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Lawrence Scott Davis

(1951–2024)

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Lawrence Scott Davis (1951–2024)

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Next year E. J. Brill will publish a book by the little-known but highly accomplished Sino-anthropologist L. Scott Davis, in which he pioneers a novel, anthropological interpretation of the Chinese classics. The book demonstrates how certain motifs and images in the *Yijing* (Classic of Changes), the *Lunyu* (Confucian Analects), and the *Zuo zhuan* (Zuo Tradition) are strategically deployed as structuring elements so as to meld these texts into a semantic continuum. Unfortunately, the author passed away this fall without being able to see his book in print; this obituary aims to make him and his life's work better known to the scholarly community.

For most Sinologists, Lawrence Scott Davis (he went by Scott) is not a household name. But it should be. Scott was without question one of our generation's most startlingly original minds in the field of China studies—a genuine prodigy (*qicai* 奇才)—one of a very small number of scholars able to conduct both high-level ethnographic research in contemporary Taiwan and in-depth, archaeologically informed philological investigations into Chinese ancient classical texts. Besides, he was a stupendously well-read and polyglot all-round intellectual, a technology wizard, a gifted musician and songwriter. His academic career may have been checkered and peripatetic; but his publications (see the attached bibliography) are notable for their originality, theoretical sophistication, broad outlook, and cultural sensitivity. In writing this obituary, I hope in particular to whet the readership's appetite for his soon-to-appear *magnum opus* (Davis forthcoming), which tragically he did not live to see in print.

We met in 1982 as new PhD students in the Department of Anthropology at Harvard. He was already married then. He and CaiYing often invited me to home-cooked Chinese dinners at their

apartment on Somerville Avenue, followed by hours of conversation, during which tall tales and were spun and ambitious plans devised. Each of us had spent several years in China—he in Taiwan, I on the mainland—and we were both committed to bringing China's cultural, religious, and philosophical heritage into the mainstream academic discourse. We realized that, in order to do so, it would be necessary to apply—as creatively as possible—the most sophisticated contemporary analytical approaches available in our discipline to Chinese evidence. We thought of anthropology as poised to replace philosophy as the master discipline of the Humanities and the Social Sciences: for it provided—or so we believed—a superior methodological toolkit for a rigorous, empirically grounded, and commendably non-Eurocentric understanding of all aspects of the human experience. Subsequent developments have quashed these hopes: as of today, philosophy is still going strong, while anthropology has imploded. But in the 1980s, being a student of anthropology felt special. Scott in particular was on top of all the most up-to-date social-science methods and theories. I, several years his junior, often struggled to keep up with his intellectual flights of fancy. Learning from one's fellow students was, and no doubt still is, encouraged as part of the Harvard educational ethos. What he learned from me aside from occasional references to archaeological scholarship I do not know; I for my part learned a huge amount from him—not only about anthropology, philosophy, and literature, but also about life in America and in academia.

At Harvard, Scott kept a bemused distance from our teachers and fellow students. He attended neither the weekly beer hours at the Anthropology Department—held at segregated venues for the archaeology and social anthropology graduate students at the insistence of the latter—nor the glittering monthly salons at the home of the British-born (and ever self-performatively British) social anthropology professor David Maybury-Lewis (1929–2007) and his Danish-born wife Elsebet ("Pia") (1926–2015), where students had the chance of mingling with the *crème de la crème* of anthropologists from all over the world. Never one to blow his own horn, Scott despaired of getting the attention of his advisor, the eminent medical anthropologist Arthur F. Kleinman (b. 1941), who, well into his eighties, is still teaching at Harvard today; nor did he get much input from the other members of his dissertation committee: Byron Good (b. 1944), another medical anthropologist, and the flamboyant Turkish-born sociocultural anthropologist Nur Yalman (b. 1931). He doubted whether any of them ever actually read the papers and draft dissertation chapters that he sent them. This sense of alienation may have

stemmed from structural infelicities besetting graduate education at Harvard during that time; I remember many of our fellow students complaining about their advisors (myself being a fortunate exception). Unfortunately, rather than resulting in their completing their studies as fast as possible in order to get away from the academic mentors they detested, such situations tended to lead to exceptionally long times-to-degree. Scott, for instance, took ten years to finish his PhD—a fact that was not without an impact on his academic career prospects.

The one Harvard anthropology professor who always held a protecting hand over Scott was the archaeologist Kwang-chih Chang 張光直 (1931–2001). (For full disclosure: Chang was my doctoral advisor; on his biography see Falkenhausen 2001.) Chang, himself a towering intellectual, recognized Scott's spark and encouraged him to follow his interests wherever they might lead him. As it turned out, Scott was proposing to do his PhD fieldwork on a topic that related, albeit indirectly, to Chang's controversial idea that the authority of early Chinese rulers derived partly from their ability to communicate with the divine spirits in a state of trance (Chang 1983). Today such shamanistic practices still survive as part of folk religion (common religion) in Taiwan and elsewhere. Scott proposed to use methods of medical anthropology to try to figure out what, precisely, goes on in the mind of a shaman when s/he enters into trance, and how s/he exerts his/her healing powers. This was bound to interest Chang intensely.

Scott's three-volume dissertation (Davis 1992) is a unique masterpiece. It is based on more than three years of fieldwork with a female spirit-medium, who had established her own temple on a high floor of a nondescript tenement building on the outskirts of Taipei. Thanks to Scott's introduction, I once visited the temple and was privileged to witness her impersonate, successively, the Bodhisattva of mercy Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin 觀音) and the unruly Third Prince (Santaizi 三太子, a.k.a. Nezha 哪吒) (she gave me her name card, on which, rather than indicating her original name, she identified herself as these two deities), followed by a rare performance of the Pace of Yu (*Yubu* 禹步); it was an extremely moving, indeed life-altering experience. Making anthropological sense of such observations, on the other hand, proved to be an extremely challenging task. In his dissertation, Scott provides a compelling and detailed ethnographic narrative, which segues into a complex and highly technical analysis of the physiological aspects of mediumistic trance and spirit-healing. In a long, multi-chapter introductory section, Scott provides the wider theoretical and methodological context. His analysis is principally

informed by the theories of the philosophical anthropologist Helmuth Plessner (1892–1985), a member of the Frankfurt School. Scott learned German especially in order to read Plessner's then for the most part untranslated writings. (At his request, I sometimes wrote letters to him in German for practice.) By discussing the Taiwanese shaman's role in the healing process in light of Plessner's concept of "eccentricity," Scott brought the results of his research on contemporary Chinese medico-religious phenomena into a wider, cross-culturally applicable analytical framework.

Despite its importance, the dissertation remains unpublished, and few institutions have physical copies (I once read through it at the National Library in Taipei); but two articles—one in English (Davis 1996a) and one in Chinese (Davis 1997a)—afford some glimpses into his fieldwork. Scott also continued to engage with Plessner. A quarter-century after submitting his dissertation, he wrote three essays on various aspects of Plessner's work, only one of which was properly published (Davis 2016), though the other two can be read online (Davis 2013b; 2014). He never found a publisher for his complete translation of Plessner's seminal book, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (*The Levels of the Organic and the Human*; Plessner 1928), which circulated quite widely in manuscript (serving, for instance, as the basis of reference for the contributions to de Mul 2014); the publication of Millay Hyatt's translation of that book (Plessner 2019) has now probably made it obsolete.

K. C. Chang was also sympathetic to Scott's other major interest, which already during his time at Harvard was beginning to supersede his commitment to medical anthropology. This was his intensive investigation into Chinese classical texts—specifically, the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes), the *Lunyu* 論語 (Confucian Analects), and the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Tradition)—with the aim of decoding the conceptual structures underlying their composition. His approach was originally inspired by Lévi-Straussian structuralism, but he later rejected the structuralist label; a more important influence, in fact, was Lévi-Strauss's teacher, the Sinologist Marcel Granet, of whose extraordinary synthesis of Chinese thought (Granet 1934) Scott produced a partial English translation that remains unpublished. Compared to these forerunners, Scott's work was informed by a far more thorough command of the Archaic Chinese language and its writing system. Even more importantly, his familiarity with the material culture of early China as revealed by modern archaeology enabled him to visualize concretely many of the phenomena mentioned in the texts. He could thus quite literally *imagine* the living reality (*Lebenswelten*) in which the earliest Chinese classical writings were generated, and to which they refer.

At first sight, his search for the underlying, ritually generated meanings of these texts may appear kabbalistic, but Scott was by no means aiming to reveal God's thoughts. To the contrary, his inquiry into the Chinese classics was a profoundly anthropological one: as in his fieldwork on shamanism, he wanted, above all, to understand the fundamental, sometimes perhaps semi-conscious text-producing strategies followed by the people who composed those texts—texts that, far from being merely sequences of words, were thought of as religiously charged artifacts, endowed with supernatural efficacy. Although the multi-layered polysemy of these texts had been dimly realized for centuries, no other scholar, Chinese or Western, had ever followed through with such an analysis, for which modern anthropology provided some methodological *points d'appui*. The difficulty of expressing his kaleidoscopically complex findings in a linear narrative flow led Scott, who was very computer-savvy, to devise software programs by which they could be presented digitally. The results were compelling, if often surprising to those nurtured on more traditional approaches.

On the Chinese Studies side of Harvard, most faculty members who became aware of Scott's work on the classical texts greeted his ideas with incomprehension or outright derision. Shifting his dissertation focus to "textual anthropology," as he might have liked to do, was therefore out of the question. One exception aside from K. C. Chang was the Neo-Confucian philosopher Tu Wei-ming 杜維明 (b. 1940), who admitted that Scott's philological explorations might have some merit and advised them to publish them as fast as possible. In fact, Scott had started to publish his insights into the inner structure of the *Yijing* early on (e.g., Davis 1979). Long before he finished his dissertation, he circulated a book-length digest of his textual studies in manuscript form (Davis 1986). Eventually, five books appeared, the first three in Chinese (Davis 1995a; 1995b; 1996b), and then two in English (Davis 2012; forthcoming), in addition to various articles (Davis 1995c, 1998, 2011, 2022; there may well may be others that I have been unable to locate). All these are breathtakingly original scholarship—strong-minded, thought-provoking, and highly competent in their mastery of both the methodology and the textual material. But they have yet to receive the attention they deserve.

* * *

Here follows a chronological account of Scott's life. Even though our career paths diverged after I left Harvard in 1988, we kept in touch over the years, visited each other when we could, and read each other's publications. I have pieced together his comings and goings based on numerous letters I received from

him over the years (and to which I replied, but these replies are probably lost). These letters—which at length gave way to email communication—are packed with ideas and may eventually merit publication. One can still hear Scott's voice through them.

Scott was born December 6, 1951, in Westerville, a suburb of Columbus, Ohio. His parents, of Welsh extraction, had moved there from the impoverished mining district of northern West Virginia, where his grandmother continued to live, and where Scott spent his summer vacations as a child. Both his parents had majored in psychology. His father, Dwight Davis (1922–2018) had fought in the US army in Germany and been taken prisoner during World War II. He went into business after attending college under the GI Bill. His mother, Elma Jane Davis, née Moats (1927–2021), worked for many years as a social worker. Scott had a married sister, Rebecca Powers, who had four children. I once visited his parents at their commodious ranch house in Westerville. They embodied the qualities that are popularly ascribed to Midwesterners: warm-hearted, down to earth, pragmatic, resilient. One may doubt that they fully understood what their brilliant son was up to, but they were supportive without asking too many questions. Scott's familial bonds were strong. Even during his lengthy stints abroad, he regularly visited his parents, and he attended to their care as they grew older.

After attended local schools, Scott enrolled at Ohio State University in 1969, graduating with a BA in 1976. His relatively long time in college—seven instead of the usual four years—is explainable in part by the breadth and ambition of his curriculum. Interested in everything, he ended up majoring in anthropology, philosophy, and Asian art history, and earned honors in "Interdisciplinary Studies." Another distraction likely came from the fact that Scott's time at university coincided with the heyday of the student movement of the 1960s. Luckily, he was spared from being drafted into the Vietnam War, but the anti-war protests, the Kent State massacre, and the Watergate scandal were formative experiences that left him with a lasting distrust of authority and an anarchic streak in his world view. Like many in his generation, he embraced hippie culture, which remained part of his persona for the rest of his life, manifested in his clothing, hairstyle, and manner of speaking, as well as in a complete lack of interest in material possessions, except perhaps for books. He mastered the guitar and was a gifted songwriter. Like many in his generation, Scott experimented with drugs—an experience that in his case actually proved professionally useful later on when he came to specialize in medical anthropology. All this constituted a complete break from his parents' way of life, and it must have

worried them. And indeed, Scott's unworldly lack of concern for money—in particular, his refusal, out of distrust in the banking system, to invest some of his earnings for retirement—caused him to experience penury at the end of his life.

It was at Ohio State that Scott first became exposed to Chinese culture and started learning Chinese. His initial fascination soon developed into an absorbing professional interest. After graduating, he obtained a scholarship to spend the 1977–1978 academic year in Taiwan at the Inter-University Center (IUC) for Chinese Language Studies (run by a consortium of universities in the United States and administered by Stanford University, hence popularly known as the "Stanford Center"), at the time the most prestigious and most competitive, and undoubtedly the best, Chinese language-teaching program available. (IUC has since moved from Taipei, where it was attached to National Taiwan University, to Tsinghua University in Beijing.) It was there that Scott was given his Chinese name, Dai Sike 戴思客 ("the Guest Who Thinks"), which, aside from rendering his birth name phonetically, also proved programmatic. For most IUC students, the goal was to reach conversational and reading proficiency in Mandarin; but Scott eventually mastered the language so well as to be able to write publishable Chinese academic prose on his own—an ability rare even among accomplished Western Sinologists.

In 1979 Scott entered Harvard to pursue a one-year MA in Regional Studies East Asia. This program offered beginning graduate students who were not yet quite sure of their academic direction complete freedom in choosing from Harvard's rich and demanding course offerings, exposing them to different disciplines, styles of scholarship, and scholar personalities. (For full disclosure: I went through the same program in 1981–1982.) For Scott, coming from a public university in the Midwest, Harvard and all it stood for must have constituted something of a culture shock, and the choice of such a program in order to, as it were, "test the waters" of graduate school was undoubtedly a wise one. Scott came to realize that, first and foremost, he needed to improve his language skills. In 1980, therefore, he returned to Taiwan, where he studied not only Mandarin and Japanese, but also, in preparation for his future anthropological fieldwork, the local variant of Chinese (known variously as Southern Min, Hokkien, or Taiwanhua; it is more than a mere "dialect" of Mandarin, from which it differs as much as does Russian from German). Moreover, he took private lessons with the exiled Manchu prince Liu Yuyun 劉毓鋆 (Aisingioro Yuyun 愛新覺羅毓鋆, affectionally known to his students as Yulao 毓老) (1906–2011), who, barred by the Nationalist government from teaching Chinese students, taught the classics to numerous

Western (mostly US-based) Sinologists in precisely the way they had formerly been taught to members of the Qing imperial family (Xu 2014). This was an anthropological experience in its own right, but Liu demanded a kind of devotion that Scott was unprepared to offer; their relationship ended after a short time.

It must have been during this second stay in Taiwan that Scott married Song CaiYing 宋采霙 (Tamara), the daughter of Song Chengshu 宋承書, a retired senior KMT military officer and amateur scholar from Hunan Province who had fled to Taiwan in 1949 (for his memoirs, see Song 1986). CaiYing's younger sister is the celebrated movie actress Song Gangling 宋岡陵 (b. 1956). CaiYing had a son from a previous marriage, who—as was then normal practice—was growing up with his paternal family, but who also lived for some time with Scott and CaiYing when they were in Taiwan. Scott was close to his father-in-law, who was not only a fine calligrapher—I remember seeing his works at Scott's apartment—but had a deep interest in the classics, having published, *inter alia*, a book on the *Yijing* (Song 1977). To my regret, I never looked up the Song family during my various trips to Taiwan over the years, despite Scott's urging me to do so. During their long sojourns in Taiwan, Scott and CaiYing would choose accommodations that were located close to her parents in the Taipei suburbs; this also explains why Scott opted to do his field research in Taipei and not in southern Taiwan, which, due to its more "authentic" cultural make-up, has tended to be preferred by Western ethnographers.

In 1982, Scott returned to Harvard with CaiYing to pursue a PhD in social anthropology. For the next four years, he took a wide panoply of courses in Social Anthropology, Archaeology, and East Asian Studies. During much of that time, he supported himself by working as a Teaching Fellow attached to various Harvard undergraduate courses; the teaching experience thus gained, which is considered an indispensable part of graduate-level training in the US, stood him in good stead in his later career. Another one of his many side jobs at the time was helping the blind octogenarian poet Eino Friberg (1901–1995), who was living in Cambridge, Mass., put the finishing touches to his translation into English of the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. While typing out the manuscript, Scott was struck that the *Kalevala* was amenable to the same type of analysis that he had begun to apply to the *Yijing*, revealing underlying thematic cross-connections that determined the recurrence of certain motifs at specific points in the narrative. A truncated version of a long essay in which Scott explained these findings was

published, under both Friberg's and his own names, in the introductory section of Friberg's translation (Davis/Friberg 1989).

Scott and CaiYing returned to Taiwan in 1986, where Scott conducted his dissertation fieldwork under a Fulbright scholarship. They stayed on for more than a year after the scholarship ended, having to leave periodically to get Scott's visa renewed. Their only child, Em, was born in Taiwan in 1988. Eventually they moved back to the US, where they lived for a year in Scott's grandmother's house in Morgantown, West Virginia. In 1991, with his dissertation still unfinished, he landed a China Times Fellowship that took him to Taiwan once again. He finally completed his degree in 1992. The following year he was back in the US, based at his parents' home in Ohio, applying everywhere for academic jobs. (He also took the US Foreign Service examination, which he passed with flying colors; but he did not make it past the interview. Diplomacy probably would not have been a good match.)

At long last one of his numerous applications came through, and in 1993 Scott took up a prestigious two-year post-doctoral position with the Contemporary China Center at Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. Here he was mainly expected to conduct research on Taiwanese ethnography, and he acquitted himself of that task by writing a major article on the psychological and philosophical foundations of Chinese medicine that eventually appeared in the journal *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* (Davis 1996a). But his main interest had by then shifted to his textual research, and it was on this aspect of his work that he published in ANU's flagship journal, *East Asian History* (Davis 1995c). This did not sit well with his superiors—a fact that probably mattered more than Scott initially realized, considering that professional relationships in Australian universities, notwithstanding the country's projection of itself as laid-back and laissez-faire, tend to be deceptively rigid and hierarchical. Even so, Scott and his family were happy in Australia and would have stayed on if he had been able to land a permanent position there.

Instead, after another six-month interlude in the US, Scott was appointed in 1995 as postdoctoral researcher with the Institute of Literature and Philosophy at Academia Sinica, Taiwan's premier research institution. Here he was able to reconnect with K. C. Chang, who was serving as Academia Sinica's vice-president at the time (1994–1996), and who may well have had a hand in securing his appointment. Even though Scott was integrated pro-forma in ongoing collaborative research projects at his institute, he enjoyed virtually complete freedom to conduct his own research. His three books in

Chinese on his textual research came out in quick succession (Davis 1995a, 1995b, 1996b), and he published a flurry of articles and book reviews. In recognition of his productivity, the fellowship was extended for another year and a half, through early 1998. His attitude toward Taiwan during this time gradually became increasingly ambivalent—on the one hand, he made good use of Academia Sinica's excellent research infrastructure, but on the other hand, the occasional brashness and crassness of the social atmosphere started to grate on his nerves, and he felt that he needed to get out. Now half a decade past his PhD, he continued feverishly to apply for academic positions all over the world. Much to the surprise of his relatives-by-marriage, who had believed a Harvard PhD to be an ironclad guarantee for a prestigious professorship in the US, rejections kept coming.

In 1998, a job offer did arrive from Miyazaki International College 宮崎國際大學. Miyazaki 宮崎 is a bustling prefectural seat on the east coast of the island of Kyūshū 九州, in a beautiful albeit somewhat remote part of Japan. Founded in 1994, Miyazaki International College is a private institution, part of a network of Japanese universities that use English as the language of instruction in an attempt to promote an international outlook (*kokusaika* 國際化). As I understand it, each class was to be taught simultaneously as a class in the subject of instruction—in Scott's case, anthropology—and as an English-language class, with speaking and writing exercises geared to the class contents. Since Scott had supported himself and his family by teaching English during long stretches in Taiwan and the United States when he was without other funding, he was, in fact, superbly well-qualified for this kind of teaching. Albeit occasionally frustrated with the reticence of his Japanese students, he was successful as a teacher, was very much appreciated, and derived considerable satisfaction from his work.

Thanks to having learned Japanese as a graduate student, Scott was able to adapt to the Miyazaki environment relatively well. He explored the religious and archaeological sites of the surrounding countryside, became a connoisseur of many things Japanese—not least its culinary culture—and involved himself in the study of Japanese folklore, presenting papers at conferences (e.g., Davis 2001). Had he stayed longer, this might have developed into another major research interest. His particular love was traditional Japanese music; he learned to sing folk ballads (*uta* 歌), accompanying himself on the *shamisen* 三線 (a three-stringed instrument plucked with a plectrum); he became so good at this that he would even perform in public occasionally. Aside from teaching and cultural activities, he found ample time for his work on the Chinese classics, resulting in his first book in English (Davis 2012).

Although he was never granted a sabbatical, in 2008, his university dispatched him for a term as exchange professor to Woosuk University 又石大學校 in Wanju 完州, North Chŏlla Province 全羅北道, South Korea—even more provincial than Miyazaki. This experience added a new facet to his East Asia expertise and exposed him to unfamiliar yet attractive musical forms, as well as to the Korean language.

Aside from his Korean interlude and occasional trips back to Ohio and Taiwan, Scott stayed in Miyazaki for fourteen years—the longest appointment he ever held. Initially hired as Associate Professor of Anthropology, he was promoted to Full Professor in 2008. But due to Japan's economic stagnation and declining birth rate, Miyazaki International College was falling on hard times. Scott saw the writing on the wall and left at the beginning of 2012. At that point, CaiYing relocated to Quincy, Massachusetts, to be near Em, who had moved to the US for college and was living in the Boston area.

Scott spent the 2012 calendar year at Erlangen, Germany, where he had been awarded a one-year Visiting Fellowship with the International Consortium for Research in the Humanities at Friedrich-Alexander-University. (For full disclosure: I had been a Fellow at the Consortium for a shorter period in 2011; unfortunately, I just missed seeing Scott during his time in Germany.) His host was Michael Lackner (b. 1953), a Sinologist of wide-ranging interests, who remembers Scott arriving on some dark evening in the deep of winter, all alone, with little baggage aside from his *shamisen*. A friendship was quickly struck up. The Consortium's cross-cultural comparative research project on "Fate, Freedom and Prognostication: Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe," seemed tailor-made for Scott. Suddenly, his *Yijing* research was smack at the center of a wider academic agenda, and his studies of Plessner, as well, elicited considerable interest. He blossomed intellectually. Arguably, this one year spent as part of a group of like-minded colleagues was the culmination of his academic career.

One of the other fellows whom Scott befriended at the Erlangen Consortium during the same year was the prominent *Yijing* scholar Zhang Wenzhi 張文智 (b. 1967) from Shandong University. Scott helped Zhang in the initial stages of his translation into English of his teacher Liu Dajun's 劉大鈞 (b. 1943) seminal *Introduction to the Book of Changes* (Liu Dajun 1986). (The translation was eventually published [Liu Dajun 2019] with Zhang alone listed as the translator and Scott contributing a blurb for the cover.) For the time after Erlangen, Zhang secured an appointment for Scott at Shandong University, where Scott taught English in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature between early 2014

and July 2015. He had visited Mainland China several times before, but this was his first long stay there. North China in particular was something of a culture shock for someone who had become acculturated to Chinese culture in Taiwan, and Jinan was not, in the long run, a congenial environment. Hence, in 2016, Scott moved south to Nanjing University, where he worked until 2019. Profiting of his special expertise, the University asked him to teach students of Chinese literature to translate Classical Chinese into English. Besides, he continued with his own research on the Chinese classics.

By all accounts, Scott was a beloved and respected teacher both at Shandong and Nanjing Universities. In 2018, while at Nanjing, he received the Firmiana Award (*Wutongjiang* 梧桐獎) for being one of the university's best "cultural envoys" (*wenhua shizhe* 文化使者). It was a well-deserved honor.

I saw Scott for the last time in September 2019, when he stopped over in Los Angeles on his way to Ohio from Nanjing. His return to China, if it was even envisaged, was precluded by the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic. During those difficult years, he sheltered with CaiYing and Em in Quincy, with intermittent trips to Westerville to take care of his mother. He made use of his enforced leisure time to finish his second major book in English, intended for a series of monographs published through Erlangen's International Consortium. Working closely with the series editors, he produced a manuscript that was sent to the publisher. I last received a fairly upbeat email from him in the summer of 2024. Unable to afford living in the US any longer, he had moved to Chiang Mai, Thailand, from where he was sounding out possibilities to resume teaching in Mainland China. But before these plans could come to fruition, he died suddenly at Chiang Mai on 1 September 2024.

Those who never met Scott—and this, alas, includes the vast majority of Sinologists—truly missed out. Had they had the good fortune of spending time with him, they would have quickly realized that they were in the presence of a truly superior mind who was at the same time an uncommonly kind person—sensitive, artistic, considerate, laid-back, modest to a fault, and sometimes incredibly funny—an excellent observer of social realities with a knack of spotting the little absurdities of life. Now that we can no longer talk to him in person, we must fall back on his writings. The bibliography here appended may well be incomplete, and much more of his scholarship remains in unpublished or semi-published form. Given its complexity, rendering all of it fully publishable may prove to be a difficult challenge. But what he did publish, and especially his forthcoming final book, is tremendously valuable and topical. Looking at Chinese culture from a unique vantage point at the interface of social theory,

medical anthropology, the study of Chinese common religion, and Classical Chinese philology, Scott's contributions to Sinology will, one hopes, come to exert a profound influence on the future development of the field.

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