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WILLOW CATKINS

*Festschrift for Dr Lily Xiao Hong Lee
on the Occasion of Her 75th Birthday*

*Edited by
Shirley Chan
Barbara Hendrichke
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WILLOW CATKINS



FOREWORD

Abundant willow catkins

Dr Lily Xiao Hong Lee has been a leading figure in global studies of women in China for many decades. Her research has informed that of the contributors to this festschrift but also of many other students and scholars around the world. There would be no researcher of any note in the area of women in China who has not made repeated use of her work. The chapters collected in this current volume focus on the big questions of China, gender, women, text and history, reflecting the focus of her own work over many decades.

When Lily Lee commenced writing on women in China, the field was in its infancy. Her early efforts helped shape the research that has been conducted ever since. When few people recognised the importance of adopting a gendered approach to the study of China, Lily was already in the field presenting a persuasive argument showcasing how the study of women informs all aspects of China's past—from revolution to religion through to political and classical philosophy and religion. Few scholars have the capacity to reach so deftly across such rich and foundational fields. She also revealed the breadth of her disciplinary expertise, making ready use of literary, historical, philosophical, visual and aural materials in her writing. Her pioneering role, her breadth of impact and her continued support of others in the field are hallmarks of her career. We all owe her an enormous debt of gratitude.

Of outstanding ongoing impact is Lily Lee's international

Biographical dictionary of Chinese women project. Lily coordinated hundreds of contributors around the world in this monumental project that demanded intricate attention to detail, patience, persistence and collegiality to complete. The *Dictionary* takes readers and researchers not only through the key female figures of Chinese history over a vast stretch of human history—from antiquity through to 2000. It also showcases, sometimes for the first time ever in English, individual women's contributions to China's literature, politics, warfare, art, music, religion, industry and philosophy. This project has resulted in four volumes published in English between 1998 and 2014 by M E Sharpe (Armonk, NY). One volume has already been published in Chinese, by Sydney University Press (2010); the others will follow. These volumes of the *Dictionary* are housed in every significant library around the world and have become the first point of reference for scholars and students ever since their much awaited appearance. Their comprehensive reach and authoritative content has attracted high praise from reviewers in all parts of the world. Contemporary scholars who had never had the opportunity to work together were drawn into collaboration through Lily's project, bridging continental divides and consolidating bonds between scholars in this important and expanding academic field. Lily Lee has made her mark in history with the publication of these volumes alone. But her work was not limited to this already mammoth project.

While maintaining her work on the *Biographical dictionary of Chinese women*, Lily continued to publish on other topics as well. Most notable is her co-authored book with Sue Wiles on the women who participated in the Chinese Communist Party's Long March. The stories of these remarkable women had been neglected for decades and almost nothing at all was available on them in English until Lily and Sue published their volume in 1999. Since then, *Women of the Long March* has become the first reference point for all of the later work on the women of this period and this pivotal event in Chinese history.

Lily's training and experience as a librarian brought home to us all the considerable value of knowledgeable librarians in creating first-rate research. A capacity to organise complex data, reformulate it and present it in a readable and an accessible fashion has been a hallmark of Lily's research. Attention to detail and data organisation are also attributes transmitted to her students and colleagues and will ensure that the field of women in China is well served into the future. Her experience working in top research libraries at the University of Hong Kong and the University of Sydney and her smooth transition to teaching and research stands as testimony to the close links academics and librarians share and the interdependency between the two roles.

As a teacher, Lily Lee has launched ten graduate and honours students into their research careers through diverse projects. The undergraduate students that have benefited from her expertise, clarity in expression and concern for the transmission of solid knowledge about China, Chinese culture and gender are legion. In addition to her teaching, research and librarianship roles, Lily has been active in professional associations relating to all these aspects. She was a founding member of the East Asian Librarians' Group of Australia and maintained active participation in the Asian Studies and Chinese Studies associations in Australia.

This volume in her honour provides a comprehensive capstone for many aspects of her life and interests.

VALUING THE CLASSICAL TEXT

A hallmark of Lily Lee's research and teaching has been the attention she encouraged us all to pay to the details of the classical text. Details matter in Lily's scholarship and she values expert readings of ancient texts, knowing that such processes regularly produce new findings. Tim Chan's chapter on the *Ballad of Mulan* provides us with a close reading of one of China's most significant and beloved poems. The *Ballad* narrates the tale of the woman warrior Mulan, who leaves her family to replace her father in

battle since his age and infirmity render his death inevitable if he were to answer the conscription call. The filial and courageous daughter, dressed as a man, ultimately returns home to resume her life as a woman—the weaving loom symbolising her feminine virtue. Tim Chan's analysis of the poem brings us into intricacies of rhyme, verse patterns, translations and transformations (across time and between languages) in meaning and symbolism.

The *Lienü zhuan* holds an equivalent prominent place within the classical texts on women in China to Mulan's *Ballad*. A handbook on correct behaviour for women, the *Lienü zhuan* has been read for centuries and attracted myriad commentaries and prefaces by prominent scholars—including eminent women. Anne Behnke Kinney's chapter on Wang Yuansun's Qing-dynasty preface shows us the emotional intimacy of scholarship at this point in China's history. Wang wrote the preface as a tender tribute to his wife, who died in childbirth. Anne Kinney gives readers a smooth and readable translation of the preface that conveys to contemporary readers the emotional power of a personal preface to a classic text. This translation brings to English-reading audiences a fresh new perspective on the literary and scholarly genre of the preface.

J Michael Farmer's illustrated chapter on female biographies of widows in the Han and Shu draws our attention to the question of the origins of the cult of female chastity and engages with the *Lienü zhuan* text that was the focus of Anne Kinney's chapter. The cult reached its apex in the Qing, and Michael Farmer provides us with an insight into how an early period commemorated women who were widowed. He shows with convincing evidence that the official historiography of the Han found widow remarriage to be unproblematic and, in fact, a normal occurrence. The Shu women, on the other hand, appear to have promoted chaste widowhood in their region. Michael Farmer posits the fascinating argument that later historians have a distorted view of widow suicide because of the focus on a particular set of texts and failure to observe

counter evidence among other relatively contemporaneous texts of different regions.

In keeping with the current volume's spirit of celebration and commemoration, Clara Wing-chung Ho's chapter invites us into the rich world of late imperial and Republican 'messages' published to honour women on their birthdays or in remembrance upon their death. These genres—collections of birthday greetings and collections of bereavement messages—have hitherto escaped close scrutiny despite their popularity and availability as a genre. Clara Ho shows us just how dynamic and rich these materials are in revealing the daily lives of women at significant moments in their lives. Her meticulously researched and expertly documented chapter shows us the power of unpacking ritual texts for understanding the everyday as it relates to 'the special occasion'. Clara Ho warns us against the superficial view that, because they are necessarily praiseworthy, such texts lack objectivity in their descriptions. She shows us that once read in a more nuanced fashion we are able to see, for example, the sometimes political ambitions of the author in relation to the woman's well-placed son. Clara Ho's advocacy of the importance of seeking new sources for women's history and her concrete demonstration of the possibility of doing so reflect Lily Lee's ongoing commitment to expanding our knowledge of women in China.

Anne E McLaren's chapter on narrative song cycles is another excellent example of how crucial it is to seek new materials—frequently ignored because of their position outside the orthodox textual realms. Anne McLaren draws us into the Wu-speaking world of the Lake Tai region and the rich traditions of long narrative songs. She shows us that many of the themes within these songs have explicit or implicit erotic meanings—another factor that led to their failure to attract scholarly attention. She provides engaging examples of the rough and ribald wit of the song performers and one can readily imagine the fun and laughter

that would have accompanied the performance of these songs. The emotional highs and lows of life, love, sex and desire for women in any part of rural China are difficult to access—Anne McLaren's chapter shows us that if we remain open to alternative texts we can find rich veins of material. Her fluid and engaging translations of samples of these songs will be valuable resources for generations of readers.

UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S CULTURE AND WOMEN'S STATUS

A second theme that marks Lily Lee's scholarly career is her commitment to expanding our knowledge of Chinese women's culture and status—regardless of period. Gender politics has remained central to Lily's analytical frame. Several chapters in this volume invoke this important aspect of her research. Ellen Widmer's contribution explores women's literary culture in both poetry and prose in relation to that of men during the late imperial era. She introduces us to a series of new texts that stand outside the usual genres and that include women authors—editorial work, talks on poetry, biographies of virtuous women, novels, histories and rhymed narratives. Widmer argues that our knowledge of women's writing can benefit considerably from close consideration of manuscript culture. It matters how texts were drafted, published, circulated, copied and recopied. The management of the physical object of a written text is central to understanding its significance as a gendered artefact.

Ng Mei Kwan (Wu Meiyun), one of Lily Lee's many graduate students, brings us further into the world of women's literary culture by examining women's poetry clubs of the culturally rich regions of Suzhou and Zhejiang. The Jiangnan women poets of the Ming and Qing provide scholars with a fertile body of materials to research. Copious works of poetry remain extant today to provide us with insights into women's lives and literary consciousness. Focusing on one of the most celebrated societies,

the Banana Plantation Poetry Club, Ng Mei Kwan draws readers into the world of the poets, their families and their poems. She also contextualises these kinds of poetry clubs within the male-centred world in which they emerged. The public circulation of women's writing at this time was a matter of some remark, since prescriptions of modesty and virtue did not match the seeking of public recognition for one's literary talent.

Ancient China's women's political engagement is the focus of Priscilla Ching-Chung's chapter. In her detailed study she argues that women's access to formal political power diminished between the Shang and Western Zhou and that this trend continued on through Chinese history as patriarchal practices firmed and were institutionalised. Priscilla Ching-Chung draws her evidence from poetry, law, military history and religion and brings her sweeping study through to the present day in a comparison of women's political standing in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China on Taiwan.

David S G Goodman's chapter builds upon the contemporary period in his discussion of women entrepreneurs on the booming southern island of Hainan. Women's business and employment practices are intimately linked to migration and local Hainan culture, which has for decades normalised women's work outside of the domestic realm. David Goodman notes that work that, elsewhere in China, is the preserve of men is often equally carried out by women in Hainan. Hainanese men in this mode of work distribution face accusations from their hardworking female counterparts of being 'work shy'.

Mabel Lee, a long-time University of Sydney colleague of Lily Lee, provides us with a stimulating chapter on the portrayal of men's and women's relationships in the literary works of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Gao Xingjian. She identifies several key trends in relation to his fiction and notes that prominent among them all is Gao's interest in exploring the female psyche rather than the male's in his depictions of emotional and physical

relations between the sexes. Mabel Lee shows that Gao's resistance to convention creates a dynamism in the depiction of the myriad fraught connections possible between men and women.

RELIGION, SCIENCE AND ARCHEOLOGY

Lily Lee's interest in religion, archeology and the history of science is represented in five chapters within this volume—those by Barbara Hendrichske, Sue Wiles, Albert E Dien, Xu Xiaoli and Elizabeth Childs-Johnson.

Barbara Hendrichske's chapter is on debates on female infanticide in a remarkable Daoist text from the second century CE—the *Scripture on great peace*. She makes the significant claim that within this religious text women asserted their right to participate in the 'moral economy' of their patriarchal world—indeed, the empowerment of women is central to this scripture in Barbara Hendrichske's view.

Sue Wiles' contribution draws from her collaboration with Lily Lee on the *Biographical dictionary* and builds from their mutual interest in women religious leaders. Her chapter focusses on a southern Chinese female spirit medium from the late fifth and early sixth centuries by the name of Xu Baogang. Xu Baoguang appears in a key Daoist text but until the publication of Sue Wiles' chapter never has there been a comprehensive study of her impact and her life story. We learn of the complex politics, familial relations, spiritual practices and rituals as they related to women during her lifetime but we also gain clear insights into the way later scholars and commentators dismissed her and her learning as inferior simply because she was a woman.

Albert Dien's richly illustrated chapter on 'artificial illumination' in the Six Dynasties period brings readers into the world of ancient Chinese science through lighting practices. He reveals the multiple technologies of lamps, bowls and cones of the period along with the fuels, candles and oils, and the various methods of igniting the flames. The chapter argues that although

lamps were common in China they are not as easy to distinguish as those in European archeological sites because of the prevalence of the open-bowl floating wick. He also ponders the preference for this relatively inefficient mode of lighting given the long-standing prevalence of the more effective Greek and Roman models and the extensive communication between Europe and China via the Silk Road.

Xu Xiaoli's contribution examines core material from the Silk Road's most valuable archeological resource, the Dunhuang Caves. Within these ancient caves and grottoes in western China's Gansu province a remarkable library of Buddhist texts was housed. This library presented experts like Xu Xiaoli the opportunity to explore the ways in which Buddhist teachings propounded the idea that women were inherently polluted and dirty—for their sexual and reproductive capacities. Basically, women's bodies are described as being inherently 'unclean'. Xu Xiaoli's chapter provides researchers with extensive citations from rare texts that explore the ways that women's impurity was espoused within these ancient, highly precious texts.

The importance of archeological findings couples with the woman warrior theme in Elizabeth Childs-Johnson's chapter on an ancient woman from the Shang dynasty whose story reaches us through the discovery, thousands of years after her death, of her tomb and oracle-bone divinations. Elizabeth Childs-Johnson provides us with a fascinating insight into the burial practices of Shang aristocracy and introduces us to the detail of the symbols that marked her status—e.g. bronze vessels. Through Elizabeth Childs-Johnson's work we are introduced to China's earliest recorded woman leader and woman warrior. This chapter represents Lily Lee's extensive bibliographic expertise in bringing the past into readily accessible format for current readers.

UNDERSTANDING CHINA AND CHINESE CULTURE

Jocelyn Chey, colleague and friend over many years, contributes

a chapter that typifies the key aspects of Lily Lee's teaching and research in academia—the commitment to enhanced understanding of China by Australians. Jocelyn Chey's extensive personal experience as a diplomat and academic underpins this chapter's authoritative advocacy of the importance of cultural diplomacy. Premised on the view that 'culture' is not fixed or static, this chapter shows how authority figures (e.g. governments) often seek to promote a fixed vision of 'culture' to pursue specific global political ends and sometimes go to extraordinary lengths to prevent the natural flow of communication and exchange through trade and travel restrictions or blocks on information flow through censorship. Cultural diplomacy is a constructed and carefully strategised process taking place between governments in nation-states. The public are often end-users of these efforts but mostly remain unaware of the broader goals of the visit of a ballet or folk-song troupe, for example. Jocelyn Chey's chapter enables us to understand the history and the operations of cultural diplomacy between Australia and China within the frame of deeper philosophical questions of culture and international politics.

Wu Zhongjie's chapter brings readers to the crucial period of the May Fourth Movement in the first decades of the twentieth century when China's intellectuals interrogated the core underpinnings of their philosophical traditions. Confucianism, in particular, came under direct attack from radical reformers. Wu Zhongjie shows us that the fluctuating views about China's classical political and moral philosophy would be a 'wild ride' for those who concerned themselves with such matters throughout the twentieth century. Western ideas, philosophies and notions entered China's city ports and spread around the nation along with electricity and railroads. The May Fourth years provide the point where more Chinese than ever before became familiar with European and American notions of social organisation, economics and government. It was also the point in history

when more people from outside China became aware of the considerable riches to be found in China's philosophical and literary traditions. No book would be complete without an exegesis on the May Fourth era's impact on China's and world culture, and Wu Zhongjie's work provides us with that study.

The issue of 'understanding' is central to Gao Yuanbao's chapter on China's scholarly language. Accusations of obscurantism, poor grammar, imported words and poor style abound throughout China's history and became particularly acute in the twentieth century as the written language moved from classical to various versions of a modern vernacular based on a northern grammar. Language snobbery is not unique to China, but Gao Yuanbao's chapter shows us just how problematic it can be during periods of rapid linguistic change. Scholars derided each other for producing works that few could understand as they crafted their own unique styles.



Each of the chapters in this volume builds towards this ongoing project of deepening global knowledge about China. Lily Xiao Hong Lee's enthusiasm for China and her passion for engendering a heightened sophistication of appreciation of China is manifest in the chapters collected here.

Congratulations on a life and career well lived, Dr Lily Lee! From all of us, a heartfelt thank you.

Louise Edwards
University of New South Wales
Sydney, February 2014

序 FOREWORD

本書是眾多朋友為慶祝蕭虹博士七五華誕而寫的論文集。

過去俗諺云：人生七十古來稀，故七十以上的老者是應該慶賀的；但現在又有新諺云：如今七十不稀奇，所以我們撰文慶祝蕭虹博士的七五華誕，不是祝賀她的學術事業的結束，而是在她學術行程的中途站喝彩鼓勁。當然，學術不同於競技，不需要拼命一搏，也不存在爭奪名次的問題，要的是持之以恆，細水長流。國內許多大學，現在設立甚麼首席教授、學科帶頭人之職，把學術納入行政軌道，實在是一種嚴重的誤導。學術研究崇尚的是自由思想和獨立精神，需要的是沉潛反復，從容含玩，不宜於人為地設定一隻帶頭羊，領著大家往既定的方向狂奔。學術上的帶頭作用，只能是通過自己的著作，給人以啟示。

蕭虹博士從不爭名逐利，也不急於求成。她的博士論文，直到進入老年，才慢慢地整理出版，這就保證了文章的質量。她的許多著作，也都是在退休之後完成的。所以，退休對於她來說，不是學術生涯的終結，而是一個新的開始。我們期望著她在七十五歲之後，會做出新的學術成果來。

蕭虹博士在中國生長，在美國、澳大利亞攻讀學位和工作，中英文俱佳，既有從事英文寫作的朋友，也有用中文寫作的朋友。所以本紀念集，就成為中西合璧的文本。本書收入四篇中文論文。有兩篇是研究女性問題的：香港大學吳美筠的《從蕉園詩社窺探蘇浙婦女詩群的型態》和西北民族大學徐曉麗的《女性身體與神聖信仰》。前者通過對蕉園詩社的個案分析，探討了清初蘇浙經濟富庶地區士紳商宦階級閨秀們的經濟地位、社會地位和家庭地位，並寫出了她們的文化趣味、道德價值和生活品味；後者主要以敦煌文獻中有關“女身垢障”的記載為研究中心，探討宗教視域中女性身體與信仰的關係。另兩篇是有關中國現代文學的研究論