

Biography — Bernard Solomon

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Professor Bernard Simon Solomon, who had a long and distinguished career in teaching, and in scholarship related especially to the Chinese School of Names *mingjia*, passed away December 2, 2022 in New York City at the age of 98.

He was born in Bronx, New York on June 10, 1924 and attended Morris High School, where he was selected as “the student most likely to succeed.” After serving in the U.S. Army Cavalry Corps during WW II, he enrolled in the Army Language Training Institute to study Chinese. He received his B.S. in Mathematics from CCNY and M.A. and PH.D degrees in Far Eastern Languages from Harvard. There, between 1952 and 1958, he was a Research Assistant on the monumental, but ill-fated, Harvard-Yenching Institute Chinese-English Dictionary project, under the direction of the eminent Sinologist and Mongolist Francis W. Cleaves. In 1952, he and Dr. Glen W. Baxter embarked on the weighty project of editing Achilles Fang’s annotated translation of *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms (220-265), chapters 69-78*, taken from the *Zizhi Tongjian (The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government)* by the Song historian Sima Guang (1019-1086). In 1954, after pondering the entry in the Chinese dictionary *Cihai* on the number “one” in Chinese, Solomon published a challenging article entitled “One is No Number in China and the West” in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. In 1955, Harvard published his dissertation *The Veritable Record of the T’ang Emperor Shun-tsung*, which is arguably the earliest surviving example of the genre known as *shilu* (veritable record). Bernard Solomon had many associations with scholarly luminaries at Harvard in the 1950s, namely Achilles Fang, Glen Baxter, Serge Elisseeff, James R. Hightower, William Hung, Yang Lien-sheng, Elling Eide, and Benjamin Schwartz.

Following his time at Harvard, he went on to teach Chinese language, literature and civilization at SUNY-New Paltz in upstate New York (1959-1962) and at Queens College in New York City, where he became Professor of Chinese (1962-1986). Between 1967 and 1978, he received NEH and ACLS grants to pursue research into the Chinese School of Names, specifically the thinkers Hui Shih and Gongsun Long. Two articles were published in 1969 and 1981/1983 on this school in *Monumenta Serica*, and owing to the support of professors James R. Hightower and A.C. Graham, he continued this research, resulting in the 2013 monograph *On the School of Names in Ancient China*, published by Monumenta Serica. This study looked at the texts through the approach of language games and how language was used *qua* language. During the 1980s he contributed some of this research to the Columbia University Seminar on Traditional China, directed by Professor William Theodore de Bary.

Professor Solomon’s excursions into the intricacies of language, along with his grounding in Mathematics, resulted in some of the most challenging and skillful scholarly approaches to translation and textual analysis in the field of Chinese studies. But it should also be noted that he was a remarkably inspiring teacher who brought many students into the field of Chinese studies who followed his path into teaching and scholarship. Never one to promote his own considerable accomplishments, he was much beloved by students, colleagues and fellow scholars in the field, and by the support of his friends in the Vermeer Apartments in New York City.

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