# THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

# CHINESE LITERATURE

**VOLUME II: FROM 1375** 

EDITED BY
KANG-I SUN CHANG AND
STEPHEN OWEN

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Two Precious Scroll Narratives on Guanyin and Her Acolytes (Honolulu, 2008); and Meng Jiangnü Brings Down the Great Wall: Ten Versions of a Chinese Legend (Seattle, 2008).

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## Preface

The two-volume *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* traces the development of Chinese literary culture over three millennia, from the earliest inscriptions to contemporary works, including the literature of the Chinese diaspora. Our purpose is to provide a coherent narrative that can be read from cover to cover. In order to achieve consistency and readability, our contributors have consulted with one another throughout the writing process, particularly when subject areas and time periods overlap from one chapter to the next. We have carefully considered the structure and goals of each individual chapter, as well as the best point at which to break the history into two volumes so as to add to, rather than detract from, the understanding of the reader.

Literary history as practiced in China has been shaped both by premodern Chinese categories and by nineteenth-century European literary history; historical accounts of Chinese literature in the West have in turn been shaped by Chinese practices, whose categories have become habitual even though the result often seems strange to Western readers. In these volumes, we have the opportunity to question these categories. In particular, we have attempted as much as possible to avoid the division of the field into genres and to move toward a more integrated historical approach, creating a cultural history or a history of literary culture. This is the most natural approach to the earliest time periods, and still relatively easy in the middle period, but becomes increasingly difficult in the Ming, Qing, and modern period. It is possible, however, to achieve our goal by providing a clear framing of the general cultural (and sometimes political) history. For example, the Tang chapter in Volume I has not been divided into the standard categories of "Tang poetry," "Tang prose," "Tang stories," and "Tang ci." Rather, we will explore the period in terms of "The age of Empress Wu," "The reign of Emperor Xuanzong and so on," treating poetry, prose, anecdote books, and stories as part of a cohesive historical whole. Similarly, the chapter discussing early and mid-Ming literature in Volume II is divided into "Early Ming to 1450," "The period from 1450

to 1520," and "The period from 1520 to 1572," with each section focusing on topics of literary culture such as "Political persecution and censorship," "New perspectives on place," "Exile literature," and so on. Issues of genre do need to be addressed, but the historical context of a given genre's appearance and its transformations clarifies the role of genre in ways that are made difficult by a genre-based organizational scheme.

A problem one encounters when using this historical approach is that there are a number of works that evolved over a long course of history and as such do not belong to a single historical moment. This primarily involves popular material of the vernacular culture, which appears relatively late in the textual record, but often has older roots. This issue has been handled by Wilt Idema (Chapter 5, Volume II), who has worked to dovetail his treatment with the authors of the historical chapters.

Due to the size and complexity of our undertaking, we have decided not to encourage extended plot summaries, and instead have favored short synopses of novels and longer plays. In addition, much of Chinese literature is in the form of relatively short works. The standard Chinese approach (as well as the approach of other Cambridge histories of literature) has been to focus on individual authors. Inevitably, our approach also involves the discussion of some of the great writers throughout the ages. Apart from those authors whose lives (real or invented) have become part of the reading of their works, however, we have in many cases focused on types of situations or writing rather than on individuals.

Maintaining a coherent narrative becomes more difficult in the Ming, Qing, and modern periods, as literature becomes more diverse and the options for its dissemination increase. In order to restrict this history to a reasonable size and scope, we have chosen not to discuss the literatures of linguistic minorities in the present-day People's Republic of China (PRC). Our historical approach also compels us to exclude literature written in Chinese in Korea, Vietnam, and Japan, although the circulation of literary texts between China and other East Asian countries is touched upon when the exchange is integral to the history of Chinese literary culture itself.

Histories of literature are inevitably shaped by the academic conventions and standard categories of a given national literature, as much as by the material itself. In the case of Chinese literature, the periods, names, generic terms, and conventional translations of Chinese words can occasionally pose a substantial barrier to even the most enthusiastic reader. We have therefore tried as much as possible to find ways to present our material that will not

pose unnecessary difficulties to readers familiar only with Anglo-European traditions.

We have tried to be consistent with the translations of terms and titles, although contributors have been urged to use their own best translations for the titles of works confined to their own period. Each initial occurrence of a book title in the text will be given in translation first and then succeeded by a transliteration of the original Chinese title in parentheses. Unless otherwise specified, all translations in these chapters are the work of the contributors. The Chinese characters in book titles, terms, and names are not given in the text; in most cases they can be found in the glossary at the end of book.

Given length and space constraints, sources are not referenced in footnotes but are often mentioned in the text itself. The bibliographies are very selective; in particular, due to the magnitude of publications in Chinese, we have omitted from the bibliographies works of Chinese scholarship to which the editors and authors of these chapters are deeply indebted.

### Acknowledgments

After working for several years on the *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, I have incurred a great debt of gratitude to many people. First of all, I am grateful to my coeditor Stephen Owen, who was extremely helpful throughout the process of assembling this book, especially in resolving inconsistencies between the two volumes. I am thankful to Linda Bree of Cambridge University Press for inviting us to embark on this project, and also to Edward Kamens of Yale University for his recommendation of us to the Press. The Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University generously supported a workshop in 2004 for the contributors to this book, and subsequently provided grants to help coordinate work on the project. We are all grateful to Mimi Yiengpruksawan, Haun Saussy, and Abbey Newman of the Council for their continuous support.

I also owe special thanks to the editorial consultant, Alice Cheang, who did thoughtful and extensive stylistic editing on the first drafts of these chapters. Although most chapters have since been rewritten, Alice's initial editing remains important. Another individual who deserves special words of gratitude is Eleanor Goodman, whose meticulous copy-editing on these chapters has contributed substantially to the readability of this book. In addition to her copy-editing, I would like to thank her for her work indexing the *History*. Others whose help has been greatly appreciated are Pauline Lin and Matthew Towns, who offered suggestions on early drafts.

Several friends and scholars have also graciously offered aid in various ways and hence my sincere thanks go to them: Lee Chi-hsiang, Chu Hao-i, Wu Chengxue, Liu Zunju, Xue Haiyan, and Wan-wan Huang for providing Chinese reference sources as well as insight into the material; the late historian Frederick W. Mote for offering wise counsel; Yu Ying-shih, Monica Yu, Chinshing Huang, Ayling Wang, Ellen Widmer, Lena Huang, Zhang Hongsheng, Jwo-Farn Chiou, K. C. Sun, and Wang Guojun for their encouragement and practical help during various phases of the project; Guo Yingde, Tian Yuan

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Tan, Chen Guoqiu (Leonard Chan), Paize Keulemans, Hung-lam Chu, and Hok-lam Chan for alerting me to some generally ignored facts concerning Ming—Qing literature and culture; Zhang Hui, Zhang Jian, Kang Zhengguo, Sheng Anfeng, and Jeongsoo Shin for assistance in translation; John Treat, Marshall Brown, Wang Ning, Lena Rydholm, Peter Chen-main Wang, Cheng Yu-yu, Olga Lomová, Fan Ming-ju, Choe Yong Chul, and Chen Pingyuan for sharing their views on writing literary history; Ellen Hammond, Sarah Elman, Yang Guanghui, Chi-wah Chan, Tao Yang, David Sensabaugh, Tai-loi Ma, Lie-Chiou Huang, and An Pingqiu for tracking down library and museum research materials; Wang Ao for making referrals and supplying helpful information, often at the last minute; and C. C. Chang for helping with technical problems ranging from computer assistance to bibliographic and glossary compilation, as well as for his constant moral support.

Needless to say, I gratefully acknowledge the sustained efforts of our contributors for devoting considerable time to writing their long chapters, each of which covers an extremely wide range of knowledge. Among our contributors, David Wang and Wilt Idema deserve special thanks for their generosity in offering guidance and advice – in addition to writing their own chapters, they offered invaluable help with the other chapters in the present volume.

Finally, I would like to give thanks to the copy-editor, John Gaunt, and also to the literature editor, Maartje Scheltens, and production manager Jodie Barnes at Cambridge University Press, whose help with this project is very much appreciated.

K. S. C.

#### Introduction to Volume II

The second volume of the Cambridge History of Chinese Literature is comparable in chronological scope to the single-volume Cambridge series in European literatures. Using the year 1375 - rather than the standard date of 1368 (i.e. the first year of the Ming dynasty) - as the temporal division between the first and second volumes brings to light our unique approach to the question of periodization. Thus far, almost all available histories of Chinese literature periodize by dynasty, so we cannot dispense with this habit completely. We have chosen, however, to divide periods differently whenever dynastic periodization becomes problematic. For example, although the Ming dynasty was founded in 1368, in terms of literary history the year 1375 is by far the more important date to remember. By the year 1375, the important surviving intellectuals from the Yuan, such as Yang Weizhen (1296-1370), Ni Can (1301-1374), and Liu Ji (1311-1375), had already died. More importantly, in 1374, Zhu Yuanzhang, the Hongwu Emperor and founding father of the Ming (r. 1368-1398), executed the great poet Gao Qi (1336-1374) and hence inaugurated a reign of terror for intellectuals. To a certain extent, the distinctive early Ming culture began with the advent of Zhu Yuanzhang's brutal political persecution, which would obliterate nearly an entire generation of poets brought up in the last years of Mongol rule.

It was not until around 1400 that literature had the chance to flourish again after a long hiatus, when the Yongle Emperor (r. 1403–1424) began to initiate his many ambitious literary and cultural projects. Given this clear division in the literary history of the period, it seems most useful to commence the second volume of the *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* with the year 1375, while allowing for some overlap in material. Similarly, we have placed the May Fourth Movement of 1919 not at the beginning of "modernity," as is traditionally done, but rather in the middle of a longer process starting in the latter part of the Qing. (See Chapter 6, "Chinese literature from 1841 to 1937," by David Der-wei Wang.) These examples suggest that literature has

its own self-regulating directions that need not be identified with dynastic changes.

This volume also reaffirms the importance of the era that extends from the Ming–Qing period (1368–1912) to the present. In most histories of Chinese literature available today, the period from the Ming–Qing onward has been considered less significant than previous periods, while the modern and contemporary period is largely neglected by Chinese literary historians. In a tradition in which literary works were often judged by how well they emulated the past, individual writers of later times could easily be overlooked. Throughout this volume, however, we will demonstrate that belatedness need not connote derivativeness, providing examples of ways of inheriting and rewriting a tradition that are themselves creative and innovative. In fact, it is during the period from the Ming–Qing to the present that one witnesses the enormous diversity of writing that proved difficult to accommodate within the traditional Chinese categories.

As in the first volume, the emphasis here is not so much on individual writers, but rather on the forms and styles of writing, especially those that characterize increasingly diverse literary directions. Again, the general approach in this volume will be historical. The only exception is Chapter 5, by Wilt L. Idema ("Prosimetric and verse narrative"), which covers a large body of "popular" material, as well as works that evolved over a lengthy course of history and thus cannot be assigned to a single historical moment. In the textual record, these works tend to appear relatively late. Most of these texts have no authors, however; and even in the rare cases in which the author is known, it is often difficult to determine when and where these texts were produced and printed. Wilt L. Idema has done an excellent job in coordinating his chapter with the authors of the historical chapters, judging whether some "popular" works in their various instantiations might have belonged to certain literatic culture. All this ensures that our *History* presents a coherent narrative, despite its multi-author approach.

In general, we do not discuss Chinese-language literature that was produced in Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. This is partly due to our unique historical approach, but also because of the fact that readers can find relevant information elsewhere, such as in the *Columbia History of Chinese Literature* (edited by Victor H. Mair). Chapter 1 of this volume ("Literature of the early Ming to mid-Ming, 1375–1572," by Kang-i Sun Chang) is the sole exception. During the early to mid-Ming, the circulation of literary texts between Ming China and other East Asian countries was directly responsive to the important questions of censorship and self-censorship at the time. As such, this is one case where

the mutual influences between China and its neighboring countries can be integrated into the history of Chinese literary culture itself. A study of this literary communication also provides insight into the unique power of writers to tell stories across national boundaries. Moreover, it was during the early and mid-Ming, when traffic between China and other East Asian countries became increasingly heavy, that Chinese writers began to produce a large number of literary works about foreign travels. Later, during the mid-Qing, as Shang Wei informs us in his chapter "The literati era and its demise (1723–1840)," China and its neighboring countries continued to maintain close ties in publishing and book marketing.

Although the issue of regionalization is an important topic in this volume, we have decided, aside from the aforementioned examples involving larger regions in East Asia, to keep our regional focus within the boundaries of China. In each chapter, we discuss significant local networks when appropriate – especially when those local networks also serve as a counterbalance to what was recognized as the "national" literary culture. For example, the mid-Ming literary field was at first dominated by a group of writers (the socalled "Early Revivalists") consisting of the "Seven Early Masters" and their associates in the north, but beginning in the early sixteenth century the literary center of China gradually shifted to the Jiangnan region in the south. According to some contemporary reports, this shift was precipitated by the Jiangnan region becoming an important economic and cultural center as early as the late fifteenth century. It is also worth noting that, unlike the Revivalists in the north who all began as high officials in the court, it was the poets and artists in the Jiangnan (especially Suzhou) region who were the first to earn their living by selling paintings and poems. Later Suzhou would also become known for its community of female poets and long-standing tradition of literary men supporting talented women. This feminine side of the Suzhou culture, embodying a quality of delicate romanticism, seems completely opposed to the heroic ideal so characteristic of the "Early Revivalists" in the north.

Print culture is another primary concern of this volume. In each chapter, the author offers commentary on the ways texts were produced and circulated, and, if possible, on the nature of the readership. In particular, the chapter "The literary culture of the late Ming (1573–1644)" by Tina Lu describes how the commercial print industry underwent rapid development during the Wanli reign (1573–1620). This period produced six times more commercial imprints than the preceding fifty years. As a consequence, the readership of literary works became more numerous and dramatically more diverse during the

late Ming. As Tina Lu explains, examination aids (with classical commentaries), collections of dramatic songs, and guides to proper female behavior all flourished in an unprecedented way. It was also during this period that the number of courtesans who socialized with male literati and became authors themselves vastly increased. In the meantime, "reconstructed" Yuan dramas were extensively printed – the best example being Zang Maoxun's (1550–1620) *Anthology of Yuan Plays* – although prior to this period the dramatist and lyricist Li Kaixian (1502–1568) had already published many of his "rewritten" texts of the Yuan plays. These examples from the late Ming demonstrate how the literary past was continually re-created and reread in later ages.

Despite our reservations about habitual periodization by dynasty, we believe that the dynastic transition from the Ming to the Qing (the Manchu dynasty) deserves special attention, because early Qing literature was profoundly concerned with the change of dynasty as well as with the meaning of the late Ming legacy. During this transitional period, there was an extraordinary outburst of creative energy in works of historical retrospection. Given this, we have used the year 1644 – despite the various chronological ambiguities about the beginnings of the Qing – as the division between the second and the third chapters in this volume. As Wai-yee Li (in Chapter 3, "Early Oing to 1723") argues, the label "late Ming" was basically a "Qing product," and if early Qing writers "invented" the late Ming, it was only because they were constantly "trying to understand and define their own historical moment." Under great pressure to redefine themselves, writers of the early Qing often faced the difficult decision of whether to align themselves with the Ming loyalists or the Qing conformers - although there were shades of gradation between the two camps. As a result, this period also created an unprecedented number of literary societies and communities centered around the members' political and regional affiliations, which eventually led to new forms of literature. For example, the Jiangnan region, which originally served as the stronghold of a late Ming political party known as the "Revival Society," later became the center of an important theatrical culture (known particularly for political drama) during the Qing.

Biographies of notable late Ming women – in particular, courtesans whose lives paralleled the prosperity and decline of a bygone era – also became popular during the Qing. Works such as Yu Huai's *Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge* and Mao Xiang's *Reminiscences of the Plum Shadows Studio* testify that the romantic ideals of the late Ming continued to survive into the Manchu dynasty. In many ways, their love for the courtesans served to express the early Qing loyalists' need for commemoration. In contrast, writers

the mutual influences between China and its neighboring countries can be integrated into the history of Chinese literary culture itself. A study of this literary communication also provides insight into the unique power of writers to tell stories across national boundaries. Moreover, it was during the early and mid-Ming, when traffic between China and other East Asian countries became increasingly heavy, that Chinese writers began to produce a large number of literary works about foreign travels. Later, during the mid-Qing, as Shang Wei informs us in his chapter "The literati era and its demise (1723–1840)," China and its neighboring countries continued to maintain close ties in publishing and book marketing.

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