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IN MEMORIAM

ZHANG ZHONGPEI 张忠培

(5 AUGUST 1934 – 5 JULY 2017)

Zhang Zhongpei at the Erdaojingzi site, Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, 18 September 2009
(Photograph by B. F. Zhao)

REMEMBERING PROFESSOR ZHANG ZHONGPEI: A SCHOLAR WHO MADE GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHINESE ARCHAEOLOGY

On the morning of 5 July 2017, a message shocked the Chinese archaeological and heritage community. At the age of 83, Professor Zhang Zhongpei had died from an illness in Beijing. Zhang was one of the pioneering Chinese archaeological scholars and a great teacher of archaeology who founded the Archaeological Department of Jilin University. He was also the former director of the Chinese Archaeological Society, a professional association established under the State Administration of Cultural

Heritage (Guo Jia Wen Wu Ju 国家文物局). Zhang had once served as the president of the National Palace Museum. The President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, as well as present and former prime ministers Li Keqiang, Wen Jiabao, and Li Peng all expressed their grief over the loss of Zhang; they were joined by thousands of people who had worked in the cultural and archaeological fields nation-wide.

Zhang was born in Changsha, Hunan on August 5, 1934. He remembered a childhood marred by the turmoil of World War II. When the Japanese invaded China, his family fled Changsha and moved to the countryside in order to avoid Japanese air raids, which occurred four times while he was still in primary school. He thus received his primary school education in six different schools. From that experience, he became determined to use his knowledge to serve his country. Since he was fascinated by archaeology from an early age, that would be the realm in which he would make his mark and contribution.

Zhang graduated from Peking University in 1956 with an undergraduate degree in Archaeology. As a doctoral candidate, he was supervised by Professor Su Bingqi, one of the greatest scholars in Chinese archaeology. Zhang later joined the Peking University team on his first field investigations and excavations in Huaxian 华县 and Weinan 渭南, Shaanxi. These enlightening field experiences sparked his interest in the lesser-known area of pottery typology. After years of research starting in 1959, he finally produced a synthesis of the social organization of the cemetery at Yuanjunmiao 元君庙 (Yuanjun Temple). Subsequent excavations and research at many sites revolutionized the way we understand the ancient history of central China.

He finished his graduate degree in 1961 and was then assigned to the History Department of Jilin University as an Associate Professor, later becoming Full Professor. In 1972, he presided over the establishment of a professional archaeological section in the department, where he established the practice of “field archaeology as the basis of modern archaeology” (Zhang 1983b:68). This ideology became the style at Jilin University and resulted in students of Chinese archaeology graduating with strong field abilities. Zhang included the latest findings from scientific research in the context of his teaching. He also followed the teaching methods set by Su Bingqi, Su Bai, and other founders of the Archaeological Department of Peking University. Through these connections, the teaching methods in the History Department of Jilin University are similar to those of Peking University. These two universities became the main cradles for training archaeologists in China. In 1987, Zhang transferred to the Palace Museum, the site of the so-called Forbidden City, in Beijing to become its director. As the fourth director since the establishment of the Palace Museum in 1925, he became a renowned cultural heritage expert.

It was said in the *Analects* that “The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue [志士仁人，無求生以害仁]” (Legge 1861:16). Throughout history, there have been uncountable stories of Chinese officials determined to live up their beliefs. Tao Qian 陶淵明 of the Six Dynasties, who “never bows for five *dou* of rice [不為五斗米折腰]” (Fang 648:n.p.) was a notable exemplar. Zhang was just as determined to abide by his moral values as Tao had been a thousand years earlier. For example, during the student movement in 1989, students and protestors gathered in Tiananmen Square for months. Neighboring the square on the north, the Forbidden City was strategically close to the crowd. Near the end of the student movement, the People's Liberation Army asked Zhang if they could enter and be stationed in the Forbidden City. Zhang said, “The Palace Museum must

not be ruined by me!” and refused the request (Liu 2017:n.p.). As a consequence, he was removed from his post as Director after the student movement ended. After having served the shortest term of any Palace Museum director before or since, he returned to his previous position as a scholar at Jilin University.

Zhang became the youngest committee member of the Chinese Archaeological Society in 1979. He served 38 years as a member, 19 years as an executive member, and then 9 years as vice-president of the committee. In 2008, he was elected President of the Society. While serving as President from 2008 to 2013, he actively promoted many different academic activities and heavily engaged in various symposiums, annual meetings, conferences, and publications. Under Zhang’s leadership, the Chinese Archaeological Society developed to reflect a new era in Chinese archaeology.

Zhang’s huge academic success was achieved only because of his persistence. When we say Zhang was a persistent person, we reflect his focus on academic research starting when he was 18 years old. From the time he was a young man until his elder years, he never gave up his passion for academic pursuits. No matter his mood or whether his days were exciting or frustrating, his belief in the importance of academic pursuits was never shaken. This made him one of the most splendid thinkers, practitioners, and leaders in Chinese archaeology.

Zhang’s works combined the latest methodologies of field archaeology with considerations for cultural heritage. He not only paid attention to practical archaeology, but also looked into scholarly history and methodologies. Although he often disagreed with others’ interpretations when dealing with archaeology, he always kept the discussion at an academic level. His research findings were always based on facts from original field reports and artifacts. He did not rely on formalist theories or any other doctrines from the East or West. He insisted on relying on archaeological findings and advocated only “speaking with true findings. If no finding is identified, be quiet” (Zhang 2002:18). Zhang (2004:320) believed in doing research “in sequence, step by step.” He formulated a sequential research system moving from micro to macro points of view and vice versa. He always emphasized the importance of examining “a site (spot)/a river basin (line)/an area (surface) and the period (time)/the distribution (space)/the human (ancients)” (Zhao 2014:7) as the best “path for Chinese archaeology to pursue” (Zhang 2012c:3) in analyzing history. His academic ideology and research methods were all based on this principle of gradual analytic development from “spot/line/surface” to “time/space/human.” Following this principle, Zhang expanded his research interests from the Weihe basin (渭河流域) to nation-wide archaeology, from Neolithic archaeology to Chinese historical archaeology, from early archaeological cultures to civilizations and the origin of states, including last but not least the developmental stages of social structures through to the formation of the Chinese nation.

Based upon previous research, Zhang followed Su Bingqi in stating that the classification of ancient artifacts in the early stages of the development of the discipline was quite different from modern research methods. Any typology must be based on stratigraphy and understanding an artifact can involve research in both vertical (series) and horizontal (region/area) relationships. Based on this principle, he formulated certain issues for studying pottery typology. He enhanced the “Two Studies 两学”—the methodologies of stratigraphy and typology—and implemented them in Chinese archaeology and the classification of periods. In his words, “Taking the modern metaphor of a car, stratigraphy and typology are two wheels of the car. If there is no

wheel, then the car cannot move forward; no stratigraphy and typology, modern archaeology cannot exist, and cannot move forward. For the advancement of modern archaeology, the first requirement is the use of stratigraphy and typology” (Zhang 1983b:60). His most valuable contribution to Chinese archaeology was this emphasis on the “Two Studies.”

In an idea similar to the context principle of European archaeology, he pointed out that an archaeological stratum (*cengwei* 层位) is not simply a layer (*diceng* 地层). He summarized three “archaeological excavation rules” or principles for Chinese archaeology: (1) the “soil principle,” the idea that soil qualities and colors are used to divide stratigraphic layers, relics, and other phenomena; (2) the “from top to bottom principle,” or super positioning, which reflects how excavation must proceed from later to earlier deposits; and (3) the “collection principle” of association, that is, the idea that one puts together artifacts by unit. These excavation principles were later written into the “Field Archaeology Work Rules” devised by the Ministry of Culture of People’s Republic of China 中华人民共和国文化部 (CCNT 1984:n.p.), which played a significant guiding role in the development of field archaeology in China. Like Su Bingqi, Zhang clearly pointed out that typological research methods are important. Any archaeological typology must be based on archaeological stratigraphy. One should not only study relics, but also study the remains, then do a chronological analysis along with analyzing regional changes.

One of his students, Professor Zhao Menghe 高蒙河 of the Archaeology Department of Fudan University, calculated that Zhang produced more than 200 articles during his prolific career, most of which related to the Neolithic period (see selected bibliography below). I admired his academic status as well as his personality when I studied for my Ph.D. under his guidance. He provided strict guidance for all his students in their studies and research. He requested that I familiarize myself with the stone tool assemblage, and so I spent a few months studying Palaeolithic stone tools with the renowned scholar, Zhang Senshui 张森水. Then I accompanied Shi Jinming 石金鸣, Director of the Shanxi Archaeological Institute, to study microlithic at the Shizitan 柿子滩 site. Under Zhang’s supervision, I learned to recognize the characteristics of the beginning of the Neolithic period and how they were different in different regions and have distinct features. My dissertation research topic was about the transition between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic. My dissertation entitled “A Study on the Process of Neolithic Formation in China” (Li 2002:n.p.) examined the differentiation between four regions in terms of inhabited settlements, agriculture, farming practices, and usage of polished stone tools and pottery.

In recent years, Zhang only participated in a few archaeological projects. He concentrated most of his effort on compiling three gigantic volumes of collected works: *Chinese Archaeology: Walk My Own Way* [*Zhongguo kaoguxue: Zouchu ziji de lu* 中国考古学: 走出自己的路]; *Chinese Archaeology: Speak My Own Words* [*Zhongguo kaoguxue: Shuochu ziji de hua* 中国考古学: 说出自己的话]; and *Chinese Archaeology: Do the Best with My Heart* [*Zhongguo kaoguxue: Jindao ziji de xin* 中国考古学: 尽到自己的心]. All three volumes took Chinese archaeology as the main theme. These have been completed and will be published soon, but he could not see them in print.

In the last years of his life, he was bedridden and could not live without an oxygen machine, but he still continued to write every day. As Zhao Binfu 赵宾福 (2017:n.p.) said, “Zhang was simply a great teacher with a kind heart. He was a famous scholar with a humble attitude.” He was a nice, caring, and considerate person. Even though

he was famous, he never behaved arrogantly. I remember the first time I met him in Beijing. Prior to my arrival, he had told me I would be picked up at the Beijing West Railway Station. I thought he meant that he would send a student to pick me up because I was from Hong Kong and unfamiliar with Beijing. Upon my arrival, it turned out that he himself was at the station awaiting me. At that time he was already 65 years old and the station was an hour away from his place. I was speechless at that moment, deeply moved by his warm welcome. After that, I became even more determined to learn from him, from both his words and his noble attitude.

Zhang Zhongpei was a giant in the field, yet he always had time for his students. The archaeological excavation at Tung Wan Chai North in Hong Kong was one of ten greatest discoveries in China in 1997 (Chau et al. 1999) and was later listed as one of the one hundred most important archaeological discoveries in China of the twentieth century (Wu 2002). I supervised this important excavation in Hong Kong. We found 20 skeletons dated ca. 2000 B.C. on this raised beach site on the coast (Han 1999). Since there were not enough experienced archaeologists to conduct post excavation works, Zhang brought a team of his students to Hong Kong to spend three months in 2001 finishing the post-excavation work for the site. Surprisingly, he preferred to stay with his students in a small flat although a hotel room had been reserved for him. During his stay, he always chatted with me, not in a scholarly tone, but like a friendly teacher, despite his profound and notable academic achievement. I am honored to have been one of Zhang Zhongpei's students. His impact on me and many others will remain forever, though he will be sorely missed.

—Li Longlam

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