

Obituaries

Prescott Clarke (1935–1980)

Prescott Clarke, named after the great American historian W. H. Prescott, but known to his friends simply as Pete, died of cancer in Melbourne, Australia, early in March 1980.

He took his first degree in History at Harvard, where J. K. Fairbank's course led him into the further study of Chinese language and history. In 1961 he completed a masters thesis at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London which became the basis of his *Research Guide to China Coast Newspapers* (Harvard, 1962) published in collaboration with Frank H. King. His main interest thereafter became the study of the interconnection between Western missionaries and the Taiping movement, one fruit of which was an article "The Coming of God to Kwangsi," published in *Papers on Far Eastern History* (Canberra, 1973). In May 1979 he presented a paper on this theme at the conference of historians of the Taiping in Nanjing. At the time of his death he had also compiled an extensive bibliography of Western language writings on the Taiping and, in collaboration with myself, had nearly completed editing a documentary selection of Western reports on the Taiping. It is hoped that both these works will be published in the near future.

Pete took up an appointment at Monash University in Melbourne in 1966. He launched, very successfully, the teaching of Chinese history there and became a stimulating, though far from orthodox, ambassador-cum-critic of America and interpreter of China to Australians. As Professor J. D. Legge stated in his funeral oration

Pete made a quite extraordinary adaptation to Australia, though without ever forgetting that he was an American. His Boston roots went deep. And, though critical of some of the international policies of his country, he never turned his back on it. He retained a sense of involvement in the responsibilities that America has assumed in the world at large. Amongst other things, in his study of China was his belief that Americans should be made more aware of the importance of Chinese civilization. At the same time, he became very much a member of the society in which he had made his second home.

Pete loved all three countries—America, China, Australia—intensely, and his passing is a loss to all of them, as well as to the wider world of scholarship. "Of the Primal Spirit was his substance," and he was indeed a strong wave in the river of darkness and light.

J. S. GREGORY
Latrobe University, Australia