NOTES ON CONVENTIONS

1. All ages are given in Chinese rendering, which assumes a person to be one year old (sui) when born.

2. In China, as elsewhere, units of measurement were not consistent. One Chinese inch (cun), for instance, may vary in length from dynasty to dynasty or from one region to another during the same period. Different scales could also coexist in one locale simultaneously. Therefore, linear measurements referred to in Chinese texts are simply translated without conversion. Hence, 1 chi (Chinese foot) is rendered 1 foot; 3 cun, 3 inches. The subunit fen is rendered 0.1 inch. An exception is made for li, which appears in romanized form instead of “mile.” The span designated by one li varies considerably with time and locale; in 1929 it was standardized to 500 meters.

3. To avoid confusion, the contemporary measurement of, say, a shoe from the Song dynasty is given first in the metric system, followed by conversion to the American inch in parentheses: 21 cm (8.4 inches).

4. Units of weight measurement are translated without conversion. Hence, 2 liang is rendered 2 ounces. Since there are 10 qian to 1 liang, 3 qian is rendered 0.3 ounces.