

*At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on October 17, 2006,  
the following tribute to the life and service of the late Kwang-chih  
Chang was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.*

## **KWANG-CHIH CHANG**

BORN: April 15, 1931

DIED: January 3, 2001

Kwang-chih Chang (Zhang Guangzhi, known to his friends as K.C.) was born in Beijing on April 15, 1931. K.C. attended primary and middle school in Beijing during the Sino-Japanese war. The schools he attended were modern, Western-style institutions. Years later, K.C. wrote that he had obtained there a "rudimentary but significant education in traditional Confucian scholarship" that laid a foundation for his later work. K.C. had an early political awakening - as was typical at the time - his sympathies were oriented left. His elder brother joined the Red Army in 1945 and remained in mainland China. K.C. was not to see him again until 1980.

In 1946 his father, Chang Wo-Chüa, a native Taiwanese and noted poet and essayist, took his family back to Taiwan. K.C. attended the prestigious Jianguo School in Taipei where he acted in plays and wrote politically colored essays. Because of his political sympathies and personal associations, K.C. was blacklisted as a Communist sympathizer. On April 6, 1949, he was arrested and kept in detention for a year. In his memoirs, published in Taiwan in 1998, K.C. recounts his prison life and describes how its impact stirred in him a scientific interest in the motives and principles governing human behavior. In the Fall of 1950, after passing the university entrance exams, he matriculated in National Taiwan University enrolling in the newly-founded Anthropology Department, which was modeled upon the anthropology program at Harvard. The Anthropology faculty at Taiwan was headed by Professor Li Chi, the Harvard trained founding father of the archaeology of China and K.C.'s mentor. The archaeological curriculum concentrated upon the Yellow River Basin, regarded as the cradle of Chinese civilization. In 1951, K.C. was afforded the opportunity to return to Taiwan where he began his ethnographic and archaeological field research. Given his experience under the Kuomintang régime, it is understandable that K.C. looked to continue his academic career in the United States.

Upon completing his military obligation in the fall of 1951, K.C. arrived at Harvard to begin his graduate career. His main academic advisor was the demanding Professor Hallam Movius, Jr., a specialist in the Paleolithic archaeology of Asia and Europe. K.C. participated in the excavations directed by Professor Movius at the Abri Pataud in France. Although K.C.

entertained becoming a paleolithic archaeologist, it was his earlier interests and training that pulled him back to the study of the emergence of Chinese civilization. Upon completion of his Ph.D. in 1961, K.C. moved to Yale. Rising rapidly through the ranks, in 1970 he became Department Chair.

In 1977, K.C. was called back to Harvard as Professor of Anthropology, Curator of East Asian Archaeology at the Peabody Museum, with a concurrent appointment in East Asian Languages and Civilizations. From 1981 to 1984 he chaired Harvard's Department of Anthropology.

K.C. was an extraordinarily productive scholar. His more than 350 publications include some 20 books and monographs. His 1963 publication *The Archaeology of China* stood without peer for over three decades and four editions in informing the western world of the wonders of China's ancient past. His majesterial *Shang Civilization* (1980) and his site report *Fengpitou, Tapenkeng, and the Archaeology of Taiwan* transformed the way we understand the emergence of Chinese civilization. For his undergraduate core class he wrote another book, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China* (1983). This book, with its rich theoretical insights, has impacted all concerned with the emergence of ancient civilizations. For almost half a century K.C.'s numerous publications stood alone in pioneering and promoting over 3000 years of understanding China's past.

K.C.'s fondest dream was to undertake an excavation on the Chinese mainland. His persistent efforts were stymied by those in authority. Finally, in 1988, Xu Pingfang, director of the Institute of Archaeology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, permitted the dialogue to begin, and K.C. was given permission to undertake excavations along the lower reaches of the Yellow River at Shangqui, believed to be a ritual center of the Shang Civilization. I vividly recall those days, for K.C. was ecstatic his dream had come true! Then came June 4, 1989 - Tiananmen Square - an indefinite postponement was declared. There are those that believe this shock triggered the outbreak of K.C.'s fatal Parkinson's disease that summer.

In 1994, severely ill, K.C. accepted the position of Vice-President of Academia Sinica, Taiwan's leading research institution. He was a figure of renown and partially succeeded in improving research conditions and academic review processes. As his illness became more debilitating he retired from Harvard in 1996 and returned to Cambridge in 1998.

K.C.'s gigantic stature in academia won him many parchments and many medals. He wore them with great modesty. He took quiet pride in having a number of graduate students that filled prominent positions. He was an avid sports enthusiast with full knowledge of the Celtics roster. To sports was added his enthusiasm for detective stories, popular culture, and very importantly, food. He even did a book about it. A deeply earnest man, he was scrupulously fair with a wonderful sense of the comic. He was an accomplished calligrapher, practicing every day, until his health stayed this art.

In 1957 K.C. married his fellow student from Taiwan, Hwei Li Chang. They had two children, a son Julian, now at the Kennedy School, and a daughter, Nora.

K.C.'s passing marks the end of an era. No one alive today can match his synthetic vision and no one can address the complexities of Chinese archaeology in their wider contexts with similar authority. As a scholar and as a person he was an enduring source of inspiration.

Respectfully submitted,

William Fash

Arthur Kleinman

Lothar von Falkenhausen

C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Chair