

JOSEPH RICHMOND LEVENSON

1920–1969

Joseph Richmond Levenson, Sather Professor of History at the University of California (Berkeley), drowned April 6, 1969 while on holiday in Northern California. He is survived by his sons Richard, Leo, and Thomas, his daughter Irene Ann, and his widow, the former Rosemary Montefiore.

Joseph Richmond Levenson was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1920 and earned his B.A. at Harvard in 1941. He served in the United States Navy beginning in 1942 as both a language intelligence officer and in combat operations in the South Pacific. After the conclusion of hostilities, he served as a member of the United States Naval Technical Mission to Japan until his discharge from the service as a senior grade lieutenant in 1946. Following the war, he returned to Harvard for his M.A. in 1947 and his Ph.D. in 1949. From 1949 to 1951 he was a member of the Society of Fellows of Harvard University. He went to the University of California in 1951 as Assistant Professor of Chinese History and he received the Sather Chair in 1965. His career was marked by distinguished appointments. He was a Fulbright Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, 1954–55; a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Behavioral Studies, 1958–59; a Guggenheim Fellow, 1962–63; and a Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies in 1966–67.

He was deeply concerned with the intellectual transformation of China in the past century, although his knowledge and understanding of the history of China across its full span was masterful. To his study he brought a profound and sensitive comprehension of the institutions and processes of Chinese life and thought. It was his hope that a peaceful and humane relationship between China and the West could evolve from a clear understanding by Westerners of the tragic passage of China into the modern world. No Western scholar has written more thoughtfully, more originally, with more authority, and with greater effect on the intellectual tensions, conflicts, and resolutions of modern China. Four major works within fifteen years created a foundation for and an approach to China's modern history that are of enduring value. These are: *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953) and the trilogy *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*, which consists of *The Problem of Intellectual Continuity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958); *The Problem of Monarchical Decay* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); *The Problem of Historical Significance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) all combined for the first time in a single volume in 1968 by the University of California Press.

His teaching and his writing were both marked by an absolute honesty and a nobility of thought that flowed from his person. He was a man of surpassing kindness, generosity, and sweetness of spirit.

JOHN A. HARRISON