should be allowed to organize-- they have been, I think, now. I don't quite know why the administration was digging its heels in so very strongly at that point.

Starn: Maybe because there were so many pressures financially that had come to a head at that point.

Keightley: Possibly, but in any event, I think we did keep the program going--I'm grateful for that--and didn't disrupt the department too severely.

I would like, also, to add as a footnote: one thing that struck me about the Berkeley history department when I came in '69--and we had a series of political crises then, with the Cambodian war, and so on--was the great effort that the members of the faculty made to keep talking to each other. We had a whole series of faculty meetings, and I was very impressed by this collegiality, by this sense of diplomacy, by this unwillingness to cut off contact with people with whom you might disagree quite strongly. That contrasted, I think, quite strikingly with the situation I had seen at Columbia, where divisions became much more sharply defined early on, with bad results.

Starn: I think there were definitely some strains that lasted in the history department.

Keightley: I'm sure there were, but nevertheless, in public they were civil.

Attempting to Maintain the Department's Size and Quality

Starn: In February '93, you called a department meeting to discuss the bad news about cuts in funding for teaching assistants, and graduate student instructors, and support staff. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Keightley: My main concern, at this point, was to maintain the size of the department. I couldn't do that right then because our budget was being cut; our positions were being cut. It's an extraordinary fact that for the two years that I was chair, we did no hiring whatever--there were no search committees. I did, in a series of meetings with the administration, get their

assurance--and I had got it in writing--that once the budget crisis was over, the department would be restored to its former size, in terms of F.T.E.'s [Full Time Equivalents, in this case, teaching positions]. I don't know that that has happened; in fact, it hasn't happened yet. I think one of the problems is, of course, that undergraduate enrollments in the department have been declining. One can see this in the graduations.

Starn: In the last ten years?

Keightley: I don't have the actual figures, but I would guess probably over the last ten years. One has seen this in the graduation crowds that fill up the Greek Theater, or increasingly don't fill up the Greek Theater. I think that when I was chair we probably had four hundred, four hundred and fifty undergraduate majors; I believe in recent years it's down to about two hundred and fifty.

Starn: So the department is not likely to be restored?

Keightley: I think the deans pay attention to this. They see enrollments declining. I've heard it said that some fields in particular are in trouble, that students simply are not taking these lecture courses anymore.

Starn: Can you can sort out which in particular?

Keightley: Well, yes. I've heard this particularly of early modern Europe.

Hiring a Korean Historian

Keightley: Of course, as a historian of China and East Asia, I'm anxious that we hire more faculty in these areas, because that's indeed where the enrollment is certainly moving. A lot of people on the faculty have objected to hiring in Korean history; they regard Korea as a small, insignificant country.

Starn: Do you have a view on that?

Keightley: I believe, actually, that we should have a Korean historian. I think that it's been a tremendously important independent culture. The U.S. fought one of its major wars on the Korean peninsula, and there's an increasing and significant, large population of Korean students who want to take these courses. We had a visitor here in Korean history several years ago. He was getting larger enrollments in his lower division lecture courses in Korean history than I was in China. The demand is there.

Starn: Really. Is there funding too?

Keightley: There is a Korea Foundation which has given us funding for a whole series of visitors, with the understanding that eventually we would hire somebody. We would be delighted--delighted may be the wrong word, but yes, we would hire somebody. Of course, the Chancellor has committed himself to that, but unfortunately the Korea Foundation has made

this kind of arrangement with a whole series of universities, all of whom are looking for good Korea historians, so there are not that many to go around. We've run a couple of searches--I chaired one of them--and we didn't find a candidate whom we wished to hire.

Starn: I wonder why the shortage? Koreans are certainly getting degrees, and--

Keightley: They are. I think part of the difficulty is that Korean history is where Chinese history was thirty or forty years ago: it is still rather retrograde in terms of the questions it studies, the scholarship it can draw on. It isn't yet asking the kinds of questions that interest our department--that interest "modern" historians. It will take a while, I think, for them to get up to that level. We haven't yet really found somebody who's doing anything more than the usual meat-and-potatoes intellectual history or political history, and it hasn't grabbed people, particularly.

Starn: But you do have a Korean visitor every year, or almost every year?

Keightley: I don't know how the money stands on that. I think we have to keep negotiating it, and actually the Korea Foundation, I think, is getting a little restless, so I'm not quite sure.

To go back to the point where we were: yes, I did do my best to maintain the size of the department, but whether or not that's a realistic hope in the present climate, I don't know.

Starn: And size wasn't the only issue, but replacing the very experienced and distinguished retirees at some level.

Keightley: That, of course, was a terrible blow to the department: we lost a lot of distinguished faculty. All one could do was to keep insisting with the administration that we must get replacements. The administration was not prepared to give us a one-for-one replacement. All requests for F.T.E.'s went into a pool, so we had to make the case for particular fields. Indeed, all that came to fruition, of course, in Reggie's chairmanship because, as I say, there were no searches at all during my two years.

Quality of Curriculum and Interdisciplinary Teaching

Starn: You mentioned, in this report in which you had a lot of collaboration, I gathered, that you requested opinions from the department in writing as to what the priorities were. The second point was--after keeping the high quality of the faculty--that historians were glad to do interdisciplinary teaching and learning, but they wanted to keep autonomous curriculum and research control. Any comment on how that's turning out?

Keightley: No, and indeed I'm not quite sure what the issue was except, I suppose, we were being asked to teach courses which were listed in two departments, or something of that sort, and perhaps not getting credit for doing that, or not getting sufficient credit. I don't know how the trend is, but the few people I've spoken to about this, I think, would still prefer to teach history courses, rather than get involved in--

Starn: Teach history courses as history courses.

Keightley: Yes, that's right. No, I don't really have any sense of that, I'm sorry.

Thoughts on Funding Cuts and VERIP

Starn: With these voluntary early retirement incentive programs, the university lost many people, and they only replaced two-thirds of them, at the junior level. There were $341,000,000 in state funding cuts over three years which this was directed at. Do you have any thoughts about the shift from public to private support at the university?

Keightley: Two thoughts: one personal, one general. I did not take VERIP when I had the chance to do so; I did not want to have my closing years at Berkeley to be the years in which I was chair of the department. I wanted to go back and teach in the classroom and go out that way. That says something about what I felt about being chair. [laughter] It wasn't what I had trained for and not what I wanted to be doing as I retired.

The general cuts in state funding I see as part of a trend probably that started with Proposition 13 way back in the seventies. I find this a very sad comment on modern American culture that we are not prepared to put money, which is certainly available--this is a rich state, and a lot of it is wasted on consumer items, or tax cuts and so on--it's terribly unfortunate that the university should suffer in this way.

Certainly I think the university could always become more efficient, but the teaching operation, in my view, is already remarkably efficient, at least in Berkeley. I resent strongly the fact that the Berkeley faculty have heavier teaching loads than the faculty at some of the other state campuses.

Starn: I didn't realize that was the case.

Keightley: That is very much the case, oh yes. Look at Davis's teaching load, look at UCLA's teaching load; they teach less than we do in the history department. Since this is supposed to be a premier research university it seems strange that we should do more teaching. I don't think we should do less teaching, but I think there should be--

Starn: Parity?

Keightley: Parity, in these matters.

I'm simply speaking as a citizen, not just a member of the faculty, that I think California must put very significant resources into education; it's the future of this state.

Starn: Do you have any thoughts about why this does not seem to be the case?

Keightley: I don't know. There is a selfishness in the modern American culture which I find distressing. I see it now in the SUV's which are clogging up our highways. I was delighted to hear that

gasoline may go to three dollars a gallon this morning on the radio. [laughter] It is that selfishness. I feel it particularly keenly, I think, having grown up in England in World War II, where virtue was indeed in saving, and not spending, and in making do with what little you have. In many ways, I welcome the current fuel crisis to save this, save that, turn off the lights, and so on.

Starn: You would think that selfishness would include wanting a good education for your children, though.

Keightley: That's an interesting question. Now you're getting me into areas which I'm not an expert on. It does occur to me that with the extraordinary pace of cultural change--and I've seen this in China, and one can see it here too--that children and parents are quite far apart in terms of what they know, appreciate, can do, understand, what interests them, movies, computers, cell phones; it's all quite different. I dare say, therefore, parents are puzzled and wonder what's going on.

Starn: [laughter] I do believe I know some puzzled parents also.

Demands of Chairmanship

Starn: Well, we're still on the department and I'm wondering, aren't you glad there were only two years?

Keightley: Let me say a word about that, because the normal tour of duty is three years. After I got through with my heart attack, I was on medications, beta-blockers in particular, one of whose side effects is to tire you out enormously. By the end of the day, I was just dragging. I kept it on for a second year. Again I attribute part of this to my English education; you hang in there, you keep a stiff upper lip, and so on. In many ways I'm surprised I didn't just resign when I had the heart attack; that might have been more sensible. But after two years, I found I was still exhausted; I was just totally consumed by the job. I would come home at night and virtually collapse. The amount of minutiae, the number of meetings one has to have, the number of contacts, the number of memos, the number of different interests one has to deal with.

Starn: And the sheer reading, also.

Keightley: That, too.

Starn: Reading other people's papers for promotions and--

Keightley: This, I think, I made a great mistake on, because subsequent chairs have delegated that task to their vice-chairs, which frees them up to be more chairman-like, if you like. No, I read every one of those merit cases and promotion cases. I'm glad I did; it was a wonderful education for me. Again, I think it was my British education--that I was too steeped in tradition, I wasn't prepared to call in [for help]--but I think it probably makes very good

sense for the chair to delegate some of that, to have people who know the field better write the reports.

Starn: You have to have people whose opinion you trust.

Keightley: Of course you do. That, I think, lightens the task, and I think it probably should be lightened. It was a killer of job.

Starn: Whenever these crises occurred, such as the strike, were there factions that had to be dealt with in diplomatic ways, or affirming ways?

Keightley: You use the word "factions," and I would resist that. There were certainly groups within the department who tend to think in similar terms, but these are positions, I think--naturally, all positions are determined by personality, training, background, and so on--but they are positions honestly arrived at. I don't know that I would always find them very sensible positions, but at the same time I don't think that they were positions with ulterior motives. They were intellectually defensible. I think that the health of the department, in fact, was assisted by having these various positions argued out in public. Certainly some of them were obstructive, yes, but I didn't find factionalism a particular issue in my chairmanship. It doesn't ring true with what was going on. Yes, there were problems. Yes, there were difficulties.

One particular case I remember was Jim Gregory, the U.S. historian who had had an offer, I think, up in Seattle, and the offer also included his wife, Susan Glenn. Jim, I think, would have preferred to stay here, but only if we were going to offer his wife a position. This was a very hard one, but finally--and I met with the American historians, I met with my vice-chairs--finally, it seemed to me that it would not be fair to discriminate against Susan as a possible candidate for a position here, just because she happened to be married to Jim Gregory, and that the department should have a chance to vote up or down on this one. So we did. The department was not enthusiastic, and Jim left us and went to Seattle. But I don't see that one in terms of faction. It was a difficult case, a difficult question to decide. No, I don't think faction would describe it.

Starn: Did I ask whether you had some advice for your succeeding chair?

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Keightley: The simple answer was not much, because my succeeding chair was Reggie Zelnik, who had been acting chair, executive chair, and so on, during part of my own tenure, so Reggie was very well primed as to how the department operated and functioned, what needed to be done. I don't remember whether I actually wrote him a memo or not, but I very much suspect I did not. He didn't need it. He did it well.

Starn: I think there was a file marked "Advice," with nothing in it. [laughter]

Keightley: With nothing in it! [laughter] Good--I spared Reggie that, at least. He knew the job very well, yes. He was a very logical choice.

Starn: Are you the only one to have kept such complete records of your chairmanship and presented them to the Bancroft Library?

Keightley: So far as I know, I'm the only one who has turned them over to the university archives. I have mentioned this to various previous chairs. I mentioned it to Sheldon Rothblatt [professor of British history and former chair of the history department]; he didn't seem interested--in fact I think he's destroying his files. Gene Brucker [emeritus professor of Italian history, former chair] has, I gather, a copy of everything he ever wrote, but that's still at home, which I found somewhat daunting. I've mentioned it to Brentano [Robert Brentano, professor of medieval history, former chair], and so on, but I haven't seen any action. Maybe they will do this later; maybe they won't; maybe they don't want to.

Lack of Institutional Memory in the History Department

Keightley: I've always been concerned with the fact that the history department seems to have a very poor sense of its own history. One thing I would like to do, and I'm going to speak to Gjerde [Jon Gjerde, appointed chair of the department in 2001] about this, is see if we can get a plaque which lists all the departmental chairs. I know this is self-serving, but you go back forty, fifty, sixty years--people have no idea who our departmental chairs were and yet they were a part of history.

Starn: That's a very good idea. This could also be financed by the Friends of History.

Keightley: Possibly, if we can waste money on that. I'd even put in some money myself. It wouldn't be expensive. [laughter] But I think it would be a nice gesture for rewarding a job, but also we would be defining the department's history. But we have a very poor institutional memory. I mean the Keightley Report is one case: these things get buried and get re-excavated twenty years later when they do another report, but nothing happens in the meantime.

Starn: You don't think there's any natural selection, that the reports that need to be remembered are remembered?

Keightley: Well, I haven't seen much evidence of it. Our institutional memory is not good. We don't, I don't think, anymore, still take notes in departmental meetings; there are no minutes. We used to have a secretary there--Janet Purcell--who used to come and take notes--and I think maybe Ramona [Levi, a later staff member] did, too.

Starn: Janet Purcell did everything, didn't she?

Keightley: She did everything; that's right. But then that practice generally stopped, and the chair would scribble down notes, which is hard work on the chair--but there is no sort of set of minutes, that I know of, which is unfortunate.

Starn: Do you think you have some peculiar responsibility, because of your close work and your realization that every record is worthwhile in some sense?

Keightley: Yes, the thought has occurred to me that I am immensely grateful to the Chinese of the Shang dynasty for having kept these oracle-bone inscriptions. Trivial though some of them are; nevertheless they are now over three thousand years old and we're immensely fortunate to have them. I don't think anyone's going to find themselves immensely fortunate to have history department memos three thousand years from now, but who can tell? [laughter]

No, I find it very hard to destroy and throw out documents. I've been doing it recently, but it gives me a pang every time I do it. On the other hand, our culture now generates them so easily that it's almost impossible to keep them all.

VII REFLECTIONS ON GENIUS, CHANCE, AND ORIGINS

MacArthur Years, 1986-1991

Starn: Do you have records of your years as a MacArthur Fellow in any particular way?

Keightley: No, I don't. My general reaction to the award of the MacArthur Fellowship, which did indeed come like a bolt out of the blue, was that I should not let it destruct my life in any significant way. If they had awarded me the fellowship for doing what I was doing, I should keep on doing what I was doing. So I tended to do that. I did two things: first of all, I no longer had to apply for outside funding for research leads.

Starn: In fact, a year or two before you got the MacArthur appointment you were on leave and you really needed money to write? You hadn't gotten an NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] fellowship--is that right?

Keightley: That's correct.

Starn: And then you went on a sort of a road tour [giving paid lectures at different universities]?

Keightley: Yes, and as I think I said at one point, that may have played a role in getting the MacArthur later, because a lot of people had heard me and knew what I was doing. I can't document that, but the thought did occur to me. There was a nice irony in that case.

At that point, I was so committed to what I was doing that Vannie and I agreed that I could take this extra term off and fund it myself, and I'm glad that I did. When the MacArthur money came along, it meant: a) I was no longer in competition with other scholars for quite limited research funds, and I was glad to leave that for other people to use. b) It also saved time; I didn't have to go through the application process. And I did certainly take a little more time off from teaching to get on with the work. But it didn't change my general pattern of behavior. Rather than taking one year off every three years, I might take one year every two, for a couple of stints.

Starn: That was from 1986 to 1991?

Keightley: Yes, but the '86 to '91 doesn't mean very much, because you put some of the money in the bank, and then you can use it again for subsequent research, or research years.

The MacArthur thing is ironic because it takes some of the pressure off to get work done because you can always take more time to do it. Pressure, I think, is a good thing, and I particularly welcome the pressure of attending conferences, because then you have to get the paper done; you have a deadline, and then you've got something. With the MacArthur I wrote a very big, fat book which I'm still working on, but there was never that compulsion to get it finished. Now that I'm retired, and presumably facing a limited life span, yes, the compulsion is coming back--and that's quite healthy, I think, for academic productivity.

Starn: So to some extent, not having deadlines, and not having structures, has a cost. You did have more time for research. Do you think this was good for your teaching?

Keightley: I'm sure it's good for the teaching because I know more, I read more, I have more ideas--particularly good for the graduate teaching, yes.

Certainly, I have always felt that if I got a MacArthur, then Berkeley gets some of the credit. Berkeley helped make me what I am as a scholar, so that it was very important to keep up what I was doing here.

Starn: Any reflections on the MacArthur culture, so to speak?

Keightley: No, it's a very disparate group. You could divide it very crudely into the social activists, on the one hand, and the academic types on the other. There are the artists, also. Very stimulating group. I have attended at least a couple of their national meetings and I think spoke at one of them. One hears a lot of interesting stuff. Elaine Pagels [Princeton professor of comparative religions], I remember, was there. [James] Randi the Magician was there, whose stock in trade is to go around exploding fake magicians, and fake telepathy, and fake this and fake that. He taught me some very useful things about how chance operates, and this was helpful to me in my study of ancient Chinese divination. I was grateful for that kind of a contact.

Starn: So some of you were in correspondence with each other?

Keightley: Actually, it wasn't correspondence--it was just a breakfast conversation. He tells a good story. Do you want to hear the story?

Starn: Yes, by all means.

Keightley: He had been invited over to France to check on the reliability of some particular study of homeopathic medicine, showing that it worked. His first question was--he wanted to see the notebooks where the research had been done. There was something fishy, as I recall, about those notebooks: they all seemed to have been filled in much later than the actual event. There was also something fishy about the figures themselves.

He told the following story: that he had been, I think, at the University of Nevada, in Reno, and the students had been delighted by his talk, and several students came up

afterward and said, "Mr. Randi, if we can help you with your research, please let us know." He said, "Yes, you can, come back to my hotel room."

He got two or three students, and he had a pair of dice, and he said, "Now *you* are going to throw the dice up against the wall; and *you* are going to read out what the pips say; and *you* are going to write down the results."

They do this about thirty or fifty times and they get a nice bell curve--I don't know how it works out, but a bell curve around six, or whatever. He says, "All right, now we're going to do this again. *You* are going to throw the dice; *you* are going to look at the pips, but you are not going to call out what you see--you're going to *make up* what you see; and *you're* going to write it down." So they do it another fifty times, but with the second person calling out what he thought should be there rather than what he actually saw. They do that and they draw the bell curve, and right at the top of the bell curve there is a very nice little indentation.

Randi's point is that when you are faking results, you instinctively shy away from results that would be too perfect, that you don't do what you think would make it look too good. He said in the homeopathic results, that's exactly what he found in France, that there was this dip in the bell curve right at the point where you would have expected a smooth crest.

I thought that was rather nice, because you could apply that to Shang divination and the desire to avoid anything that looks too good.

Stam: It makes the predictions suspect.

Keightley: That's right, yes. The whole thing becomes more plausible if you have a small number of off divinations.

Stam: I wonder if one qualification for the MacArthur grant is an ability to tell a good story? [laughter]

Keightley: I think for some people, yes. Wouldn't put myself in that camp, but yes, Randi is a very good entertainer.

Stam: So, meetings and contacts were fruitful. Then there was the happy state of being recognized as a genius. It didn't carry any burden, did it?

Keightley: Well, I dislike the word "genius". I don't feel I'm a genius at all. I think I probably got the award because I was working in a field which people found important. People liked what I did with the field, and they wished to encourage further research in this area. I don't feel I'm a genius at all, but I like to think I'm doing work that is of some value to the scholarly and national community.

Stam: That seems to have rather affirmed that, among other things.

New Models for the Origins of Chinese Culture

Starn: Let's talk a little bit about your work. In fact, let's talk a lot about your work. I do like that comment on a book you edited, that said that this book, called *The Origins of Chinese Civilization* should be called *The Origins of Civilization in China.* You mentioned it earlier, but could you give more details?

Keightley: The book was a conference volume, a conference that I helped organize in 1978. The book was published in 1983, and I was the editor. The conference was called "The Origins of Chinese Civilization." Everybody, I think, was perfectly happy with that way of conceiving the issue, but by the time the book came out, Bill Boltz in his review was making the point that we are now increasingly thinking of the formation of Chinese civilization as a very slow process of coalescing regional cultures.

Starn: Could you go a little bit into the regions?

Keightley: I certainly could. In the old view there was just one central Neolithic tradition in the Central Plains, known as the Yangshao tradition, with its painted pottery. Then, in the 1980s, 1970s, anyway, we thought that the Yangshao tradition expanded into other parts of China, bringing civilization and culture with it. The Black Pottery tradition then evolved out of the Painted Pottery tradition and then finally led on, again in the Central Plains, into the Bronze Age--the culture of the early dynastic states, and so on.

Now, that model has now been thoroughly upset, partly thanks to radio-carbon dating where it's become quite clear that the Black Pottery tradition is just as old as the Painted Pottery tradition, almost as old, but on the East Coast rather than the Central Plains. The model that I now subscribe to sees the Black Pottery tradition and the Jade-working tradition moving up the East Coast and then finally moving into the Central Plains, and that the interaction between the Painted Pottery cultures and the East Coast Black Pottery cultures then becomes very fruitful and probably helps explain the genesis of Bronze Age cultures in the Central Plains.

But, there are cultures all over the Neolithic period in China--up in the northeast, up in the northwest, and down the Yangzi Valley, down in south China--which had their own distinctive qualifications, characteristics, and then produced their own Bronze Age states. There may, indeed, have been a great expansion of bronze-working from central China around 1600, 1500 B.C., but whatever power may have been behind that, assuming it was even political at all, was unable to maintain control over this large country. You then get the development of a series of local Bronze Age cultures--in the south, in the north, in the west, and so on--each with their characteristics, motifs, burial customs, and so on. Certainly they share some things.

What is perhaps a little falsifying is the fact that only the Shang, up in north China, have left us written records. Therefore, we tend to privilege the Shang, as later historians did. They saw this tradition of the Xia through the Shang, through the Zhou, as the great dynastic tradition, of dynastic progression. But it could well be that these other cultures in the south, for example, which were producing massive, highly technically competent bronzes, were just as cultured as the Shang, but they didn't leave us any written records, so we don't know who

they were; we don't know what their name was; we don't know what they did. Clearly, they were able to organize themselves in very efficient ways in terms of labor mobilization and so on.

Pinyin versus Wade-Giles Spelling

Keightley: Then, over the next millennium from the Shang through the Zhou, we see increasingly the development of what one would call a Chinese culture, but I probably wouldn't use that term now until about 221 B.C. when you have the unification of the Qin dynasty--that's *Qin*, not C-h'i-n.

Starn: We're doing "Q" now.

Keightley: We're now doing "Q," yes. We're now doing "Q" partly because of computers. If you're trying to search for these things, you want to have one consistent romanization system. Wade-Giles, with its apostrophes, doesn't make this easy. Pinyin is preferable in my view.

Starn: How long has the Pinyin been in existence?

Keightley: I'm sorry you asked me. I don't know the answer to that, but I would say it started in the mid-1970s. The Chinese could have gone with Wade-Giles; they could have gone with a Russian Cyrillic form of romanization, thank goodness they didn't. At least they went with a Latin alphabet, but they felt they should have their own national system of romanization. I can understand that. Like all systems, it has its benefits, it has its costs, but it works.

The Origins of Writing in China

Starn: Speaking of writing, in 1996 you published an article in the journal *Representations*, on "Art, Ancestors, and the Origins of Writing in China." It's a very good article. You talk about the way that Shang culture helped keep Chinese writing logographic in nature. Can you explain a little bit about that?

Keightley: The distinction is logographic versus ideographic, and much of Western scholarship, certainly in the thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, spoke about the Chinese written language as ideographic--that is you have the idea for something and then you write down a picture of it, and then you have a writing system.

Starn: Is that also called a glyph?

Keightley: You could call it a glyph, but a glyph doesn't determine what you think the impulse is behind it. A graph is what we refer to these things as. If you want to write down the word for mountain, you would draw a picture of a mountain, because you have the idea of a mountain

in your head. But it's quite clear, I think, that the written system in China is a logographic system--by which I mean the graphs write down words, they don't write down ideas.

Starn: They write down the sound?

Keightley: They write down a spoken word, the sound of the word. So if you're going to write the word for mountain, which is *shan,* you would write down certainly a graph, which in its origin looks like a picture, but the sound is attached to that. Then there will be a whole series of graphs which may also be pronounced *shan,* a whole series of words which may be pronounced *shan,* but would frequently incorporate that graphic element because the sound is associated with that. The logographic persuasion thinks of a written script as a way of recording speech, essentially, not of ideas.

Starn: This influenced the way--?

Keightley: A lot of cultures, including the Egyptian culture, start off with pictographic symbols, but I believe every other major writing system has then shifted to some form of phonetic syllabary, so that you can then spell out words with a rather limited range of symbols, glyphs, graphs, whatever you call them. The Chinese did not do that, and this was one of the interesting questions, as to why not. There are many possible explanations, all of them, I think, probably playing a role here.

The point I was making in the article was primarily that an enormous religious value attached to many of these graphs; secondly, an enormous social distinction attached to the ability to read the graphs, and that probably, it was in the interests of the elites to maintain the monopoly they had over reading and writing. Only those who had the leisure time and the money to devote themselves to learning the five, six, seven thousand characters needed were going to gain the status associated with writing.

A third reason would be political, that no matter how you pronounce a word you're going to write it with the same logograph. Spoken dialects were immensely important, but the unity of the elite culture is maintained by one single writing system. I don't know if I've mentioned this on a previous tape, but when Chiang Kaishek falls back on Chungking in the 1940s, under the Japanese onslaught, his supporters come from all parts of China. They cannot speak to each other, because of the different dialects, but they can write to each other. It's the writing that has held the empire together. That would be another reason for not moving towards an alphabetic script.

When Pinyin was introduced in the People's Republic, the eventual hope was that they would get rid of the written graphs and move to an alphabetic writing system. That certainly is not going to happen until they can standardize pronunciation throughout China, because otherwise it would break apart, as Europe broke apart, into various local languages.

Starn: This would happen inevitably?

Keightley: I think it probably would, yes. The differences in pronunciation are very marked. Beijing and Peking, or pa-KING, as they would say, is a big difference. Also, there are people who are enthusiasts, in this country in particular, who have put out whole magazines written entirely in Pinyin, in romanization. I find them extremely hard to read; I would much rather

read Chinese characters. Of course, that's the way I've been trained, but I suspect the Chinese themselves are going to feel that way.

One of the virtues of the Chinese writing system is that it gives us access to three thousand years of Chinese history. That is, I can read an early Chinese text because of the characters--they're not always the same, the meanings are not always the same, but they're accessible. Once you move to an alphabetic script you'll be cutting yourself off from your history, and it will require special training.

Starn: Who was Pinyin?

Keightley: No, *Pinyin* simply means spelling.

Starn: I always assumed there was some originator of it. [laughter] The Chinese developed this system originally, their logographic language, because they were in isolation and they weren't influenced by--?

Keightley: The question is the origins of the written script. My view of the matter is yes, that the written script develops indigenously. I associate it, in fact, with influences coming out of the East Coast Neolithic. Not everybody agrees with me on that, but certainly I think it's a Chinese development, yes, and one can see it developing slowly through the late Neolithic and then the Bronze age. It's not an introduction from outside.

Starn: And it influences the cultures around it?

Keightley: It certainly does, yes. Korean elites wrote in Chinese until--what?--the Ming dynasty in China. Japanese did the same; Southeast Asia did the same. The impact of this writing system has been enormous.

Starn: Also there was a very high literacy rate?

Keightley: The literacy rate, as I understand it, in medieval China was certainly comparable to the literacy rate in Europe, even though the script was much harder to learn. Our assumption is that the prestige associated with the written script, and the career opportunities it provided, encouraged people.

Also, one has to distinguish between true literacy and functional literacy; people could be literate in a small area of their activities--whether shopkeepers, or traders, or so on--they would know the characters for that. That was true in Taiwan, when I was a student there in the sixties, that a lot of the Taiwanese farm boys coming into school would learn to read and write the things that the central government wanted them to learn to read and write, but they couldn't read and write the agricultural terms which they would be using at home, because they hadn't been taught that yet. There is sometimes that disjunction between what you can read and write, and what you're actually talking about, and what you're doing.

Starn: Scholars and intellectuals not only were literate, but they also had to be able to wield a brush in a skillful way.

Keightley: Yes, calligraphy. Again, I think the artistic appeal of the script also helps to explain its endurance. There are whole books written by western admirers, and certainly by Chinese admirers, too, as to the spiritual value of calligraphy. It is a very beautiful art form. If I had been younger when I started this field, I might have taken it up because it's very attractive.

Starn: I think that you said that there was some question about the origins of the script in comparison with skeletal arrangements. In other words, there was the great mortuary cult and that perhaps some of the graphs evolved from placement of bones?

Keightley: [laughter] I remember making some kind of comparison to that effect. I don't remember the details now; I would have to go back and look. I think the point I was making was that the graphs, as opposed to the pictures, can be thought of as almost the skeletons of the words. That is, it isn't just a picture, it's been a picture that's been highly systematized and rendered into a diagram rather than a picture. In a sense, in the treatment of the dead, particularly in secondary burials when you relocate the bones in the ground in a secondary burial...

Starn: Can you explain secondary burial?

Keightley: Secondary burial is one in which you bury the person in the ground the first time and then after an interval--we don't know for the Neolithic how long, but modern ethnography suggests one year, two years, something like that--the person is dug up, the bones are then cleaned off of any remaining flesh, and then they are reburied in the ground. Presumably this involves a ritual activity, and sometimes many bones are put in the same pit so that in a large community ritual, the positioning of the bones, we assume, was significant.

The analogy I was drawing, and it is only an analogy, was that the graphs can be seen to the words as the bones can be seen to the original human being. You are giving them structure, you are giving them meaning, but you are simplifying them at the same time.

Starn: The purpose of the secondary burial was?

Keightley: Well, again we're dealing now with evidence of six or seven thousand years old, but ethnographic analogy, again, suggests that it was only after you have been reburied, and the bones had been cleaned and stripped, that you were thought to be truly dead. Death, presumably, was a rather slow process; it wasn't a punctual event. It was with the reburial of the bones that you lost your social identity. I say this because the number of grave goods you find associated with secondary burials is very small and trivial, compared to the large number of grave goods you can find at the primary burials. Presumably these people have now become true ancestors; they don't need these pots anymore, they are in a different order of existence, or non-existence.

The Oracle Bones and Their Inscriptions

Starn: Can we move from human bones to the oracle bones?

Keightley: Yes.

Starn: First, please describe, as I know you have many times, oracle bones and your work with them.

Keightley: The oracle-bone inscriptions date from the Late Shang dynasty, from about 1200 to 1045 B.C. They are records of a form of pyromancy, that is, divination using fire, in which the diviner took something like a red-hot poker and applied it to an especially thinned place on the back of a cattle scapula or a turtle plastron, and cracked the bone, because of the heat stress produced by the red-hot poker. The diviner would then interpret that crack in some way--he may have done it on the basis of the shape; he may have done it on the basis of the sound; he may have done it on the speed with which it formed, or some other criteria which are not recoverable--as lucky or unlucky.

This kind of divination is very common in world history. It is all across central Asia. It came across in the Bering Strait and on into Labrador. But it is only the Chinese, as far as I know, that then carved into the bone and sliced into the bone a record of what they had been divining. It is also, I think, only the Chinese--this I might have to check--who, instead of throwing the bone into the fire, apply the heat directly to one area.

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Keightley: By applying the heat to the bone, the Shang were able to control the location of the cracks, possibly their direction. Then, as I say, they would carve the results of the divination, the subject of the divination, the date of the divination, and the forecast.

Starn: Such forecasts as, for example?

Keightley: To give you some examples: the king might be concerned about the weather; so if the king goes hunting at such and such a place, will he encounter great rains? Or if the king hunts at another place, will he encounter great winds? Then, you may have a crack, and the crack may say, "lucky," so, presumably, this was a favorable response. In a smaller number of cases, we will get the result that the king forecast had said, "No, it will not rain," and then sometimes it will even say, "It did not rain." That's not a very good example, but you do get the idea. A full inscription would be the preface, which gives you the date, it gives you the name of the diviner, it gives you the charge, which was the subject, and then gives you the king's forecast, or his prognostication, of what was going to happen, and sometimes you get the verification.

The fact that we get fewer forecasts and verifications suggests, quite possibly, that many of these forecasts didn't work out very well, and the king presumably was not interested in having people carve into the bone the fact that he had got it wrong. The record does dwindle in that way.

The inscriptions are important to us because the king divined about most of his major activities, particularly the Shang king Wu Ding, in about 1200 B.C., so that virtually everything he did--whether it was hunting, military alliances, warfare and mobilizing labor, praying for a harvest, trying to analyze the meaning of his dreams, trying to determine the sex of his pregnant wife's child, his health, the sickness in his eye, the sickness in his nose, and so on. And then the constant routine divination at the end of every ten-day week. On the

tenth day they would divine, "In the next ten days we will have no disasters." This was just a lucky charm, as it were. For about a hundred and fifty years they did that at the end of every ten-day week on the *gui* day--that's the tenth day of the week.

Many of these inscriptions can tell us a great deal about Shang culture, about Shang elite values. They can even tell us about Shang geography, because on some bones we have a series of travel divinations where the king is in point A on one day and says, "I'm going to go to point B," and three days later, he's in point B, and "I'm going to go to point C," and three days later, he's in point C. You can draw a map showing these places are three days apart, and so on.

We can reconstruct some of the late king's campaigns. He was away from his cult center for 173 days, or something like that, fighting against a certain tribe down in the southeast. It has given us a wonderful window, and it is only a window because these are, after all, very special documents, but it's given us a wonderful window into late Shang culture.

Starn: Are these found in groups which make it relatively easy to sequence the information that you're given?

Keightley: The answer is yes, some have been found in groups; and the answer is no, it's not so easy to sequence them.

Originally, these bones were being dug up by peasants, and they were called "dragon bones". They were ground up because they were thought to be a cure for malaria, and they were sold then as medicine in apothecary shops. The peasants felt that the writing they found on these bones in the fields diminished the value of the bones so they would erase the writing before they sold them off to the apothecaries.

According to tradition, in 1899, a Chinese scholar by the name of Wang Yirong was I guess suffering from malaria; he went and got a package of these bones from his local apothecary in Beijing, and noticed there was writing on them, and realized he was looking at a form of Chinese script that was older than anything that he had known before.

It took scholars, I don't know quite how many years, but probably about ten years, to find out where these bones were coming from, tracing them back to various antique dealers, and so on, finally locating the site near Anyang in northern Hunan. The moment, of course, that the peasants realized that there was money in these bones, that people wanted the bones, then rather than erasing the characters, they would start to inscribe extra characters on them, because people paid more if there were more characters. The field initially was plagued with a certain number of fakes and forgeries.

Starn: They were probably easily detectable?

Keightley: We would like to think so, yes. Many of them are, but for all I know, one or two have got through.

Then in the 1920s and the 1930s, after the reunification of China in 1927, the Academia Sinica immediately started scientific digs in Anyang, and I think in 1936--they found this enormous pit of oracle bones, YH 127 was the name of the pit. I would have to look up the

number of fragments, but something like seventeen thousand fragments were excavated. It was this great ball of mud and turtle shells. It was then shipped all over China as the Japanese were pushing the Kuomintang out of North China, and eventually was sent over to Taiwan where the scholars then spent the next twenty years putting these bones back together--an enormous jigsaw puzzle. They now have published a series of very important volumes where we have more or less generally whole plastrons.

The fact is, in my view, that when the Shang put these bones into pits, the bones had lost their usefulness. There is nothing less interesting than last week's forecast, or last year's forecast. I suspect that they were kept above ground while the king was still alive, and perhaps displayed to people on occasion, because some of them were quite big and bold and were colored in red, showing how good a diviner the king had been. But once he was dead I think the bones lost their value.

Starn: It was always the king who was the diviner?

Keightley: It was always the king, with one or two very minor exceptions, who was the prognosticator. Under Wu Ding, no, the king has diviners doing the actual work for him, but then he comes in and makes the forecast. By the end of the dynasty the diviners have disappeared and the king is doing it all, but the whole thing has become much more routine.

That's a point I do like to stress: that there's a considerable evolution in the practice of this pyromancy in the 150 years in which we see it. There's no unchanging China here; they really are changing their theology and their methodology, and the scope of the whole system of divination shrinks considerably by the end of the dynasty.

Starn: And that's by about 1050 BC?

Keightley: 1045, maybe--yes, roughly.

Starn: When you came upon the Shima Kunio concordance and you saw how much information you were going to be able to get out of the bones, that could be gotten from bones, were you immediately certain that you wanted to devote time to them? You must have known this was going to take--? And you were coming at this from a different place.

Keightley: I don't think I was at all clear about that. As you know, I was writing this dissertation on labor mobilization, public work, for a somewhat later period. I simply wanted an introduction, and here, on page one, you had all these inscriptions about labor mobilization, so I thought I would simply use these inscriptions. There was no need for me to get into the whole corpus of Shang oracle-bone inscriptions.

Starn: But it seemed as if it came over you very quickly. It didn't take long for you to be--

Keightley: I clearly had to do my homework. I was self-taught, and that was perhaps a rather slow business, but I don't regret that. When I got to Berkeley, in 1969, having just finished the dissertation, which was all about the Shang and the Western Zhou, I thought I would do what every assistant professor does, which is publish my dissertation. The moment I started to do that I began to think more carefully about the nature of the sources I had been using, particularly these oracle-bone inscriptions--wondering why we had them, wondering how

they were organized, wondering what kind of historical biases were involved--so that I became acutely aware of the need to study the historiography of these inscriptions.

I had another one of those "That can't be right" moments. I was increasingly worried about the nature of the sources, and began to realize that they were not questions, as most Chinese scholars had taken them to be, but declarative statements.

Starn: The inscriptions themselves?

Keightley: The inscriptions themselves--the charge, the subject that was being divined. As I showed you in that review of my Shima Kunio book, when I translated the inscriptions there, I did indeed put a question mark at the end. So, "Will it rain on Tuesday?" But eventually I came to see that these were forecasts, or wishes, or prayers, so: "It will rain on Tuesday," or, "It might not rain on Tuesday."

Starn: Is it too intense and detailed for you to explain what made you change your mind, and what made you certain you were right?

Keightley: The paper that I wrote, *"Shih Cheng"*, which I gave in 1972 at a conference, is a long, technical, detailed paper. Much of it is philological. Part of it involved challenging the early dictionary definitions of the key terms involved. But I think above all it was the complexity of some of the charges which had negatives--they had conditional clauses in them, and when you start trying to turn these into questions you get into a lot of trouble, whereas if you treat them as declaratives--that if we do this, that will happen--it made a lot more sense.

So, with considerable fear and trembling--and partly, of course, this was taking a lot of time that I should have been spending on getting on with my book--I produced this *"Shih Cheng"* paper and gave it down at the Asian Studies on the Pacific Coast conference in Asilomar, in 1972. I was treated with considerable resistance, much of it from the graduate students who had come down from the University of Washington where students under Paul Serruys had been studying the oracle-bone inscriptions. Father Paul Serruys, who was a very great oracle-bone scholar, a great linguist, but who, at that point, evidently was still teaching his students to think of these things as questions. Actually, at exactly the same time Serruys was changing his mind, too; he was coming around to the declarative view of this, and he eventually published an article in 1974 which made the point very, very clearly.

So here I was, worrying about the sources I was working with, and not just the mood of the charges,, but also how they functioned in Shang society and what legitimating values proceeded from the results; why they were carved into bone in the first place, and so on. Eventually I turned away from my dissertation and published *Sources of Shang History*, a book which at least made these documents accessible to a wider range of Western scholars, and in a sense, I suppose, summarized what I had been teaching myself for the last ten years or so as I started to master the field.

Starn: How was the *"Shih Cheng"* the turning point here? What precisely?

Keightley: I don't know if it was a turning point; it was simply a milestone on the way, that it showed that I wasn't interested in writing history, yet, but I was interested in understanding the nature of the sources first. It was important to understand what impulses were behind the

Shang inscriptions, and whether these things are questions, or whether they are prayers or wishes. So, "In the next ten days there will be no disaster"; this was a kind of spell cast on the next ten days; not "In the next ten days will there be any disasters?" No, it was statement; it was a wish; it was a prayer.

The eventual result was that I wrote this whole book, *Sources of Shang History*, which is just an introduction to what these bones are, and how they can be dated, and how they were made, and so on. I still haven't published my dissertation; I don't know if I ever will. It was a somewhat risky procedure, I think, but it seemed to me it had to be done. I'm very glad I did, it helped--

Stam: You never have doubts?

Keightley: [laughter] No, I don't. And my copy of the book is certainly worn out because I consult it a great deal; there's a lot of very useful information in it.

Stam: That's a very wonderful thing to be able to say about one's first book, isn't it?

Keightley: Yes. It's not true much of the other books.

So I published that book, and was also pursuing a theme which had interested me, I think, from the moment I started Chinese studies, and that was comparing the development of Chinese culture and the development of Western culture. I had gone back into the ancient period because I wanted to see how these two great civilizations began to diverge way back in the Bronze Age. Then, increasingly, I began to think, "We've got to go beyond the Bronze Age. You've got to look to the Neolithic, or the Neolithic to Bronze Age transition." The assumption was that perhaps at some point in the Neolithic, all cultures are similar--in fact, I don't believe that anymore, but that was my assumption then--but as they get into the Bronze Age they begin to diverge in very significant ways.

Stam: And you're still interested in the issue. Is this some way to maybe bridge your early interest in humanities, and Western humanities, and literature, and Chinese--?

Keightley: I think you put your finger on something very important, because early Chinese culture--elite culture--depended very heavily on mastery of the classics, of learning and embodying the virtues demonstrated in those classics, and of course in the West, there had been considerable emphasis on the classics also. As I said, I can't remember in my English schooling ever being asked to read Homer, but I certainly did read Homer. It gave me great pleasure to go back to those Greek texts as part of my own past, and then begin to make comparisons with the Chinese elements.

Oracle-Bone Scholars

Stam: Could you say that there is a school of oracle-bone--?

Keightley: --studies? Well, I did, at one point, think about establishing a Society for the Study of Shang Culture. The trouble is there are not that many of us in the west that are doing this, and we're in touch with each other anyway; we didn't need a society.

Starn: Who are your closest colleagues, intellectually?

Keightley: Certainly one of them has been Professor David Nivison, who is now professor emeritus of philosophy at Stanford. He has become very interested in the oracle-bone inscriptions because they may contain information about early chronology, also about early philosophy. Many, many years ago he came up and spent about three hours with me in my office and I taught him all I knew about oracle-bone inscriptions. He's been working with them right along. He became quite absorbed in this.

Professor Takashima Ken-ichi,who was a linguist, and a paleographer, who teaches up at the University of Washington, in Seattle--he has done very valuable studies of Shang grammar.

Professor Edward L. Shaughnessy, who got his Ph.D. at Stanford, but who took my seminar on early Chinese inscriptions at Berkeley and who, despite his major focus on the Zhou dynasty, has produced some very valuable papers and articles on the periodization of the Shang inscriptions, on the introduction of the chariot, and so on. And Professor David Pankenier, now teaching at Lehigh, also trained at Stanford, and has done valuable work, particularly on early Chinese astrology and cosmology, that deals in part with the bone inscriptions.

There was also Professor Stanley L. Mickel, who teaches at Wittenberg University in Ohio. He wrote a most useful dissertation on the oracle-bone inscriptions in 1976 (Indiana University) and, for a number of years, was a valued correspondent. Unfortunately for the field he shifted his interests to the pedagogy of Chinese language teaching--the result, perhaps, of teaching at a small liberal arts college.

There is a series of other professors who use the bones peripherally--they use them when they have to. But those are the ones that I would think of immediately.

Starn: The undertaking seems to require overlapping disciplines from anthropology, archaeology, history, science. But these people come together only at conference time, and with focus, I guess.

The Harbsmeier Dictionary Project

Keightley: I was in Oslo the spring before last [spring 2000], where Christoph Harbsmeier is putting together a dictionary of early Chinese, but it's really a relational database. The whole thing will be online eventually. The oracle bones will be part of this. During the three months I was there, a group of four of us: me, Harbsmeier, Takashima, and the Chinese colleague Qiu Xigui, who had come from Beijing, we would meet four hours every morning and talk about

oracle-bone inscriptions. That was quite marvelous. We translated, I think, about a thousand of them, and those translations will all appear in the eventual website.

Stam: Were these photographs of the bones?

Keightley: Curiously, a university in Taiwan, Chenggong Daxue, has scanned in one of these concordances, so we have computer access to the whole body of inscriptions. They have also scanned in the rubbings, the actual oracle-bone rubbings. So it was possible to flash this up on the screen, do searches, and then look at the actual inscriptions. This was not a perfect research device; there were many mistakes in the database and in the scanning, but nevertheless, yes, we did have access. It was a quite wonderful opportunity to discuss a whole series of questions.

Stam: Is it likely to be repeated?

Keightley: If Harbsmeier gets more money, and if I stay young and travel-able enough, yes. I was due to leave Oslo and go off and visit my relatives in England and France, but I was having so much fun, I just cancelled that. I stayed on and got the full benefit.

Stam: Couldn't tear yourself away?

Keightley: No, I couldn't.

The Problem of Continued Accessibility of Emerging Artifacts

Stam: Can you count on having access to new material from new excavations in China? Is this going to be ongoing?

Keightley: I think the situation is certainly improving. It isn't necessarily perfect for Chinese scholars either. First of all, of course, proper publication takes some care, and time, and money. There was a rumor several years ago that they had discovered a whole new library of oracle-bone inscriptions complete with a dead body of the Shang dynasty librarian. They were speaking about thirty, forty thousand new oracle-bone inscriptions. I must say, my reaction was somewhat mixed because: a) it would take a long time to organize, classify, and make the rubbings, and publish; and b) it would take enormous energy to digest forty thousand new oracle bones. But, in fact, it was just a hoax. [laughter] This had not been discovered. It was announced at an international meeting of Chinese librarians. I think they were anxious to demonstrate the antiquity of their task.

Stam: It doesn't sound like an Asian sense of humor, though.

Keightley: They're getting a sense of P.R. these days.

In the 1970s, they discovered some very important oracle-bone inscriptions out in the Wei River Valley--important because they were associated with the Zhou dynasty, not with the Shang dynasty. The original publications were very sketchy and rather unsatisfactory. They

were hand drawings, and you had no idea how accurate they were. I desperately wanted to see them, but I never got the chance; I was in Beijing at the time. When I said to Li Xueqin, "Gee, I would love to see those oracle-bone inscriptions," He said, "Yes, so would I," because there is a certain feudal tendency, especially now with the development of provincial loyalties in China. Local archaeological teams will do their best to hang on to what they've got, and they're a little, I think, cautious about letting Beijing get hold of it.

Those bones, I know, for a long time just rotted away, and the scholars in Beijing were not able to get at them and see them, which was a great pity because I think they were probably the better scholars in terms of their ability to interpret what was on the bone. So access is always a little problematic.

Starn: Could it become more so given current political tensions?

Keightley: Of course it could, yes. This joint dig at Shangqiu--which I may have talked about last time--which K.C. Chang at Harvard was organizing, that all came to a grinding halt at the time of the Tiananmen. It then got started again, I think maybe ten years later.

I think most Chinese scholars are prepared to try to maintain their contacts with Western scholars, and I routinely get invited to conferences in China. I think it would take a major destruction of diplomatic life to put a stop to that, but it could happen.

Starn: Also the Chinese have an interest in the rest of the world knowing about their rather difficult early culture.

Keightley: They do indeed, absolutely. And they have an interest in coming over here themselves, or having their students coming over here. So yes, they find this attractive, I think.

Starn: So you feel reasonably confident about access?

Keightley: I'm relatively optimistic. And of course there's an awful amount of publication going on. It's very hard now to keep up with all the journals coming out, and bibliographic control becomes a very important question.

<u>The Origins of Confucian Spirituality</u>

Keightley: One day I received a letter from an editor who was organizing an encyclopedia of world spirituality. He wanted me to write an article on the origins of Confucian spirituality, or pre-Confucian spirituality, in China. My immediate reaction was, "This is complete nonsense," and I simply took the letter and tossed it in the wastebasket. And then, in one of those moments which can change your whole life, I thought, "Wait a minute, maybe this is not such a silly idea," and I reached back into the wastebasket and pulled the letter out. I thought this would be very simple: all I have to do is go through the Western accounts of the Chinese Neolithic, look at the references to spirituality, and write the article; this will take me two or three weeks. I think I have told you this already, perhaps.

Starn: I don't think so.

Keightley: So I started to do this, and the moment I got beyond the Western language accounts and went into the Chinese archaeological reports, I was just astonished at the wealth of evidence, particularly involving burial practices, mortuary rituals, and so on, which spoke to the question of spirituality--but evidence which the Chinese scholars at that point had ignored the significance of, the meaning of. They were prepared to classify it, I think, in terms of matriarchy, patriarchy, slave society, but in terms of what religious values were being expressed here--the concept of the soul, the concept of the individual, the concept of the afterlife--they had not yet addressed these.

I sat down and I slowly began to hammer out this long article on the origins of Confucian spirituality, because clearly it underlay whatever I was doing in the Shang dynasty; I wanted to know more about those origins. The encyclopedia--this was the third time this had happened in my career--the encyclopedia finally never was produced, but I had this article knocking around. I probably gave a couple of talks on it.

So I was interested in how these cultures diverged, and I was interested in the classics, and comparing the two great classical civilizations. On the twelfth of March in 1984 I had lunch at the University of Chicago with the provost, who was Robert McC. Adams, who eventually became the very distinguished leader of the Smithsonian. He is a Mesopotamian archaeologist and anthropologist. We had a good lunch and I was asking him: how does one go about comparing seminal civilizations in their formative stages, because there's so much evidence: How do you get comparable fields of analysis?

It was very much like that scene in the movie, "The Graduate", where the older neighbor takes Dustin Hoffman aside and says, "I have one word for you: plastics." Bob Adams said to me, he said, "mortuary archaeology." He said, "All cultures bury their dead; all cultures think about death; we have good evidence from most cultures because of the archaeological bones in the ground." He thought that that made a very sensible category for comparative analysis and I believe he was absolutely right. That began to shape my scholarship for the next few years.

Starn: Was that a new formulation, "mortuary archaeology"?

Keightley: It was new to me. I was still very green, yes. Certainly I hadn't been trained in any of this, and as I must keep insisting, I'm an amateur, but at least I could approach the technical archaeological reports with amateur's questions--a liberal arts education, if you like, coming into play.

I then wrote a series of papers bearing on these issues, particularly one called "Dead But Not Gone."

Starn: Could you talk a little about that?

Keightley: Well, yes. "Dead but not gone" is a phrase which comes from the philosopher Laozi, meaning that certain kinds of people, if they live in the right way, will die but not be forgotten. It simply was an analysis of the mortuary evidence and what it meant in the Chinese Neolithic, and noticing significant distinctions in the way people were buried in the

East Coast cultures and all the cultures of the Central Plains, paying particular attention to the practice of secondary burial, which we did speak about last time, and noticing... To give you an example: the Neolithic Chinese practiced something called "urn burial," in which they would take the bones of the deceased and put them into a pot.

Starn: There was no cremation?

Keightley: No, there was no cremation. Cremation probably comes in with Buddhism--well, let's just say no cremation. I can think of one or two exceptions, but not many.

So they would bury the bones of the deceased in a pot and put a lid on top of the pot and seal the whole thing up. Now, what I noticed was that when they did this for infants, you could put an infant skeleton in a quite small pot, put the lid on, and that was the end of it. When you do it with an adult, the adult is too big to get into a pot, so you've got to let him die first, strip the flesh off the bones, and then put the bones in the pot.

The difference between these two kinds of urn burials was that in the case of the children, they put another kind of cereal bowl on top of the pot containing the body of the baby to seal it, but then they knocked a hole, they punched a hole through the center of that cereal bowl. Puzzling. Why did they do this? And then, having done that, they took a small sherd--a broken piece of pottery--and stuck it over that hole and sealed the whole thing tight. Now why did they do this? They did not do this for the adult urn burials. In the adult urn burials they simply put the cover on and then sort of tied it down tight, but there was no hole.

I hypothesized, and I think I'm right on this, that when you put a baby's body into a pot, and put the lid on, that body is going to decompose--there are going to be a lot of gasses produced. If you seal that thing tight, it's going to explode. So when they put the babies in the pot, they would punch a hole in the lid so the gasses could escape. Then, when the whole process was over, they would seal the lid so that the child was now truly dead.

I think it's possible to argue that those escaping gases represented the cloud soul--there are two souls in early Chinese thought--this was the cloud soul escaping. After the cloud soul has escaped, then the infant is truly dead, with the bone soul, or the white soul, in the pot. Then you seal it up, make sure the soul perhaps can't come back and reactivate the dead.

For the adults, on the other hand, you see by the time you've stripped off the flesh they're already dead, there is no cloud soul to escape, and there are no gasses to escape. It was that kind of detail that caught my attention and which I wrote this paper for.

I was a little angry about that. This was part of a conference down in Oracle, Arizona, where I first met Tom Laqueur, as I mentioned. He was the discussant. I revised my paper in accordance with the editor's instructions, and then they cut my paper from the volume, which was certainly their privilege. The reason they did so was because the rest of the volume was all about Imperial China, whereas my piece on the Neolithic was way out in left field, as it were. That's their privilege; I just wish they had told me before I had revised the piece for publication.

Starn: It's not too late to publish it now, is it?

Keightley: Well, yes, it is, in the sense that it's now badly dated. This was 1986.

Starn: You don't believe the same things that you did?

Keightley: Yes, no, no, no, I still do believe the same things, and I certainly use bits and pieces of it, but I haven't published that piece. I did submit it to the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. It got turned down, but I think probably one reason was that K.C. Chang, who was the Chinese archaeologist there, didn't particularly like my attempt to introduce all these cultural explanations for the evidence.

Again, as a minor footnote, the reason it got kicked out of the volume was that when the volume was submitted to U.C. Press, one of the readers was one of my colleagues here at Berkeley and he made the point that, "Yes, Keightley's piece is out in left field. It doesn't belong with the rest, so cut it out." That's a perfectly respectable point.

Starn: Probably not conducive to warm relations with the colleague? [laughter]

Keightley: In fact, no. It's somewhat ironic. He's a good friend of mine.

That certainly heralded my spending several years working on the Chinese Neolithic. I was terribly excited by this. I set up an enormous filing system with multiple xeroxes so that I could go to any site and tell you about the pots, and the burial practices, and so on.

Starn: I still would like to hear you talk about this quote that you began another article in *Representations* in 1987 from Ward Goodenough--I believe he's an anthropologist. "The great problem for a science of man is how to get from the objective world of materiality to the subjective world of form as it exists in what, for lack of a better term, we must call the minds of our fellow man." To what extent does this chewy sentence apply to your research and interpretation of your oracle-bone inscriptions, making them accessible and relevant, excuse the word?

Keightley: It does apply, and I will speak to that. Of course I found that chewy sentence after I had done most of the work, and it just was a nice introduction. I was applying it primarily to the mute Neolithic elements, where we only have artifacts. For the Shang, one concern I've always had is--and this goes back to English 1 at Amherst; I spoke about that on a previous tape--what did the Shang think they were doing? Why were they doing this? What cultural significance did this have?

Chinese scholars in the 1930s had simply dismissed the oracle-bone inscriptions. They said, "These are mere religious superstition. These are the dregs of Shang culture." Whereas my approach was, no, the kings invested an enormous amount of effort in this: preparing the shells, carving the shells, cracking the shells, storing the shells. They divined the most central questions of Shang elite existence. It's a great mistake to dismiss them as unimportant. I think they are of great importance. They do certainly provide us with a marvelous window on Shang life.

I believe, profoundly, that there were other written records. In fact I think the diviners kept notebooks which were used then by the engravers when they carved the inscriptions. So we only have this narrow view of what the Shang were doing, but nevertheless it's a very

deep view, and I think many of the values one can tease out of that evidence provide a legacy for later Chinese culture.

The questions that I addressed the oracle-bone inscriptions with involved an attempt to reconstruct the culture: this whole question of how the inscriptions were used to legitimate the royal rule. Most of the inscriptions show the king was only right in his forecast. As I have said, this was a filtered record; we don't get a thorough record, but clearly there was some propaganda value in these things. I was very interested in what I called the metaphysical assumptions of the inscriptions, because under Wu Ding they would usually balance the charges: "It will rain on Tuesday." "It might not rain on Tuesday." They would make both the positive and negative charge. Presumably, they saw the world as somehow balanced in this way, so that one is able to use that kind of evidence to show how the Shang conceived of their world.

Finally, I've written a book recently, *The Ancestral Landscape*, where you could use these inscriptions to talk about Shang cosmology, Shang conceptions of the weather, Shang conceptions of the spirits and the gods, and so on. I think the inscriptions are, indeed, very important. When I came along there was almost nothing available in western language scholarship on this. That has now changed, somewhat.

Life continued, through all this, and I was bicycling, especially now that I'd met Tom Laqueur, and we formed this group of bikers and would bike through the hills. Then I started, in 1992, getting some chest pains. This is again a footnote, but on a couple of my rides I simply had to turn back. I was going up the hill, going up Grizzly Peak, I was getting chest pains, came on home, called Kaiser and explained, "I got chest pains when I was exercising. Could I see the doctor?" And the nurse said, "No, no, no, the doctor's far too busy. It must be the way you're sitting on your bicycle. You must have changed your position." I did this twice, I called them twice, and both times that was the answer. One reason was the doctor was about to go on vacation. I'm sure the nurse had instructions to try to protect him. But it does seem to me quite extraordinary.

Fortunately, one of the people I was biking with, Harold Varmus, who was a Nobel prizewinner over at U.C.S.F. [University of California at San Francisco], and then became the director of the N.I.H. [National Institutes of Health]--he called me up one night in great embarrassment. He said, "You know, I am an M.D. by training. I shouldn't be doing this. It sounds to me you have angina. You must see a doctor." That got my attention, so the next day I went to the drop-in clinic at Kaiser, and then they started the whole procedure of stress tests and so on, and I flunked the stress test. My heart was showing signs of distress. Then they said, "We'll do an angiogram and perhaps an angioplasty, but don't worry, you won't have a heart attack." And then, of course, I did have the heart attack. But I'm immensely grateful to Harold Varmus for having that instinct, "That can't be right. There's something wrong here." In a sense that may have saved my life.

VIII ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS, INSTITUTIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL

Keightley: What I would like to do, now, is talk about what I think of as my academic contributions, if that would be a sensible way to proceed.

Starn: That would be an excellent way to proceed.

Keightley: One is on the institutional level. While I was still a graduate student I helped found a group known then as the Society for the Study of Pre-Han China. This was a group of graduate students, primarily. We got a few faculty involved, and we began to circulate a little newsletter. So part of my time as a graduate student was spent cranking out these form letters, and trying to collect one check here, another check there. It eventually became the Society for the Study of Early China, which has it's own journal, *Early China*. We now have about twenty-four issues of that journal and it's been a very important force in the field. I was by no means the only person involved in creating this, but I'm very glad that I did that.

Starn: It's not easy to found a new journal.

Keightley: It isn't. Fortunately, when I came to Berkeley I was able, in a sense, to bring the journal here. We produced it here in Berkeley and the Institute of East Asian Studies still publishes it.

Starn: Is it read all over the world?

Keightley: Yes, I would say it is.

Starn: Is it published in both English and Chinese?

Keightley: No, it's not. We do provide now, I believe, Chinese abstracts. Several of the articles have been published in Chinese, translated, and indeed we've now produced a volume of selections from *Early China* which is going to appear in Chinese. So the Chinese are certainly aware. It should be out very shortly, in fact, because I finished the translation a year ago--working on the translation: I revised it.

The other institutional contribution I made was serving on various national committees, the ACLS [American Council of Learned Societies] committee for early China, and then the CSCPRC [Committee for Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China] in which I must have spent, I think, ten years--invested in helping to negotiate exchange

agreements with Chinese colleagues, and hoping, as I've indicated, to further cooperation in the field of archaeology. It's very hard to tell exactly how our endeavors led to results, but certainly we do have the results now. I'm immensely pleased by that.

Also, as a footnote, Mary Brown Bullock, who was very important in the CSCPRC, has now become the president of Agnes Scott College in Atlanta, my wife, Vannie's, alma mater. Mary is very anxious to build up their China program; she's sending students over to study in China, and so on. So I was able to make a gift of about eight hundred of my Western-language Chinese history books to their library, because they're trying to build up that library, and I'm very pleased with that. The books will do a good service.

Starn: Wonderful.

Keightley: Secondly, I think my contribution has been to introduce the study of oracle-bone inscriptions into Western scholarship. My dissertation certainly did that, and then my book, *Sources of Shang History*. More than that, I've tried to put the Shang dynasty and it's legacies on the map of Western Sinology in general. I went to a college where nobody had ever even heard of the Shang dynasty; in fact, they didn't even teach Chinese history when I was in college. All that has changed now. They have a good strong program there. In fact, I'm giving my Chinese-language books to the Amherst library.

Because my field is so specialized--these ancient Chinese inscriptions--I don't get a great many graduate students here who want to work in that field. I've done my best, therefore, to publish the series of what I would call pedagogic--either pedagogic books, like *Sources of Shang History*, to show people how to do this; or a whole series of book reviews: Shima Kunio, Yao Xiaosui, the *Heji* collection, and so on, which tell people what is out there and how these texts may be used, and the cautions that should be used in consulting them. I hope that some of my influence has been that of an instructor reaching out just beyond the confines of Berkeley through these publications.

Thirdly, I have paid great attention to the historiography of the inscriptions--again, my 1978 book. I'm interested in their nature; I'm interested in their motivation, their function, their rationale, and always raising the question, "What did the Shang diviners think they were doing?" Here, this reminds me again of my training in English 1 at Amherst, where we were to ask that question of ourselves: what did we think we were doing? None of this has been particularly conscious, but certainly that seems to be a linkage that can be made.

Fourthly, I did introduce as a hypothesis in 1972 that the charges [of the inscriptions] were declarative, not interrogative. There was a whole symposium on early China several years ago in which people argued this out, and I think most of the Chinese scholars came around to the view that, "Yes, given the uncertainties involved, it's better to translate them as declarative statements rather than questions."

Starn: The habit, in general, the principle, in divination would be to assume that they were questions?

Keightley: I would resist that because you think of petal plucking: she loves me, she loves me not. You don't ask a question, and that's exactly what the Shang are doing: it will rain on Tuesday, it will not rain on Tuesday.

Starn: You certainly put a lot of support for the declarative.

Keightley: I don't know. I think they are still doing this bone-cracking in Mongolia and I have sent a series of friends out there and said, "If you find anyone bone-cracking, find out how they do it. Do they make questions or do they make statements?" But nobody has yet been able to tell me that.

Cracking the Oracle Bones

Starn: Is this a time when you would want to talk about how they do the bone cracking?

Keightley: Yes, I think this would be a good time. One of the questions related to "What did the Shang diviners think they were doing?" was: how were they cracking these bones in the first place? As I indicated earlier, the Shang, or the Chinese Neolithic people, were unusual in that they applied the fire to the bone; they didn't just throw the bone on the fire. This enabled them, by applying the red-hot poker, or whatever they used, to this hollow which they had thinned in the bone, to make sure that it would crack in a particular place.

Starn: The mystery is, what did they use?

Keightley: The mystery is, how did they do it? We have the intense, high-heat burn marks on the bone, which suggests to me that it was indeed probably something red-hot. All the charring is there in one specific local place.

I wanted to see if I could reproduce the cracking of the bones. I went down to a butcher shop and got myself a scapula, cleaned it off, boiled it, and was totally unable to crack the bone. When I was on sabbatical in England in 1978-79, at Cambridge I mentioned this to the master of my college, who was indeed the head of the Department of Materials Science. He said, "That's a simple matter of materials science. Bring the bone around to the laboratory; we'll crack it for you." Again, I went out and got a scapula at the English butcher shop, cleaned it off, and took it in over the Christmas break. We were in this large airplane-hanger-like building with many men rushing around in white coats. At the end of about three hours the whole room stank of burning bone, and it was the Shang, 1--Modern Science, 0: we had not succeeded in cracking the bone.

It's clear to me now that the fault was mine, because I had boiled the bone to clean off the flesh, and I think by boiling the bone I had altered the collagen structure inside the bone, which probably made it much harder to crack. I don't think the Shang boiled the bones.

Starn: Do you think they probably aged the bones?

Keightley: I do indeed, and I now know more than I did then, because since that time Li Xueqin has published a very important little article where we have a scapula which gives you the date on which the animal was killed from which the bone came; it gives you the date when the bone was consecrated for service and divination; and it gives you the date when the bone was actually cracked. The time interval is about a hundred days. I would expect they probably

sun-dried these bones, let them dry naturally, and then cleaned them off. So if and when I do this again, I will buy my scapula and let it age for a hundred days.

I have told this to a series of sixth-grade and eighth-grade teachers as I give extension-style courses in the Social Science Project here that Jon Gjerde's been running, and I'm hoping that maybe they're going to take this on as a research experiment in their schools.

Starn: They looked very interested during your lecture.

Keightley: That's right, you saw that, yes, so maybe--

[One of my colleagues has tried to crack the bones]--and he hasn't had much success. He's found he can only crack a bone by taking a coil of incense and putting it into the hollow, and maybe twenty minutes later he will get the crack. But I don't think that's the way the Shang did it because the burn marks on the Shang bones are not those produced by coils of incense. They indicate a much higher, intense heat.

Starn: Was incense used at that time?

Keightley: No, not that I know of, no. It would be very hard to determine that archaeologically, but no, I don't think so.

Practicing Pot-making

Keightley: One other point, while we're speaking about practical experiments: when I was at Cambridge--and I was working on the Neolithic then--I thought, "I'm spending a lot of time studying Neolithic pots; surely I should learn how to make one." So I joined the local--I think it was the Y.W.C.A. or the Arts and Crafts Society--and became an amateur potter for a number of weeks. That was quite extraordinary, because everybody else in the group was making what I would call Yangshao pots; that is, they were throwing them on a wheel; they were getting these large globular, rotund forms, which was an aesthetic and a pot form very characteristic of the Central Plains and the cultures of the Northwest--the Yangshao Painted Pottery culture. Whereas, I was interested in making the pots of the East Coast--which, as I've argued in that paper, "Archaeology and Mentality"--were put together componentially. They would have three legs; they would have handles; they would have spouts; they would have hollow mammiform legs--you put three of these together and you would get a hollow-leg *ding* tripod.

So everybody else in the room was busy Yangshao potting and here I was, Longshan potting--making my components, sticking them together. They were fascinated by this, but they found it very strange, as I think the Yangshao potters would have found what the Longshan potters were doing very strange, in 3000 B.C.

The pot I produced, and I still I have it, in fact, was an extremely ugly, misshapen pot. One reason it was ugly and misshapen was that I couldn't get the three hollow legs that I was putting together to be the same size. They had tipped a little and it doesn't look aesthetically

pleasing. I figured out, and Chinese archaeologists have also figured out, that the peoples of the East Coast, when they made these three-legged, mammiform tripod forms, used a core--that is they would form the legs around a central core so that you got three legs of identical shape and size. This was part and parcel of what I would call the mentality of the East: that is this planning ahead, this measuring, this use of model forms, so that you were engaging almost in a kind of engineering.

The other point of those Longshan pots was, of course, that they were designed for special functions: you put a handle on it; you put a spout on it. You can only pick it up one way; you can only use it for a limited number of activities. Whereas the Yangshao pots, by comparison--their full-bodied globular forms could have been used for a whole variety of functions. Again, I saw more evidence for a social specialization, economic specialization, and so on, in the cultures of the East. That's practical archaeology, if you like. [laughter]

Shang Dynasty Ancestor Worship: A Lasting Influence

Keightley: Another of the contributions I hope I have made is to argue that early Chinese culture was not primarily secular; it was significantly shaped by religious values. This I eventually published in 1978, and if I may, I'll just read a couple of sentences from the start, because that explains what I thought I was doing. "It is the argument of this exploratory essay that the secular values and institutions representing the great traditions of the Zhou and Han dynasties, were characterized to a significant extent by habits of thinking and acting that had been sanctified at least a millennium earlier by the religious logic of Shang theology and cult." The argument, very simply put, was that if you look at Shang dynasty ancestor worship you will find a whole series of models which you could characterize as proto-bureaucratic: the sense of order, the sense of hierarchy, the sense of jurisdiction. These things were valued because of their religious worth, and that value then proceeded to influence the way the Chinese regarded bureaucracy in later periods.

Interestingly, this article, which appeared in the *History of Religions* in 1978, had started out as a model for a seminar paper, a History 275 seminar paper, because I was always encouraging my students at the end of the graduate seminar on early Chinese history, to write--I suppose you would call it a think piece--but a piece which took pieces of evidence and put them together in some analytical whole, a hypothesis, which could be for used future testing. As an example I had this idea about religion and bureaucracy, and I wrote this two-page paper and said, "Look, this is the sort of thing I have in mind." Gradually over the years I began to develop that more and more. I would like to pay tribute, incidentally, to the seminar system at Berkeley. I think there was a big difference between the way I was trained as a graduate student at Columbia and the way we train students here; that is, there certainly were graduate student seminars at Columbia, but by and large they were almost lecture courses. The instructor would come in and tell you in a small group what he could have told you in a large group. There was really rather little give-and-take.

Starn: Interchange was not--

Keightley: Interchange. Whereas at Berkeley there is this continual conversation with the graduate students, which is good for them and it's good for the faculty. I much welcomed that change. That has been very helpful.

The next point that I would make is that I think that I have helped to introduce anthropological questions into the study of both Neolithic and Shang China. That piece, "Archaeology and Mentality," certainly addressed the question of what did the Neolithic potters think they were doing? How were they doing that? How did that influence the way, or express the way, society was organized?

I have another article called "Craft and Culture," which looks at the metaphors that the Zhou Chinese use to speak about government, trying to relate those metaphors to some of the crafts--jade-working, and pot-making, and so on--that go back 2000 or 3000 years. The paper involves a bit of a leap: you have to leap from about 3000 B.C. down to about 500 B.C., but again, I think my literary interests were coming into play here. But again, also the anthropological one: why do people pick particular metaphors and what does that choice tell us about their values and their culture?

Starn: Could you unpack that a bit in terms of, say--make one comparison using a metaphor that might be used regularly by the Shang?

Keightley: The Zhou--because we don't have any Shang metaphors; we don't have those kinds of texts--but for the Zhou , certainly, there's a famous passage in the *Analects*, and we'll have to check this exactly, where Confucius says, "The gentleman is not a pot, he is not a utensil." In other words, he is not somebody who is to be used, something you just pour into and fill up, but he is presumably an independent, autonomous, moral being.

There was great emphasis in the Zhou philosophers on jade as a very hard, enduring, but again, morally correct stone. And again, we find jade being carved, and cut, and used in mortuary practices way back into the Neolithic.

Starn: Do you have any insight into why jade acquired a morality?

Keightley: I suppose because--

Starn: Because it's hard?

Keightley: Yes, because it's hard. Again, because it's a prestige item--that is, it takes a lot of labor to carve the jade, so only the elites presumably can benefit from this.

Starn: It had qualities that gold did not have?

Keightley: Gold is a curious matter in early China. There isn't much of it. There certainly is a little gold, but no, they did not work gold the way that other cultures have done. Maybe they didn't have the ores for it. I don't know the answer to that. But jade certainly played a much more significant role in early China than it did in some other cultures. Jade also played this mortuary role. They would sometimes put a jade piece in the mouth, or surround the corpse with a perimeter of jades, and presumably it was thought to have some magical function,

even in the Neolithic. But more than that I'm not sure I can tell you. We would have to go back and read that article.

The "Archaeology and Mentality" piece, I was pleased and surprised to find, has been translated into Chinese on three separate occasions. What this says about--

Starn: Three separate translations?

Keightley: Three separate translations. Three separate journals. [laughter] What this says about the way the Chinese pay attention to what's going on in other journals I don't know. But I was pleased because it did suggest that it struck a chord among young Chinese scholars in particular--because I think it was young Chinese scholars who were doing this--and suggested to them ways that what has been called a symbolic-structuralist approach can lead to new insights, particularly as the old Marxist paradigms, I think, were beginning to lose their appeal.

Starn: Have you seen examples of people, or papers, that might have been influenced by this?

Keightley: I haven't seen examples of papers that have gone that particular route, but there is no doubt that modern Chinese archaeology is now filled with young people who are doing the kind of anthropological work that has to be done. Increasingly, therefore--my "Dead but Not Gone," which was a kind of survey of mortuary practices--I mean, they're doing that now, routinely. Whether they're prepared to take the next step and speculate as to what this really meant--no, I haven't seen too much of that, and maybe properly so. I don't know if they've got their hands full with what they're doing, but what they're doing is much more aware of the anthropological dimension.

Again, as a footnote on what I've been doing--in the field before I started to publish, there were at least two notable books: one was *The Birth of China* by H.G. Creel, which I think came out in 1936. He was at the University of Chicago. I believe he was at Anyang looking at the oracle bones when I was born. He played an important role in helping introduce the Shang then to the West, but that was in the 1930s, and then nothing happened for about forty years. Then we have Ho Ping-ti , who wrote a book called *The Cradle of the East*, again on the origins of Chinese civilization.

I resist these metaphors which speak of the growth of Chinese civilization in biological terms, that is "the birth of China," "the cradle of the East," just like this is a baby growing up. What I have been trying to do in my articles, primarily, is to get across the point that Chinese civilization develops as the result of a series of deliberate cultural choices which people are making. So the "Archaeology and Mentality" piece would have been one, but also I did a long article on pot makers, again trying to figure out the culture associated with that, and I'll come back to that in just a minute.

Now, I am publishing my own article called "The Making of the Ancestors," because the idea of an ancestor is incredibly important in early Chinese culture. An ancestor is something you construct; it's a cultural construct. How they did it, and what they did is, I think, extremely important and significant.

History in the Archaeological Records

Keightley: Moving on then, I've also, as a historian, tried to discern historical scenarios in both the archaeological and inscriptional record. In terms of the Neolithic archaeology, I wrote a very long paper, over a hundred pages long, in 1985--this was for an A.H.A. [American Historical Association] meeting--called, "Pot Makers and Pot Users in the Central Plains." There was a village just to the northeast of Zhengzhou called Dahe cun , a Neolithic village, where about 3000 B.C. you can clearly see that pot forms from the East Coast are beginning to move into the Central Plains. You can stratify the chronology and at about stages III and IV you begin to see these East Coast vessels appearing.

Starn: This means some very competent archaeology.

Keightley: Reasonably competent archaeology, but this was generally known, that about 3000 B.C., yes, a great change is taking place in the ceramic customs of the Central Plains. What I did was to look at the archaeological reports with great care, and this enabled me to identify about three or four households about which I could say, "These were East Coast households." You look at the pots found in their kitchens, and there are a lot more East Coast pots here than in any of the other houses.

I then looked at the burials. The only people in the graveyard who were buried with pots at all, with any grave goods at all, were women. The women who were buried with East-Coast-style-pots lay at the eastern end of the cemetery, with their heads pointed towards the East. I therefore developed the hypothesis that this transmission of the East Coast cultural forms into the Central Plains may, at least in this case, have been associated with marriage--from women coming from the East, bringing their pot forms with them, their cooking practices, and then being buried with East-Coast-style mortuary practices, with their pots in their graves, at the eastern end of the cemetery, with their heads pointed back towards their homeland. I found this--I liked this, because it put flesh on the bones of the archaeology.

Starn: Was there a counterpart for the western--for the other end of the cemetery?

Keightley: No. At the other end of the cemetery, a lot of men were buried. My memory was that the orientation of those graves were not to the east, probably to the northwest, because that's what the Yangshao people tended to do. But they didn't have the vessels buried with them, which again suggests these women were given a certain value in the culture and were cooking and eating in the East-Coast style and thus helped bringing in these cultural traits.

Clearly, this would have to be done in a whole series of village sites in the Neolithic, to see whether it's a valid model. I was very excited about this. I would have been prepared to spend a year or two of my life at Dahe cun and the surrounding sites. Then I visited the site, I think in 1987, and had a wonderful time running around the museum--because they have a museum on the site--looking at the pots. Then I realized that not all the pots were there. I said to the curator, I said, "Where are the rest of the pots?" And he said, "Oh, they're in Professor So-and-so's bedroom." I began to realize that, of course, the control of this evidence was going to be difficult; it was going to be a matter of contacts; and that it was not

going to be as easy as I had hoped to do this kind of general survey. And indeed, what modern archaeology is doing now in China is survey work, which has to be done. They have to do Neolithic village after village after village in this area, find all those villages, and then tell us what the repertoire of pots is.

Starn: That's a vast undertaking.

Keightley: It's a vast undertaking, and to me, as a historian, it isn't terribly interesting because it leads to a series of graphs, statistics, this kind of gray-ware, this kind of tempered-ware, this kind of pot design, and so on. It's got to be done.

Starn: But when you see examples such as your "Pot Makers and Pot Users"; that resulted from site visits.

Keightley: It did, but again I don't know how comprehensive the archaeology had been, and we clearly need to know more. That is being done now. There are numerous stories of American archaeologists in China encouraging, urging, their Chinese colleagues to engage in this kind of walking the site, essentially looking. The Chinese have usually resisted, but they said, "All right, we'll do it just to please you." Then, to their astonishment, they found eleven or twelve new Neolithic sites they didn't know about, just by picking up sherds on the ground.

One of the problems the Americans had--again, this is a very small footnote--I think you would walk about ten or twenty feet apart, I don't know, so you can cover the ground as you walk, a long line of people going over the fields. They found out that the women among the walkers had been warned by their parents to stay away from burial areas, so that every time they came to a burial area, they would veer to one side or veer to the other side. [laughter] That required some correction. Culture still plays a role in modern archaeology.

There was my attempt to read the Neolithic evidence in terms of a historical scenario. As I've been telling my students for years, if I were younger, I would go into Chinese archaeology. It seems to me it's a boom field and lots of very exciting material to work with.

I've also attempted to read the oracle-bone inscriptions in context. My latest book, *The Ancestral Landscape*, does that, where it takes you through a series of inscriptions in scenarios, as it were. You could put several together and see what was going on. I also did a piece in the festscrift for K.C. Chang called, "Theology in the Writing of History," which addressed this question, "Did the inscriptions ever show that the Shang king made a mistake in his forecasts?" I had initially assumed they didn't, and most of the time that's true; I mean, this is a validating, legitimating activity. But there are a small number of pieces, and you can tease them out of the evidence by comparing inscriptions on different bones--but clearly about the same episode--which show that the diviners were trying to keep a faithful historical record of what had happened, and they were not prepared to fudge the record all the way. So we do get places where the king made mistakes, or where they changed the terms of the divination halfway through when they knew what the result was going to be. It's rather nice to see that: one gets a sort of tension between the historian and the king already, but a certain loyalty and commitment to the historical enterprise.

Comparison of Early Chinese and Greeks

Keightley: Finally, I've attempted to introduce the comparative dimension into the study of early Chinese culture, publications comparing early Chinese and early Greek ideals. In the paper, "Dead But [Not Gone]" I look briefly at Neolithic burial practices in Greece, and they are trivial by comparison. The amount of ritual activity, and the amount of wealth that was buried with the dead, is small. I once discussed this with--I think it was Jock Anderson, but certainly one of the classics professors here, up on the fifth floor of Dwinelle, or wherever they were then--I said, "What do you think the biggest difference was between the Chinese Neolithic and the Greek Neolithic?" And he said, "Oh, the Chinese Neolithic was incomparably richer." That is true. That is, the Chinese of the Neolithic seemed to have been running a culture that produced a good number of material goods. It suggests a fairly successful agriculture, a fairly benevolent environment. I think that this is probably an immensely important clue to the general optimism of Confucian philosophy: I mean, this was a culture that was working well. You don't get this sense of an angry, vengeful God; you don't get the sense that the gods are trying to wipe you out, and so on, that you get in Mesopotamia and also in Greece. I suspect you can trace this back to the generally benevolent ecology of the Neolithic.

I haven't been doing that so much with the Neolithic, but with the textual material, particularly taking Homer, and the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and the early Chinese texts which we can compare up to a point with these, and trying to demonstrate the quite marked differences in value that the two cultures privileged. The Greeks: heroic, martial, killing people off, never yielding, undying. Eric Havelock, the very distinguished Canadian classicist, gave a talk here at Berkeley many years ago that impressed me greatly. He was speaking about the impact of classics on the Western ruling elites in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and how most of the officer corps in World War I, on both sides of the trenches, had been trained in the classics. This sense of unyielding, martial heroism did not have very attractive consequences.

The Chinese high ideals, by contrast, are much more pacific. They are not interested in warfare in itself, but only as a result towards good government, benevolent government, good administration. At the same time, you don't get that interest in individual specificity. There's much more interest in the general virtues, the general character of a ruler. This runs right through descriptions of clothing, descriptions of battle, and so on, that they simply give you the digest and then get on with the real moral and philosophical point of all this. I'm now trying indeed to relate this to the genesis of ancestor worship because I think the nature of ancestors in early China did involve precisely this sense of abstraction, this sense of getting to the real core of what the person could now do, but stripping away--just as they stripped off the flesh on the bones in the secondary burial--stripping away all the individual characteristics that had made this person particular.

Happy Accidents

Keightley: I think too that some of my projects certainly arose entirely accidentally. I told you about the letter in the wastebasket and the origins of Confucian spirituality, how several years of research derived from that. I did an article quite recently on the status of women in Neolithic and Bronze Age China, and that arose quite accidentally.

Starn: Where is that?

Keightley: It's called, "At the Beginning," and it appears in a journal called *Nan nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China*, the inaugural issue. This all started because on the publication of the twentieth issue of the journal *Early China*, my colleagues in the field decided they wanted to make a festschrift for me. This was to be a secret from me, but there was to be a big reception and celebration at the A.A.S. [Association of Asian Studies] meeting in Hawaii. Friends would write and say, "Are you going to the A.A.S?" And I said, "Not on my life. I don't want to go to Hawaii." [laughter] Eventually, they had to work through Vannie, and Vannie told me--I tell you this in confidence, but it will appear in the oral history--Vannie had to tell me what was going on, so I said, "All right, I will go to the A.A.S meeting."

Then, of course, I had to write a paper. There was a panel on the early condition of women in China so I said, "All right, I'll do this article," and that eventually became, I think, a rather nice article because it deals both with the Neolithic evidence and the early Bronze Age evidence, and again, tries to deal with the historiography of this evidence--noting how biases in the modern scholars can frequently shape conclusions that one reaches on the basis of this sometimes quite questionable evidence.

I also--I think I've said this before--but I want to pay tribute to conferences because they do stimulate you and give you deadlines.

Starn: Some do and some do not, though.

Keightley: I've had good luck with that, yes. Several of my good publications, I think, were stimulated precisely by someone proposing a conference topic to me, which I wouldn't have done otherwise.

I do think of my scholarship as being Anglo-Saxon rather than French, and by that I mean that I'm not interested in "-isms" and high-flown generalizations. I know that may seem a little strange, because I do try to draw rather big conclusions out of the evidence, but I try to root those conclusions in a very close analysis, with this mantra of "God is in details."

I just published, in that connection, another article on shamanism in early China. There's been a lot of talk about shamanism in the Shang dynasty and how the Shang kings were shamans. I resist that very intensely because I think when you look at the oracle-bone inscriptions and what's going on, this is not a shamanic kind of religious activity.

Starn: How are you defining "shaman"?

Keightley: That is the absolutely crucial question. Most of the people who write about it don't even bother to define it. I define it in terms of two major shamanistic traditions, one northern and one southern. In the northern one, the shaman goes into a trance and visits some other world, and then returns with information about what's going to happen in this world. The southern version of shamanism involves spirit possession, in which the spirit seizes the shaman and then speaks through the shaman. I considered the possibility of applying both of these to the Shang evidence, but I do not see the Shang kings as shamans. There may have been some shamanistic residue from the Neolithic, but I am extremely reluctant to use the term at all, because my understanding is that shamanism may not have been a human activity at all until the eighteenth or nineteenth century. But once again, it was that attention to detail that enabled me to make this argument. The inscriptional evidence will not support that view of the Shang. Once again, "That can't be right--"

Forthcoming Works

Starn: Do we get to hear more about the big book that's on the way?

Keightley: Yes, that's just what I was going to end up with. I retired three years ago, and I retired deliberately because I still wanted to have the energy to get on with scholarship. I hope to finish what I now call the big, fat book--though it may, in fact, turn out to be three thinner volumes--*Divining the Shang: Kinship and Religion in Late Shang China*. I had finished a big manuscript in 1991, just before I became chair. But the moment I became chair, it just became impossible to get enough time to finish that. That was almost ready to go. It's now, of course, ten years out of date--which is fine: I can bring it up to date. I'm going to shorten it and I'm going to put in a whole series of extra chapters on Shang religion and thus expand it.

Starn: Are you planning to include all the inscriptions to which you are referring in the same volume, or will you have a separate volume?

Keightley: All the inscriptions will be there. It will be like *The Ancestral Landscape*: that is, inscriptions presented in context. I would expect there will be about a thousand inscriptions translated in there.

I am also tempted by the idea of publishing a collection of my articles. I think it would be worthwhile doing. I published in *Representations* because Randy Starn, an editor, asked me to, because they were open to the kind of thing I was doing--but the number of people in Sinology who [don't] know that it's there--I would like to reach them.

Starn: That would be very valuable, surely.

Keightley: It's kind of you to say so.

Then, eventually, I would like to produce a thin volume comparing ancient Greece and ancient China, but I'm diffident about that because I don't read Greek myself.

Starn: Whom would you trust in terms of--

Keightley: I trust Bob Fagles as a translator. He was a college friend of mine. But there is that disparity between my ability to engage firsthand with the Chinese text, so I'm putting that [book] last, but it might be a swan song if ever I get around to it.

Starn: It sounds as if that it would be an extremely enjoyable thing to do. But you're not going to allow yourself to do it until you finish the big, fat book.

Keightley: No, because my training and my major contribution, I think, is in what I'm technically competent at. But there are books coming out, doing these comparisons between the fields of science. I've just been reading a manuscript for Stanford University Press. What concerns me is that they are too narrowly focused on science. I don't think you can make these comparisons unless you also consider religion. I think religion is fundamental, because your religious view of the world is going to shape whatever scientific attempts you make to understand it, so I would hope to pursue that if I ever get around to it. That, I think, brings me up to date.

Starn: I want to know how you find time to work on big books since you're constantly working on papers for deadlines and teaching.

Keightley: Yes, I spent four hours yesterday working on a Ph.D. dissertation for somebody.

Starn: That is true service.

Keightley: That's what we were trained to do. That's fine. I also spent the last few months getting rid of my books and shifting them out of my office. I could have written a thin book with the time that took.

Starn: Your office in Dwinelle Hall.

Keightley: In Dwinelle, that's right. In fact, this morning was the final day. I just got the stuff out of there.

But no, I will make time, but I've got to pace myself. I've set myself the deadline of my seventieth birthday, which gives me about fourteen months from now to try to finish the book. I think with the deadline, I will get on with this. So that's the next thing. I'm a very happy man in retirement, and looking forward to the rest of it.

Starn: This is good. I still have two or three questions left over which you promised you would answer. This is regarding your important book, *Sources of Shang History*. It went through two editions and you said that there were changes in the second edition, in the paperback--

Keightley: Yes, I think the changes only involved rewriting part of the preface. In the rewriting, I was able to alert the readers to a couple of new scholarly developments which made me change my interpretation of particular inscriptions. One is rather technical and philological, and I needn't go into it here.

The other involved the "Bird Star". The word, the name, "Bird Star," *niao xing*, does appear in Zhou dynasty texts, and you find on the oracle-bone inscriptions two characters which you could certainly read as *niao xing*, "Bird Star". I had read it that way; Joseph Needham read it that way; Chinese scholars had read it that way for a long time. The inscription seemed to involve the offering of sacrifices to the Bird Star.

I had been increasingly unhappy with this because of what I call the "rule of coherence"--which is, essentially, that if the Shang start divining about one topic, they don't give you a result which bears on another topic. If you read this as the Bird Star, you then have a divination charge about offering sacrifices to Ancestor Yi, on a particular day. In the results they tell you they offered sacrifices to the Bird Star, and that doesn't make any sense.

While I was brooding about this, Li Xueqin published an article in a provincial journal and he, too, had similar doubts. It's possible to read those two characters to mean something like, "Suddenly the weather cleared." That makes perfectly good sense because the Shang frequently divined about offering sacrifices, were worried about the weather when it would take place, and then gave you a weather report as to what happened on that day. This was it: it rained at this point, it rained at that point, and then suddenly the weather cleared. It was important for the Shang to have the weather clear because they associated their ancestors with the sun, and I think to be able to see the sun meant a lot to them.

But that was the major change. Now my copy of *Sources* is thoroughly marked up so if ever I were to do a third edition--I don't think I will--there would be lots of changes.

Starn: I would imagine so. You have written on "Archaeology and Mentality" in a very effective way about early Chinese civilization. Could you imagine using the same process with characteristic artifacts or items of today's China?

Keightley: Yes, I'm sure one could. I would not be the person to do it, but I take it that this is what anthropologists do. In the psychology department, Peng Kaiping is very much interested in comparing things like proverbs in modern China and proverbs in modern America, and using that to draw significant cultural conclusions. I think cultural anthropology can be an extremely promising tool for historians.

Ancient China and Modern China

Starn: Can you see any threads actually connecting early Chinese culture and China under Communism three thousand years later? I realize that's a very wild question--

Keightley: It is a wild question, and I would resist the terms of the question. I wouldn't want to put it under Communism, I would just say China, modern China. Certainly, Communism shares some of these impulses; that is the interest in a science, and almost a theology, that enables you to forecast the future just as you interpret the past in particular ways. The emphasis on classics--but now they were the works of Chairman Mao rather than the five classics--the rote memorization of the Little Red Book, all of this certainly resonated with elements which were present. I think also there were all sorts of tiny clues. For example, you may remember

that first page of Shima Kunio I showed you where they are talking about raising men, and the graph used to write the word "raise" was two hands raised up, like that [makes the gesture].

Starn: That was raising men to work?

Keightley: That was raising men to work, but possibly also consecrating them; they're raising them up in a sense to get the blessing of the gods.

Starn: I see, it could be either way.

Keightley: It could be both, probably. But I've been told that in modern China, if you give a present to a person, the polite thing is to present it with both hands. You don't just give it with one hand. I would like to see some kind of cultural resonance, even in a small little detail like that.

The Cultural Revolution, of course, upset many of the continuities, particularly in terms of deference for the older, deference for the aged, politeness. Chairman Mao said, "To be impolite is to rebel," and therefore you had a whole generation which was not trained in even just the mere social conventions and courtesy. That finally led to campaigns to try to reintroduce some of this social lubricant. The Chinese have always been extremely interested in family, kinship connections. Bureaucratism has also played an enormous role in the Chinese Communist revolution; and indeed much of the resistance to the Party now, I think, is based upon the kind of corrupt linkages that have existed among bureaucrats and among their relatives.

I feel that China, as it modernizes, is going to begin to cut itself off from many of these traditional values. Ancestor worship, as I think I've indicated before, is not likely to play the role that it did. Other religions may well step in, and there certainly are other religious alternatives available: Taoism, Buddhism, local cults, and so on. But I think the relevance of early China is changing precisely as China becomes more Western, if that's the word you use.

The Significance of China

Starn: It's not difficult to argue the importance of China in any context today, because of its size and importance. You must have some random thoughts here about China that you would share.

Keightley: Well, yes, and before I answer that, let me just add on to what I was saying before, that I think--when I went to Taiwan in the Sixties, one could certainly see more of traditional Chinese culture in operation there. I think particularly about fortunetellers; there were many fortunetellers on the streets. They could tell you your fortune if you told them the date you were born, and so on. When I got to Anyang a second time in 1981, I was very keen to have my fortune told by a fortuneteller on the streets of Anyang. It was explained to me by my host that that was impossible--that the police would arrest any fortuneteller that they found on the streets--that this was a mere superstition and it wasn't possible. I imagine it is

possible again now, because I think the Chinese still share this interest in foretelling the future, and lucky days, unlucky days, and so on.

The significance of China--here I would go back probably to the summation with which I end my lecture courses--that Chinese civilization has fed more people more successfully than any other civilization in world history, and therefore this is a model which we owe respect, with which probably we can learn things from. Because Chinese civilization has been so successful it has been facing the problem of pressing up against its ecological resources far longer, I think, than we have in the West. The United States was virgin territory when we got here. Only now are we beginning to see that some kind of social constraints may be needed--the Chinese have been facing that, in my view, for some two thousand years. It's important, I think, to study the Chinese solutions and see whether we like them, see what we can learn from them. For all these reasons, yes, China's important.

Also, of course, it's grown to be a world power. We have fought Chinese troops in Korea. The Chinese have fought the Vietnamese army. There is constant saber-rattling over Taiwan, which I hope, in fact I think, will not lead to war. But yes, it's important to understand China.

Taiwan and the People's Republic of China

Starn: What do you imagine happening with Taiwan, short of war?

Keightley: What I imagine happening will be some kind of solution analogous to the Hong Kong solution: one government, two systems, in which there will be some kind of nominal acceptance of Beijing's sovereignty, but that Chinese culture on Taiwan will be allowed to pursue its own economic, legal, social models. Above all, what I hope is that they keep talking. As long as they keep talking, they won't be fighting. My sense of the matter is that they're doing that. Of course Taiwan has an enormous economic investment in the Mainland now. They could lose it, but for the Chinese, it would be killing the goose that laid the golden egg. I think that would hurt the Chinese too.

When I was last in China, in '91, we were down around the Shanghai area, in Hangzhou, the feast of Qingming, where Chinese must come and pay homage at the graves of their ancestors. Every train was just jammed with tourists from Taiwan; they were coming back to this area to worship at the graves of their ancestors. The cultural connections, at least with that level of Taiwanese society, are very strong. Of course, increasingly everyone in Taiwan is Taiwanese; they're no longer Mainlanders. Time, in a sense, is against the Mainlanders. If this keeps up for another two or three generations, Taiwan may indeed resist any idea of coming under Chinese suzerainty, because after all, China didn't pay any attention to Taiwan until the 1880s--it had been largely aboriginal territory until that point. They suddenly realized Japan was interested and then they became interested. The traditions of Chinese control are not particularly long.

Starn: So it may work itself out without bloodshed.

Keightley: Well, I devoutly hope so. Clearly, the idea of what we think of as a flourishing democracy suddenly being overrun by what we think of as an autocratic despotic regime would not sit well in the West, and I suppose we probably might get involved, yes.

The Asian Art Museum's Brundage Collection

Starn: One local question which kept sifting through the cracks--I wanted to ask you about your involvement with the Asian Art Museum, and comment a little bit about what kind of resource that's going to be when it's moved into the new building.

Keightley: I have been involved over the years with the Asian Art Museum, with the Brundage Collection, which is a superb collection of ancient Chinese bronzes in particular, which is what interests me. They have a few oracle bones--two or three, I think, which I've translated for them, and so on, and they're on display, I think. In the heady days, the glory days, when there were a lot of academic delegations going back and forth, we would always take the Chinese scholars over to the Brundage Museum so they could look at the bronzes; that was very instructive--get their comments, listen to them.

I've helped by talking to docents over there about particular exhibitions when they come through. All this started, I think, about the summer of 1975 when "The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China" came to San Francisco--enormous excitement at that point, enormous crowds flooding through. It made it very difficult, in fact, to see the objects.

But no, I have found that a great resource. I love talking to the docents because they are a very intelligent, committed group of people.

Starn: Is it true that it's an outstanding collection?

Keightley: I think the Brundage Collection is, certainly in the bronzes, and I'm not qualified to speak about the other parts of it, but yes, I think it's probably first-rate.

The new site, in my view, is much to be wished for because it's very hard for me to get to the Asian Art Museum on a bicycle. [laughter] At the new site, in the library, you could get there just on BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit]. That, I think, will probably increase viewership--I would hope so--and make it far easier to send students over there. Certainly we have taken groups of students over there, and that's, again, very instructive, to show them the exhibits. It's a wonderful resource.

Starn: Anything else occurs to you?

Keightley: Let me just have a look. [ruffling of papers] You've been a wonderful interlocutor, and I'm very grateful to you.

Starn: Well, I've learned a lot and enjoyed myself, I think more than perhaps I could even have imagined. Thank you, David.

Keightley: You're very kind.

IX AFTERTHOUGHTS ABOUT TAIWAN, BERKELEY, WAR, AND LIFE

Life in Taibei in the Sixties

[Interview 5: August 29, 2001]##

Starn: Since our last interview a month ago both of us have, of course, thought of some important material that we hardly touched on in our previous interviews, and so we have a postscript. For example, David, you talked very little about the hard work of learning Chinese and Japanese at Columbia and in Taibei. What was the regimen really like, and what was it like to be a foreign student in Taiwan in the mid-sixties?

Keightley: Well, there are many aspects to that. I did keep a diary in those years, and looking back at the diary, prompted by these interviews, I was quite astonished by the amount of hard and lengthy work that went into the language training. I would just spend hours and hours on end in my apartment in New York City, whole weekends, working on Chinese, working on Japanese. It was quite a hurdle to surmount.

Life in Taiwan in the mid-sixties was extremely interesting. Clearly, we were there between '65 and '67, at a very historic moment, as Taiwan was gradually beginning its rather rapid change, in fact, from an underdeveloped country to a rapidly developing and emerging capitalist and very successful commercial society. When we first arrived, we were quite shaken by the rather low standard of living we saw all around us, the poor housing, poor sanitation. We were told that the rest of Asia wanted to be like Taiwan; this, in fact, was the model to which most of the developing countries were aspiring.

What this meant, when we were there, was that there was what you might almost call an *amah* [household servant] economy, because all of us American graduate students, with our fairly generous American stipends--at least by comparison to Taiwanese standards--were able to employ a servant who lived with us, who did the cooking, and the shopping, did the housecleaning. Many of these women, who were in their thirties and forties, for the most part, were the wives of Chinese servicemen from the Mainland, particularly from the airbase at Jiayi, down in the south of the island, because they needed jobs, too. Their husbands were not well-paid. Many of them came up to Taibei looking for employment of this sort. My sense of the matter now is that when you go back to Taiwan there is nobody who would serve as an *amah*-- that is, the economy has flourished so remarkably that there are now jobs for all of these people in industry, electronics, and so on. So we, in that sense, led a very privileged life. On the other hand, it would have been particularly hard, I think, to become familiar with

all the various customs of Taibei life without that kind of guidance to help us in the shopping, and the laundering, and everything else.

Starn: Were you really a community of foreign scholars, or were you more isolated than that?

Keightley: We were a community of foreign scholars because most of us who were there were attending the Stanford Center, which was this Inter-University Program set up by a number of American universities to send graduate students over to learn Chinese. Of course, we all went to Taibei because the Mainland was closed at that point. We met there every day. Particularly in the first year, we were a kind of first-year cohort, and we established good friendships then. We would frequently go out to dinner together; we would play poker on weekends. It's the only time in my life I've ever played poker, but it was particularly amusing because we were playing with *taibi*, that is Taiwanese money, and that didn't seem like real money anyway, though of course it was.

We also did a lot of traveling together. We traveled over many parts of Taiwan, which was a very scenic landscape. Indeed, when friends would come to visit us from Hong Kong, because that's where all the China-watchers were---they were just across the border from Red China--but when they came to Taiwan, they were just astonished at how rural, how traditional: all the water buffalos, all the rice paddies; these were things they didn't get to see much of in Hong Kong.

Starn: The China-watchers being the State Department?

Keightley: The political-science types, that's right, who were certainly doing very important and exciting work--but it wasn't Taiwan.

Now I would also point out that Taiwan in the mid-sixties was still a military dictatorship. I think martial law was in operation because of the potential conflict with the People's Republic of China, just across the Taiwan Straits. I remember there was this slogan plastered all over Taibei, all over Taiwan, "*Wu wang zai Ju*," which means, "Don't forget being in the city of *Ju*." It goes back to a story that dates to about 300, 250 B.C, in the period of the Warring States. One of the states had lost all but two of its seventy cities to an enemy state. One of those remaining cities was *Ju*, and by golly if they didn't win back all seventy cities. This was the slogan to remember: "We, too, can get back to the Mainland."

Starn: That was really the sense of things?

Keightley: That was the sense of things. The whole propaganda was directed towards that, and of course Taibei prided itself on being the conservator of traditional Confucian and Chinese values. The Cultural Revolution was going on over on the Mainland, and so on; Confucian values were being destroyed, but not in Taiwan. I was so taken with this "*Wu wang zai Ju*" slogan that I had a paperweight carved for me. I went into the paperweight part of the marble carving shop and said, "Will you please carve this for me?" As I got on my bicycle to ride away the man came dashing out of the shop. He said, "Do you want that in Chinese, or do you want it in English?" [laughter] I explained, "I need it written in Chinese."

Starn: You still have it, presumably.

Keightley: I have. Unfortunately, it fell on the floor and broke, but yes, I still do have it, which may be symbolic in itself. I don't know.

Taiwan was more a matter of total immersion. We certainly worked hard, but there was a mixture of things to do: the bookstores, the libraries, the classroom, and then private tutoring with a whole series of teachers, both in Chinese and in Japanese. The Japanese is interesting because Taiwan had been occupied by Japan for some forty or fifty years, so many of the college-educated Taiwanese spoke excellent Japanese. I went to one or two parties with Taiwanese businessmen, and as the evening wore on, and they drank more and more, they all lapsed into Japanese; that was the language of their youth. Of course Japan did a great deal to provide the infrastructure for the modernization of Taiwan: they had a decent police system, decent railroads, decent roads, and so on.

Teachers: the Gifted and the Eccentric

Keightley: One of my teachers was a Mr. Zhuang Qichang, who was Chinese but had perfect Japanese, and he taught me Japanese, and I was immensely grateful to him; he was a very good teacher. It was very nice because he was teaching me Japanese in Chinese so that I got practice in both languages.

Starn: He was your particular teacher?

Keightley: No, he taught at the Center, but then--I don't remember how this worked, but at least I arranged for him to come to my house, so he would come several hours a week, and it was just one-on-one. Then I had at least three other Chinese teachers: Yu Dacheng, Chen Xiuwu, and Yu Hou, who again would come to my house to tutor me, some in the reading of the ancient classical texts, and then some in more modern, speaking Chinese, which I never became particularly good at. I think I started this too late, so my spoken Chinese has always been rather stiff.

Starn: Not as good as your reading?

Keightley: I don't know. Anyway, I do regret that, but as I may have said earlier, I didn't start this until I was quite old, and probably that made me a better historian, but it also--

Starn: It certainly hasn't hurt the work that you've done.

Keightley: You're kind to say so. Then one of my teachers was the so-called Manchu prince. His name was Liu Yuyun, and he was quite a character. He was the brother of the last Manchu emperor, Puyi. He would come to my house and smoke very elegantly, with long fingernails, this little pipe he had, and take me through the classics. A lot of my fellow students had studied and were studying with him because they were doing Qing history. Of course, understanding Manchu and understanding Manchu politics, the Manchu language, and the Manchu view of China was extremely important to them, so he was an invaluable resource for them. Unfortunately, I was studying the Chinese classics with him, and it fairly quickly became clear to me that he didn't understand these classics much better than I did. We had a

series of rather embarrassing lessons in which he would simply misread a text, and insist on it, and then we would go another page and then it became very clear he had misread the text. Even my *amah,* who could hear all this in the kitchen, was just appalled at what she heard was going on. I didn't quite know what to do because you can't sack a Manchu prince. [laughter]

Then I had a stroke of good luck. For our medical purposes, we went to the so-called Christian Clinic, which was run by a Dr. Dale. I had some inflammation of the eyes; I suppose it was conjunctivitis, and I went to see Dr. Dale. The Manchu prince, I think, was in the house at the time. Dr. Dale said, "Your career in Taiwan is finished. You can't read anymore. Your eyes are ruined. You have to go back to the States. Forget studying." So I rushed back home, just delighted, and told the Manchu prince, [laughter] "I can't study anymore, doctor's orders. I've got to leave," and so on. So that was the end of the Manchu prince. My eyes cleared up almost immediately.

Starn: [laughter] This was a happy conjunction.

Keightley: I was very grateful to Dr. Dale. I think, let me see--I was looking at my diary this morning, just before you came. Extraordinary links with the past. We stopped in Japan--we stopped in Tokyo, on the way to Taiwan in September of 1965. I see in my diary I had lunch at the Palace--or we had lunch at the Palace Hotel with Saneyoshi and Watanabe. Those are names I haven't thought about in forty years. They were business associates of my father in the petroleum refining industry, who had come to the States, I suppose, probably in the early sixties, and had visited my parents, had dinner with my parents, and so on. My father had done business with them. Japan was rebuilding its oil industry, I suppose. It was rather nice to have that kind of contact in Japan. I spent a few days in Tokyo. I spent much of the time going to bookstores there.

Then, to my astonishment, I see that in 1966, Ben Zevin, my old boss from the World Publishing Company, came through, and so I was able to take him around and show him the museums, and so on. That was very pleasant.

Much of my time in Taiwan was spent with translating texts, the Confucian texts. I translated a portion of the *Zhouli*, the *Rites of Zhou*, a very important administrative text. I had all of my translation in a little airline bag by the side of my desk. Then one night our house was burgled. It was just a very flimsy Japanese-style house, no doubt quite easy to break into. They stole all of Vannie's dresses; they stole my camera. Then they dumped the loot in the bag in which I had my translation, and they made off with the bag, so I lost that *Zhouli* translation.

Starn: Which had taken you--?

Keightley: It had taken me, I suppose, a couple of months at the most. One can read it again, but that was a little sobering.

Another note I saw in the diary was that in one of my Chinese lessons my teacher and I were interrupted by Furong, who was the *amah*, telling us how her son had been stabbed. I don't remember the details, but I'm assuming that there was considerable ethnic tension down at the airbase in Chia-yi between the native Taiwanese and the interlopers from the

Mainland, as it were--a tension, I think, which pretty much has vanished now as virtually everybody on the island is Taiwanese.

One of the peculiarities of being in Taiwan was that all the books of Mainland scholarship that I wanted to study-- books that had been published in the People's Republic of China--were locked up in a special room down at the Stanford Center. I experienced this one day when I went down to do my studying, and I had forgotten the key to the room, so I couldn't get in, and I couldn't study these books. They had to be specially stamped, to show that the Chinese garrison command had approved my reading this. They were thoroughly innocuous in terms of any political value.

Starn: But you did work with them other times--many times?

Keightley: I was able to work with them, yes. And of course there was good scholarship being done, more traditional scholarship being done, in Taiwan.

The Academia Sinica

Keightley: The first year I spent largely at the language center, at the Inter-University Program. The second year I spent much of the time out at the Academia Sinica.

Starn: What's the structure of that?

Keightley: Well, it's a research institution and there is an Institute of Anthropology; there's an Institute of History--Institute of History and Philology, I think it was called--and then there was a research library, the Fu Sinian Library.

Starn: What's the administration? It still exists?

Keightley: I couldn't tell you. I don't know what question you're asking. It's set up as a research center--like the Princeton Center one.

Starn: Set up by the Taiwanese government?

Keightley: Yes. Presumably--I haven't gone into the history of this--it is the inheritor, or the replica, of institutes that existed on the Mainland before the government came over in the late forties. Of course similar institutes exist now in Beijing. In the sixties the Academia Sinica was pretty much of a backwater: it was out in the countryside; there weren't many scholars there; getting a book out of the library was always a little tricky because if the book was out to another scholar, the first question they would ask was, "Who recommended you to this library?" That is, my clout depended on my *guanxi*, my connections. It has now become, I think, just a first-rate primary research institution: wonderful libraries, wonderful buildings, very active, a great place to do research, which, again, demonstrates the general modernization of Taiwan that has taken place.

Starn: You were last back when?

Keightley: I was last back--I don't actually remember the years, but I think it was the late eighties. I went back for a conference and was quite astonished at what had happened. David Johnson mentions this--that our old Japanese house had been brutally slashed in two as a modern apartment house had gone up. I guess somebody had sold off half of the structure but the other person wasn't willing to sell. There are now rather rickety skyscrapers all over the place. Taiwan has changed remarkably.

Also, one has to remember the climate. You see all these wonderful glowing pictures of the Taiwanese countryside, but they don't tell you what the temperature is. Usually it's very hot and humid. That was draining, certainly .

Acupuncture

Keightley: I did, at one point, try Chinese acupuncture there--you may remember I had broken my thighbone in this car smash and there had been some nerve damage. I was simply doing this for an experiment, and it was extremely interesting because they put the pins in precisely at the points where the American doctors had applied the electrodes as they were trying to stimulate the nerve with an electric current. Here they put the pins in at both places and twirled the pins. I'm not at all sure it wouldn't have done some good if I had persisted with it. I didn't feel the need.

Starn: At the time you didn't?

Keightley: I didn't need it. I was just experimenting. Taiwan was certainly full of traditional--

Starn: You haven't used acupuncture since?

Keightley: Actually, I have. When I had back trouble I used acupuncture for a while at Kaiser.

Starn: Successfully?

Keightley: Umm, I think successfully. What you were asked to do was to go through the session and then lie down and sleep for thirty minutes. In those days we had a station wagon, and I could open up the back. I slept for thirty minutes in the Kaiser parking lot. It gives such a jolt to the system that I think it probably does do something. It sort of relaxes you, and gets your attention, and takes your--everything changes. But I simply didn't have the time to get in the car, and drive on the freeway, and go to have someone stick pins and needles into me, so I didn't persist in this. I'm not a skeptic in that regard. And, you know, you could get your fortune told on the streets in Taiwan.

Starn: You mentioned that, as a tradition that was lost and since regained.

Keightley: That's right.

More About Life in Berkeley, After Barnarditis

Starn: You're coming to Berkeley as a completely prepared professor of early Chinese history in 1969.

Keightley: [laughter] Hardly that.

Starn: It sounds as if you were very prepared. Also, you were a husband, and father, and member of a very spacious, and, let's say quirky, community of Berkeley. How did you develop your earlier interests--such as singing, and soccer, and bicycling, around here?

Keightley: Let me get to that in just a second. There's one final note that I wanted to add. When I went back to Columbia and was working on my dissertation, which increasingly required me to use bronze inscriptions, I became inflicted with what I call Barnarditis; this was having fundamental doubts about the authenticity of the inscriptions that I was using. I take the name from Doctor Noel Barnard, who was teaching at Canberra--he's retired now. He was extremely skeptical of many of the Chinese claims as to the authenticity of these ancient bronze vessels. He has a point--that is, he says that the Palace Museum in Taiwan, because they shipped many of the holdings over when they came, has the world's largest collection of fakes. In the nineteenth century the viceroys in South China knew that nothing pleased the emperor like an ancient Chinese bronze, and so they would simply have one run up in the local factory and then ship it off to Beijing.

This really troubled me. This is, I think, possibly one reason I also moved back into the oracle-bone inscriptions, because though there are problems with fakes there, they're not anything as serious. Since Barnard wrote in the 1960s, he and I exchanged a lot of letters about this, and he said, "I have Barnarditis, too." He shared that same point. Since that time, so many more bronze inscriptions have been discovered. We now have so much better control over what is likely to be fake, and what authentic, and what couldn't be fake, and so on--that I think some of Barnard's fears have now been allayed. But it certainly played a real role in my young life there as a scholar as I was finishing my Ph.D.

Starn: One has enough doubts as a Ph.D. as it is, without this. But it didn't keep you from finishing up and moving on.

Keightley: No, it didn't, and I don't think any of the inscriptions that I used were fake--but that I probably excluded some because I was uncertain about them.

I came to Berkeley in '69, not particularly well prepared, I think, to teach, because I had been a graduate student in the glory days when the government was funding the study of China, so I had never had to be a T.A. or a teacher at Columbia. I had to work at NYU briefly, that's true. That took some getting used to, and particularly, I think, getting used to the student body at Berkeley, which was very different than the student bodies I had known on the East Coast, and I think, in a very healthy way. As I think I've already remarked, the seminar life here was more lively and stimulating than it had been at Columbia.

Parenting in California

Starn: What about the off-campus life?

Keightley: My children were young, of course. Steven was born in '67, just a few days after we got back from Taiwan. Richard was born a couple of years after that, so our children were zero and two. Thinking about it, I think this was part of my becoming an American. I had never grown up in this country, so I didn't know very much about American child-rearing practices and patterns. Still less did I know about what it involved in California. Also, when I started at Berkeley I was thirty-seven years old, which was a little late for starting as an assistant professor, so I was very much concerned about tenure. I really had to get on with things. There were a lot of pressures there. I'm sure that I wasn't quite as good a parent as I should have been, but I certainly did my best. I remember, for example, being a parent in Y-Indian Guides. I don't even know if that still exists. This, of course, reminded me of the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts in England which I hadn't particularly liked, and I think I didn't particularly like Y-Indian Guides either. I don't think my children did either.

Starn: [laughter] It didn't go on for too long, I hope.

Keightley: It wasn't a terribly great success, I think. I remember one night in--Camp Kitov, I think, was another thing of summer camps, and so on; we would go there. I remember one summer camp up in Tilden where we were all under canvas, and it was ten, eleven o'clock at night, all quite tired, and there were just a bunch of parents who were drunk as the dickens, and singing and singing. Oh boy, did that irritate the hell out of me. It wasn't a good model for the children either.

Starn: You did enjoy the soccer coaching?

Keightley: As the children got older I then became a soccer coach. This, of course, was closer to what I knew as a boy. I had played a lot of soccer in England and that was of some help. I enjoyed that. I used to attend Steven's games, but I didn't become a soccer coach, I think, until Richard was coming up through the ranks. I coached his team, the Lightnings. Again, that was quite demanding. Every weekend, and the soccer practices in mid-week, and so on.

Starn: Taken very seriously.

Keightley: And then traveling all over the East Bay for the various games. But I enjoyed that, and I think it was a good experience for everybody.

Singing, Poetry, and Teaching

Starn: What about your singing, David, with--I mean, Gilbert and Sullivan began in Evanston.

Keightley: Yes, Gilbert and Sullivan began in Evanston. It's curious that I don't remember much exposure to this in England, but that's the way the world was. I take it that Gilbert and

Sullivan and the D'Oyly Carte weren't operating during the war. Probably there was very little going on.

I have a whole file here, which I call "Departmental Ditties," of songs I have written over the years for various retiring chairmen, and so on. Many of them are indeed modeled on Gilbert and Sullivan songs. I've always liked, I think--I like to sing. I'm sorry we don't sing more than we do. I think it's a good thing to do. I also like the structure that poetry gives to thinking, to sharpening insights, and also to giving them a certain wit or a certain impact. I've also encouraged my students to write limericks about Chinese history, not for grades; in fact, they can turn them in anonymously. Many of them say, "If you read this out loud, don't use my name." [laughter] I've got a lot of good limericks out of students in the past, some quite memorable. I even published an article about this at one point, as a recommendation--

Starn: Where was it published?

Keightley: *The History Teacher*. I have it here, somewhere.

Starn: You wouldn't have one or two choice limericks here, would you?

Keightley: Let me see if I can find it. Yes. I can read you a couple. "Young Mencius due back home at seven/Got through the front door at eleven/He explained to his mother/While running for cover/'But Ma, it's the Mandate of Heaven.'" That was from a nice student--that was very nice, yes. This one is pretty horrible. "Woman Wang met her maker one night/As any adulteress might/Her spouse his fuse blew/Nearly broke her in two/But two Wangs just don't make a right." I think that's an older joke. I didn't know at the time. But, you know, the students enjoy this.

Starn: [laughing] This was a good teaching tool.

Keightley: It makes them think about the material and how to use it. I like that.

I also would require all my graduate students to write a weekly two-page paper. There would be much groaning about this, that it was only two pages, because it's easier to write a five-page paper than a two-page paper. I wasn't able to keep that up. Finally, there was so much protest that I cut it back to every other week. I think this probably goes back to my teaching in England and the essays I had to write at Aldenham. I did want my students to be able to focus, to analyze with some precision, and get some point out of their readings. Then we would distribute these two-page papers and discuss them in the course of the seminar.

I've also laid great stress on opening sentences. I want a good, strong opening sentence. It's got to the point in our family that when we give books for Christmas or something, and the book is opened, the first question that goes around is, "What is the opening sentence?" It's not a bad test.

Starn: It saves you a lot of boring reading, I'm sure.

Keightley: At least it makes them focus on what they're doing. Again, I want a good title. So many student papers come in without titles, or even dissertations which don't seem to have a title

on them, so I wanted my students to package their thoughts effectively. This may have been a holdover from my days as an editor.

Training Graduate Students

Keightley: One of things that I'm most grateful for at Berkeley is that the China history program provided a comprehensive training to the graduate students. We divided Chinese history into three sections: ancient, medieval, and modern. Graduate students had to be responsible for two of those three fields. That meant, therefore, in the course of twenty-nine years' teaching here, I did help to train a lot of the students in modern Chinese history. That was very good.

Starn: Which gave them considerably more depth.

Keightley: It gave them more depth, and equipped them for teaching a wide range of material, introduced them to whatever teaching methods I had, and was also good for me--because these were very bright students and attracted by bright people like Fred Wakeman and Yeh Wen-hsin. I think that was one of the strengths of Berkeley's history program, and I hope that that continues to be the case.

I also had the pleasure of having a couple of post-docs here, like Ed Shaugnessy--no, actually, he was a student at Stanford. He would come up and take my oracle-bone seminars. Lothar von Falkenhausen came as a post-doc. He was teaching at Stanford.

Starn: He's now at Harvard?

Keightley: No, he's at UCLA at the moment. He may be at Harvard one day because they are looking for an archaeologist.

But in terms of the community, it has to be said that the field in which I work, my community, has been much wider than Berkeley. It's had to be; there aren't that many people in Ancient China, so it has been a fairly national, even international, community. The Society for the Study of Early China, which I helped to establish, has helped to encourage that kind of community.

Here at Berkeley I've had some splendid colleagues. As I think I've probably said already, coming to Berkeley changed me as a scholar and turned me into a real research scholar. People in anthropology, people in political science, people in English--these have all been very valuable, very stimulating.

Starn: And people whom you could consult about your work and you could exchange papers with.

Keightley: Absolutely. I do believe profoundly in pre-prints--get this out, get criticism before you publish it.

The Ancestral Landscape

Stam: In your later scholarly work, and I'm talking now about *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China*--that's 1200 to 1045 B.C--you've made some very strong connections between the oracle-bone inscriptions, as you interpret them, and the shape of Shang culture--

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Stam: Is there much disagreement about the meaning of the graphs or is it more of a cooperative spirit in interpreting these oracle bones? Apparently, each one has --the net of inference is very fine and dense, it strikes me, from reading your chapters. Is it more cooperative, or is there a great deal of conflict about the meaning of the graphs?

Keightley: I wouldn't use the word "conflict". There certainly are disagreements. One of the basic disagreements is whether these charges were questions or declarative statements. There is an extensive scholarship on a word-by-word basis as to the varying interpretations that have been proposed. Some of the characters there's just no doubt about; we understand what they are--like the character for "king," or the character for "Shang", and so on. There are, indeed, several hundred characters where I think honest scholars can legitimately disagree. Here, a great deal depends upon a knowledge of the later bronze inscriptions, which may be two or three hundred years later in date, and even the manuscript materials from the Eastern Zhou, which may be eight or nine hundred years later. There are scholars in Beijing, for example, like Qiu Xigui, who are so well versed in this material that one has to give enormous respect to any solution that they may propose. One doesn't always agree with them. I have, on occasion, deciphered a character that nobody in Mainland China was able to do. That happens very rarely, but it does, and it's very pleasing when it does. But no, I wouldn't think of this as a combative community. It is cooperative, and we read each other's work and learn from it. I'm reading an article right now by a young man, Cao Dingyun. I've never met him, but boy, I respect his work immensely. He is very good on the details, and I appreciate that immensely.

Stam: Can you maybe describe what you mean by the title, *Ancestral Landscape*?

Keightley: Well, I mean a couple of things. First of all, in my old age--I may have said this already--I'm increasingly tempted by the claims of the geographical determinists. I do think geography, landscape, environment play a large role in the worldview.

Stam: Does that include climate?

Keightley: Yes, it certainly does. Paleo-climate, paleo-environment, plays a large role in shaping cultural conceptions, cosmology. Landscape itself is a man-made artifact; it isn't just brute nature, but what man makes of nature. I wanted to look at the kind of climate, environment, the kind of crops, the kind of animals, and so on, that the Shang lived with, and had to live with. I called it the "ancestral landscape" because they also imputed a whole series of religious values to the landscape, seeing various powers in the mountains, in the clouds, and so on. I think that many of the communities in North China at that time took their political and religious identity from these ancestral forces, which they saw in particular localities.

Finally, I meant it, of course, in the extended sense of a landscape which was ancestral to much that followed. Shang values served as models for what happened in the Zhou and the Han. Clearly, there were enormous changes, and one has to trace it out in each instance, but I do feel profoundly that the Shang model was fundamental in shaping what happened.

Starn: You certainly make a persuasive case for that. It's interesting that the sense of time, as you can see it reflected in these inscriptions, appears to change, you say, from non-linear to--can you explain a little bit about that? How it was measured?

Keightley: I'm not sure I can. [laughter] There were clearly a variety of models at work. There was the sixty-day cycle, which just repeated itself endlessly, like our seven-day week, for example. The Shang, in fact, had a ten-day week. Then there was the luni-solar calendar where the months succeeded each other--first, second, third, fourth, and so on. Curiously, in the oracle bones they do not pay a great deal of attention to what I think you're referring to as linear time--that is, the year of a king's reign, the first year, or second year. It's only by the end of the dynasty that we begin to see records of that sort. This doesn't mean that they didn't have this conception; it simply means that it didn't appear in the oracle-bone inscriptions until rather late in the dynasty. The fact that they were recording it rather late in the dynasty suggests probably a change in the function of divination, or a change in the nature of the record-keeping. The oracle bones do provide us with a very narrow window. It's a very deep window, but yes, it's only one particular aspect of Shang culture.

Starn: And you can infer from that, however, that most of the Shang culture lived on peasant time, so to speak.

Keightley: That certainly is the sense I would have. The oracle-bone inscriptions confirm that the main thing that counts is the ten day names, which form the ten-day week, the *jia*, *yi*, *bing*, *ding*... That is almost always present, and I'm told by Chinese scholars that this seems to accord with what peasants would be doing; they would be keeping track of time in that way. Whereas the more complicated systems of timekeeping were ritual time, time for offering sacrifices to the ancestors. Peasants presumably were less interested in that.

Starn: How were you able to infer their sense of space and territory from the inscriptions?

Keightley: Largely on the basis of the divinations about travel, about enemy tribes, about the directions the weather was coming from, about hunts. All of these give us a sense of the king's awareness of what lay beyond his immediate cult center. It's possible to use the oracle bones to map the king's travels, sometimes for a hundred-plus days at a time as he was on campaign--because he says: "I'm in point A today; I will have no disasters; I'm going to point B." Ten days later, or three days later, he's in point B; and three days later, he's in point C, so you can figure out the time intervals between these various places.

Starn: You actually have an itinerary there.

Keightley: That's right, and you can do some triangulation to see where these places might have been. Working out Shang geography is not easy, and some of it's problematic, but yes, we do have a sense of what the king thought of the landscape.

Geographical Determinism

Starn: Tell me a little more about how your interest in geographical determinism developed.

Keightley: Was there some insight or some particular thrust? I think probably it came out of my undergraduate lectures, because as you wind down at the end of the semester, you sum up the enormous achievements of Chinese culture and civilization. One of the questions, of course, is, "Well, they are different from other cultures and civilizations. Why? What made them different?" It seems to me inescapable that the geography of China certainly must have played a role. For one example, all the main rivers in China run east to west, not north to south or south to north. This means that they run through areas which generally produce very similar crops. There was not that impulse, therefore, to large-scale commercial transport on these rivers because you were simply shipping from A to B, where they both produced the same kind of goods in any event. So you don't get the encouragement of a large, politically significant merchant class, such as you might have in Mesopotamia or the Mediterranean world where these people indeed were absolutely essential to the functioning of the society. On the contrary, you get a trade in high-status elite goods between north and south; not easy to transport, because there aren't any rivers. Of course it is significant that finally the Chinese Empire built the Grand Canal, which does run north to south, so they could get that link. That's quite late in the game.

Starn: How late?

Keightley: Sui dynasty, Tang dynasty, so sixth century A.D., something like that. I think the general benevolence of the climate, too, helps to explain the general optimism of the early philosophy. You look at the climate in Mesopotamia: it's quite disastrous--floods, cataclysms, sandstorms and so on, and you have a mythological picture of gods who were constantly angry. You have Jehovah who wants to wipe out mankind with a flood. The Chinese have a flood legend, but nobody's trying to wipe mankind out; there just was a flood. In fact, I think we can probably identify that flood in the Neolithic record. It doesn't have the questions of good, or evil, or malevolence in it that was true in other societies. Confucianism is indeed a remarkably optimistic philosophy about the goodness, or potential goodness, of human nature. The idea of original sin is just not present in early Chinese philosophy. All these things may be linked, I think, to the early environment.

Starn: The wind plays a considerable part in the religion?

Keightley: Certainly the Shang, in their inscriptions, paid considerable attention to the wind. The king was always afraid of encountering great winds when he went hunting. I've seen what the winds can do around Anyang; they can just knock the crops flat. As you probably know, in later Chinese medical theory in particular, but also philosophy, there is this emphasis on *qi*, which is translated sometimes as ether, or *pneuma*, but it seems to represent some kind of wind-like entity. Many scholars argue that this comes out of the Shang interest in the winds.

Starn: Is that peculiar to the Shang?

Keightley: No. Well, now you're asking me. No, I think that right through the Han dynasty, people were paying attention to the wind, yes, and to the ethers. They had these pitch pipes they

would put into the ground, and then the wind would blow over them and you would listen to the sound and foretell the future, and so on. They paid considerable attention to this.

Changes in the Berkeley Student Body

Stam: You're able to bring the Shang alive for various groups, including the high school teachers who were listening to your lecture before we began interviewing. I was wondering if you feel that students are more able to take in the differences between East and West than they were a generation ago?

Keightley: That's interesting you would ask that question, because I think the last time or so that I taught History 9A, which was the rice paddies course, I started out with my usual trick of showing this slide of Achilles and the Amazon queen--and there is this shock, as I said, that runs through the class--that they're in the wrong classroom, and so on. Then I talk about the comparisons. My T.A.'s reported, I think the last time I did this, that there was considerable resistance on the part of the Chinese students; "Why are we doing this? Why are we studying this? We're here to study China," and so on. So no, I don't even know if this is a real trend; it may have been accidental in that class. I do think I bring them around to see the virtue of asking these questions because--the question I ask them is, "*You* know it's not Chinese, but why? You must tell me what is it. You must articulate this." But yes, there was some cultural resistance to that. On the other hand, as I think I may have said already, I've had some just splendid Chinese students who were in engineering and medicine but who desperately want to get back to Chinese roots, and who study this with great intelligence and interest.

Teaching and Writing in Retirement

Stam: Are you doing much post-retirement teaching?

Keightley: As I put it, I see myself as the Johnny Appleseed of oracle-bone inscriptions. There aren't many of us who do this. I have been invited to teach up at Seattle, down at UCLA, at Harvard, at the School for Oriental and African Studies in London, to run seminars of various lengths, introducing students to the oracle-bone inscriptions. My scholarship has also, part of it, been devoted to trying to show people how to do this, so that there is a pedagogic value there, so that they're not going to need me to do this. But yes, I enjoy doing this, because, of course, from good students one also learns good things. I don't have any invitations on my plate now. Whether I'll get any more in the future, I don't know, but I would certainly think about them.

Stam: But you are continuing this work on the Harbsmeier Dictionary?

Keightley: I spent three months in Oslo with Harbsmeier, working on this relational database which he was calling *Synonyma Serica Comparata*. He likes the Latin. It was to be a dictionary of

synonyms. I think he's probably changing his conception now, but the idea was to take Chinese words which have very similar meaning but show how they differ, which will be a very valuable tool to have. We spent long hours together going through oracle-bone inscriptions which will form part of his corpus.

Starn: From Oslo and peace to something you mentioned--the important part that war has played in your life.

Keightley: Before we get to that, could I just say another little word about the book I'm working on now, which has the working title of *Divining the Shang: Kingship and Religion in Bronze Age China*. This is going to take about a thousand inscriptions and translate them in context. The first part of the book is more philosophical in nature: that is, it will deal with the metaphysical assumptions underlying Shang divination, Shang worldview, the way in which divination functioned, a rather close look at those cases where it seems clear the king made a mistake. It's quite striking to find that you can intuit this--at least out of the records--so that the record-keepers, I think, were not entirely subservient to preserving the king's image. Looking at the metaphysical conceptions, one can see in the inscriptions a balance between positive and negative which, I think, surfaces later in the *yin-yang* conceptions of Chinese philosophy, and then argue for the impact that the organization of the ancestral hierarchy had on the organization of secular administration, too. There were clearly shared patterns of belief and value here which I think help explain why bureaucracy became so important in early Chinese belief.

If that's the philosophical part, the second part is what one would call the world of religion and kingship. That is, I want to look at the various powers of the Shang pantheon--*Di*, the high god, the high power, the nature powers, the Yellow River, the mountain power; and then the ancestors themselves, what role they played in Shang life, and what it means to be an ancestor. In my view, the ancestor is very much a depersonalized representation of the deceased; you don't care what he looked like, you don't care about the color of his eyes, and so on, but you can care about what he can do, and what his functions are, what his jurisdictions are.

Starn: Which depends on what?

Keightley: Well, it depends partly on his status in the generational hierarchy, and status on the main line of descent; that is, those kings who were on the main line of descent were more powerful. It's quite striking that they would give temple names to their dead, so you have no idea what the name of the person was when alive. They give them names which were like the days of the week, so Father Monday, Father Tuesday, and so on, Grandfather Monday, Grandfather Tuesday. Then you would offer them cult on Monday or Tuesday, according to their name. But you get people being called Fourth Ancestor Tuesday, or Third Ancestor Tuesday, because there are two others ahead of him in the hierarchy. It's quite depersonalized, and I do feel that this helps to explain the Chinese view of personality among the living, too: they are interested in what you can do; they are interested in, essentially, what your values are, what your philosophy is, rather than in the externals which are such a joy to read in Homer, for example. Homer is very much interested in surfaces and appearance.

Starn: And individuality?

Keightley: Early Chinese doesn't do that. I think there is a link there to ancestor worship.

The end of the book will have a very large glossary, because, as you said, there are many, many terms about which there is scholarly disagreement. I want to address these issues, explain why I've made the choices I have--but also to introduce the scholarship to people who wish to pursue this matter. There will also be a series of glosses, because many of these inscriptions do require more comment; they're not immediately apprehensible. Every time I put an asterisk by an inscription, there will be a gloss in the back explaining why I read it the way I do. Then there will be large glossary dating these inscriptions, which is a sub-branch of the field, which is very technical and very important.

Starn: Is it more scientific than--?

Keightley: No, it's not particularly scientific. It's philological; it's epigraphic, and of course, it does depend upon the archaeological provenance of some of these bones, which helps you put them in the sequence. Tremendous strides have been made in that field in the last thirty years. I'm very grateful to it, but keeping up with it is not easy.

Starn: I can imagine. You said also that you lost two years of periodical publications.

Keightley: I can get that back, but there is that gap on my shelves which causes me to wince every time I see it.

So that's what I'm going to be working on, I say for the next year, but probably the next several years. I'm in no great hurry. I want to pace myself properly. Now then, back to war.

The Continuing Role of War in Life and Work

Starn: You grew up during a war, and other wars were important in your life.

Keightley: This is not a reflection that had occurred to me until recently, but war does seem to have played a role, both in my own life and in that of my father. If my father hadn't been in World War I, he certainly wouldn't have been able to go to the Colorado School of Mines and become an engineer, which then, of course, sent him off to England, where he met my mother. I experienced World War II, not entirely as a spectator, and I still remember the great sense of relief when peace was finally declared--the wonderful feeling that for the first time in five or six years, nobody was trying to kill me from out there somewhere. I don't mean that this was happening all the time: it wasn't. But nevertheless, the potential was always there.

I went off to college, and within two years the Korean War had broken out and several of my classmates were drafted and went off to fight in the army. Then the Vietnam War, of course, played a major role, both academic and political, in my early life as a teacher: the protest meetings, the letters to the editors, the going out to talk to alumni groups, and the strikes on campus. All of this was very consuming--and again persuaded me that it was just fundamentally important that the American electorate know some Chinese history--I mean,

because China was one of the great bugaboos; we were going to lose Vietnam to China. Anyone who knew any Chinese and Vietnamese history knew that was highly unlikely. We were dealing with patriots, above all, and not just Communists, part of some international conspiracy. I only wish Richard Nixon had taken Chinese history, and John F. Kennedy. Maybe this will change with time.

As I said, it's perhaps no accident that the most moving public monument in my lifetime has been the Vietnam memorial in D.C.-- partly because of the associations it has for modern America, and what I think was a tragic mistake in our foreign policy; but also because, quite strikingly, as you descend that ramp past the wall with all the names, I did have the sense of going down into a Shang dynasty tomb. I realize this is farfetched and personal, but it did give me a resonance which I quite value.

Starn: Maya Lin is Chinese-American, isn't she?

Keightley: I believe so, yes. A quite wonderful monument, yes. Again, Chinese in the sense that it's quite impersonal, that there are no human figures around, just the names there--yes, certainly, which are not Chinese, but still--.

The other thing that occurs to me is that many of my basic values were shaped with the ethos of World War II: the rationing, the self-deprivation, the blackout, turning out the lights, five-inch baths, and so on.

Starn: Saving tinfoil.

Keightley: That's right. All of this. That ethos is with me. I ride a bike now rather than drive a car whenever I can. I enjoy turning off lights. This is a problem Vannie and I have because she grew up in T.V.A. [Tennessee Valley Authority] country where electricity was dirt cheap.

Starn: If you haven't worked that out yet, I don't think you're going to.

Keightley: We're working on it. I've been brooding about the way the present generation, indeed, the present economy, depends upon spending, and getting, and more spending, and more getting. I don't respond that way anymore. I don't think this is simply my British upbringing in World War II; I think it's part of my age--as you get older you probably have all the stuff you want.

Starn: I think we become more spiritual, don't you think? [laughter]

Keightley: That's one way to look at it. I do think the world is going to need to return to some kind of more economic ethos than we have at the minute.

Starn: Yes, yes, it's not possible to go on the way it is.

Keightley: This is one of the points I make with my students in the Chinese history class. The Chinese have been wrestling with this kind of problem for the last two millennia because they have been pressing on their resources. They were such a success that their population grew so much. Then they had to worry about how you deal with this question. It's worth studying them with that in mind.

As an old man speaking, I'm also struck by the way, in my lifetime, science has extended our life expectancy. It's wonderful. That's a minor point, but my grandfather died of TB when he was thirty-three. Four of my uncles died in their fifties of heart disease, or related problems. I feel privileged to have the extra time. Much of that I do owe to modern medicine. I'm grateful for modern medicine, and I'm reminded I once was a biochemistry major.

Starn: I would like to extend the war theme a little bit further. War played a great part in the Shang way of life. It seems to come through in the inscriptions that I saw, anyway. I wonder if your personal experience is--?

Keightley: No, I haven't made that connection. You are quite right; I think war played a fundamental role, and it is possible to map out some of the Shang kings' campaigns, the officers involved, the troops that were mobilized, the geography of the campaign. Of course, they would sacrifice a good number of their prisoners of war as human sacrifices to their ancestors, particularly in the royal cemetery. What is of interest, I think, in the Shang records of war, is that Confucian culture has generally downplayed the martial aspects of Chinese culture. It's always stressed that the good man is not the general or the fighter, but is the civilian administrator, the man of peace. One has to dig rather hard into the later documents to see how the military machine was functioning. The oracle-bone inscriptions are pre-Confucian; they have no reticence about recording matters of this sort. They desperately needed the help of their ancestors in warfare, and they certainly divined about it.

But no, I hadn't made any connection between that and my modern experiences. One can certainly make the connection in the case of Europe, I think, where the argument is that the nation state and the feuding between the nation states in post-Reformation Europe produced a series of economies which were warlike economies in many ways. China, as a unified empire, did not have that stimulus between the various parts of China, and this may be one reason why it has been rather slower to modernize and develop. That's a very complicated question. I don't want to get into that one, I think.

The Influence of Climate; Of Loss

Keightley: If I may just go back to a question you asked earlier--you asked about where my interest in climate came from. I was recently reading an account of the book called *The Victorian Visitors* [by Rupert Christiansen] where I see that all the Continentals who came to London in the Victorian period were appalled by the filthy English weather. Of course, I grew up in that weather. I don't think, again, that consciously I thought it shaped my character, but quite possibly it had. It may have had some effect on my disposition.

The other point is that when I left England in 1947, I had to leave all my books, and my toys, and my childhood things behind. It didn't particularly trouble me at the time. I regret it now intensely, and it could well be that my interest as a historian was stimulated in part by my need to get back, to get back to roots--

Starn: To hang on to things.

Keightley: I think this is part of it.

Starn: Your library is still mostly here, but you're still getting it in order?

Keightley: I've given away I forget how many books, but I would say maybe nine hundred, and there isn't a day that goes by when I don't miss one of the ones that I gave away. I have an excellent working library here, which I'm very pleased with. I'm still getting it in order, but yes, that's fundamental.

A New East Asian Library Building

Starn: And the East Asian Library? How much is duplicated there?

Keightley: I was able to give away most of my books, which were not my specialist books, precisely because they are there in the East Asian Library. They've got one or two books which I don't own and I wish I did, but I have to go in and keep looking at those, but that's all right. Of course it is one of my great hopes that we get a new East Asian Library built. Have you ever been up in the East Asian Library?

Starn: Of course.

Keightley: You have? Upstairs in the stacks?

Starn: Yes, I have, indeed. It's quite a monumental place on campus. It's the only place where there are that many card indexes still. Isn't it the old law library?

Keightley: It is the old law library, as it is at Columbia, too. I think this is a fairly common pattern.

Starn: You think it's not state-of-the-art?

Keightley: It's not state-of- the-art. I went up there and took some color slides a couple of years ago to show alumni, because it's very rickety and very dangerous, and you have to get up on high ladders. We can do better.

Starn: And it will be built soon? The new library?

Keightley: They're still working on the money. As I said, I think construction costs have escalated so badly, we're probably losing ground.

Starn: But there's still a place for the books. They will find a new home eventually.

Keightley: They will, but finally, this impacts, I think, on our ability to attract faculty, as the library becomes harder and harder to work in. We've certainly heard visiting scholars say, "I wouldn't come back to Berkeley again," because so many of the books are in another location that it slows you down a little bit. So we do have to worry about this.

Starn: I hope you'll be able to help realize that as well. I very much look forward to seeing what you're going to do with your extended life span, thanks to modern science, and how many more books and students are going to come out of this. Thanks very much, David.

Transcriber: Jessica Stern
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TAPE GUIDE--David Keightly

INDEX--David Keightley

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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5. *Publications*

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6. *Professional service*

History Department, Berkeley: Vice-Chair (1986-87); Chair (1992-94)

Center for Chinese Studies, Berkeley: Vice-Chair (1985-1988); Chair (1988-1990)

Member, ex-officio, China Relations Committee, Berkeley (1988-1990)

Editor or Associate Editor (and also co-founder) of *Early China* (1975-); Associate Editor, *Journal of Asian Studies* (1983-1986)

Secretary, Society for the Study of Early China (1975-)

Director, and member of China and Inner Asia Council, of Association for Asian Studies (1986-1989)

Member, Joint Committee on Chinese Studies (ACLS-SSRC), and Chair, JCCS Subcommittee on Early China (1979-1984)

Member, Social Sciences/Humanities Panel of Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China (1984-1987)

Chair, Committee for Advanced Study in China of Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China (1988-1989); Senior Advisor to the NAS-CSCPRC Beijing Office (1987-1989)

Member, Breasted Prize Committee, American Historical Association (1985-1988); Joseph Levenson Prize Committee, Association for Asian Studies (1986-1988) (Chair, 1987-1988)

Adviser, Society for Asian Art, San Francisco (1988-)

Executive Committee, Chinese History and Archaeology Networking Group, (1988-)

Chair, Steering Committee for a New East Asiatic Library Building (1989-90)

Member, Advisory Council, Berkeley Institutes of International and Area Studies (1989-90) Chair, American Subcommittee on Archaeology, Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China (1990-91)

Member, Advisory Committee, Townsend Center for the Humanities (1991-93)

March 2003

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Brucker, Gene. (In process.) Historian.

Brown, Delmer M. *Professor of Japanese History, University of California, Berkeley, 1946-1977.* 2000, 410 pp.

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Stripp, Fred S. Jr. *University Debate Coach, Berkeley Civic Leader, and Pastor.* 1990, 75 pp.

Strong, Edward W. *Philosopher, Professor, and Berkeley Chancellor, 1961-1965.* 1992, 530 pp.

Struve, Gleb. (In process.) Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature.

Taylor, Paul Schuster.
Volume I: *Education, Field Research, and Family*. 1973, 342 pp.
Volume II and Volume III: *California Water and Agricultural Labor*. 1975, 519 pp.

Thygeson, Phillips. *External Eye Disease and the Proctor Foundation*. (UC San Francisco professor.) 1988, 321 pp. (Available through the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology.)

Tien, Chang-Lin. (In process.) Berkeley Chancellor, 1990-1997.

Towle, Katherine A. *Administration and Leadership*. 1970, 369 pp.

Townes, Charles H. *A Life in Physics: Bell Telephone Laboratories and WWII, Columbia University and the Laser, MIT and Government Service; California and Research in Astrophysics*. 1994, 691 pp.

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Whinnery, John. *Researcher and Educator in Electromagnetics, Microwaves, and Optoelectronics, 1935-1995; Dean of the College of Engineering, UC Berkeley, 1950-1963*. 1996, 273 pp.

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Wilson, Garff B. *The Invisible Man, or, Public Ceremonies Chairman at Berkeley for Thirty-Five Years*. 1981, 442 pp.

Wilson, Olly. (In process.) Professor of Music.

Winkelstein, Warren. *AIDS Epidemiology at the School of Public Health, University of California Berkeley* in *The AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco: The Medical Response, 1981-1984, Volume VII.* 1999, 257 pp.

Winkler, Albert J. *Viticultural Research at UC Davis, 1921-1971.* 1973, 144 pp.

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Wurster, William Wilson. *College of Environmental Design, University of California, Campus Planning, and Architectural Practice.* 1964, 339 pp.

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