

BETWEEN WOMEN



*Women Writers of
Chinese Ancestry*

Amy Ling

Rockefeller Fellow

Queen's College

City University of New York

PERGAMON PRESS

Member of Maxwell Macmillan Pergamon Publishing Corporation

New York Oxford Beijing Frankfurt São Paulo Sydney Tokyo Toronto

BETWEEN WOMEN



*Women Writers of
Chinese Ancestry*

Amy Ling

Rockefeller Fellow

Queen's College

City University of New York

PERGAMON PRESS

Member of Maxwell Macmillan Pergamon Publishing Corporation
New York Oxford Beijing Frankfurt São Paulo Sydney Tokyo Toronto

U.S.A.	Pergamon Press, Inc., Maxwell House, Fairview Park, Elmsford, New York 10523, U.S.A.
U.K.	Pergamon Press plc, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford OX3 0BW, England
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA	Pergamon Press, 0909 China World Tower, No. 1 Jian Guo Men Wai Avenue, Beijing 100004, People's Republic of China
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	Pergamon Press GmbH, Hammerweg 6, D-6242 Kronberg, Federal Republic of Germany
BRAZIL	Pergamon Editoria Ltda, Rua Eca de QUEIROS, 346, CEP04011, Paraiso, São Paulo, Brazil
AUSTRALIA	Pergamon Press Australia Pty Ltd., P.O. Box 544, Potts Point N.S.W. 2011, Australia
JAPAN	Pergamon Press, 8th Floor, Matsuoaka Central Building, 1-7-1 Nishishinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan
CANADA	Pergamon Press Canada Ltd., Suite 271, 253 College Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 1R5

Copyright © 1990 Pergamon Press, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means: electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Ling, Amy.

Between worlds : women writers of Chinese ancestry / by Amy Ling.

— 1st ed.

p. cm. — (The Athene series)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-08-037464-6 (alk. paper) : — ISBN 0-08-037463-8

(pbk. : alk. paper) :

1. American literature—Chinese American authors—History and criticism. 2. American literature—Women authors—History and criticism. 3. Chinese American women—Intellectual life. 4. Chinese American women in literature. 5. Women and literature—United States. 6. Chinese Americans in literature. 7. China in literature. I. Title. II. Series.

PS153.C45L56 1990

810.9'9287—dc20

89-70968

CIP

Printing: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Year: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Printed in the United States of America



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984

Foreword

As a picture encompasses a universe of cognition, so should words, like stones, embody a permanency of meaning, bear witness to enduring reality. Amy Ling's book is of this quality. It is a breakthrough not only in the sphere of Western studies on the manifold aspects of China, but also a beacon light for Chinese historians. The latter have been so preoccupied with events in China itself and its many metamorphoses, matrix of a world on its own, that they have not come to terms with the diaspora, the overseas Chinese, 50 million of them today counting the generations, nor with their contributions both in labor of body and exertion of mind to the world at large.

It was the era of the gun and the dreadnought, of violence in the name of civilization, of that vile and reviled yet inescapable historical phenomenon called colonialism, that produced the diaspora. They left by the thousands, over two centuries, the "bitter strength," the colliers, driven by the starvation and misery brought about by colonial plunder, to build the railways of America and Canada, to dig the Panama canal . . . three hundred thousand of them during World War I were required by Great Britain and France to man their man-depleted factories because so many of their own workers died in the trenches of that grotesque conflict.

There were very few women in these first migrations, not only forbidden by the powers that ruled these near-slaves, but also because the Chinese Empire did not want to export its women. But later women did come, in small numbers. And it is marvelous to discover in this book that in the mid-nineteenth century two women, two Eurasians, product of that mingling of two worlds totally opposed to each other, were the first to break the smothering silence that buries all history.

History only is if it is recorded. They wrote history. The story of the diaspora as seen by the women first aware that they were between two worlds, two cultures, women who had to survive in their souls. They were the first to make that imagination leap, discovering what it is to live in perpetual

contradiction, between master and slave, the highly valued and the inferiorized.

Eurasian. So long despised, as I know so well, I who have lived through contempt and contumely, I who continue to fight against an ingrained racism, an unconscious one. For upon those who live between two worlds was imposed a spurious and in the end ignoble choice. "You must be the one or the other." Which implied a service to be performed for one or the other representatives of a culture. I rejected this diminution of the self, this having to survive. ~~I shall be both~~. Amy Ling's book makes me discover, to my delight, that I had predecessors, forebears, women who refused to be anything but their own entirety.

What perturbs me about academic studies in the West is an unconscious intellectual *apartheid*, disguised as concern, sometimes benevolent probing, or, what is worse, as objective scholarship. Perhaps this should be matter for a deeper investigation.

Amy Ling's book gives us that family of woman warriors—such a felicitous word, coined by Maxine Hong Kingston—a family to which, I found to my surprise, I too belong by the skin of my teeth.

The woman warriors of Asia are many. Action warriors, like Joan of Arc—and how many of them were burnt at the stake, right up to the nineteenth century, as witches?—and word warriors, those who became literate, and wrote, and survived, and gave us that first aperture into another state of being, another wholeness.

Woman, warring against those man-imposed images, the Suzy Wong, the Madame Butterfly, submissive and delightful sex objects to be used and discarded with hypocritical regret.

Not all the examples, the quotations, in this book are centered on the phenomenon of existing, surviving, and creating between two worlds. Some—and I do not blame them—have achieved fame by pandering to that nostalgic image of a China that never was, save for an infinitesimal number of the elite. But never mind. This is the beginning of a worthwhile exploration, all the more valuable because it shows us the lacunae, the compromises in which some of the writers cited entered, to pander to the superior culture—or so it seemed. These are the books lauded as "authentic," when they are only tasty rehash of what pleases ingrained prejudice. But so many, so many, despite this fear of saying too much too soon, have gone beyond that imposed, seemingly impenetrable Great Wall of pompous prejudice disguised as academia.

I predict that in the future this book will stand as the first milestone in a long march to understanding our world to be, a world of Eurasians, Eurafricans . . . a world where culture is no longer used as a weapon to impose inferiority.

October 1989

Han Suyin

Preface

Like Alice Walker, but from a different cultural background, I too have felt compelled to go "in search of our mothers' gardens" and this book is the fruit of my search. Born in Beijing, brought to the United States at age six and educated here from first grade through a PhD in comparative literature, at a time when the "classic" authors were white and nearly all male, I had never encountered in all my reading any Chinese American authors or even Chinese characters, except Bret Harte's "Heathen Chinese." I can still remember the red hot humiliation I experienced as my fourth grade teacher in Mexico, Missouri, read Harte's verse aloud to the class. I remember, too, her sudden embarrassed realization that my perspective on the poem was radically different from hers; she had never had to consider the Chinese perspective before.

Thus, when I first read Maxine Hong Kingston's *A Woman Warrior* and was asked to review Nellie Wong's chapbook of poems, *Dreams From Harrison Railroad Park*, I was thunderstruck. Here were people like me creating moving and artistic literature from our shared Chinese American experience. They expressed the struggle for personal balance that is the experience of every American of dual racial and cultural heritage, but, specifically, they wrote with pride and affirmation out of our common Chinese American background. My reading of these writers followed upon discoveries in the 1960s and 1970s by African American and feminist scholars working to reclaim their literary history, unearthing such neglected masterpieces as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper." I wondered if other Chinese women in America had produced memorable literature, if Kingston had had forerunners. If so, who were they? What had they chosen to express of our bicultural experience, and how they had done it?

Thus, I began the journey "in search of [my] mothers' gardens." Walker

spoke for me when she wrote in "Saving the Life That is Your Own," "the absence of models, in literature as in life . . . is an occupational hazard for the artist, simply because models in art, in behavior, in growth of spirit and intellect—even if rejected—enrich and enlarge one's view of existence."¹ The lack of models is an occupational as well as an emotional hazard, not only for the artist but for everyone. My search for models, however, brought together the scholarly and the personal in a way that I had never experienced before. I felt a harmony and a wholeness, for each author uncovered, not only enlarged the general field of American literature, as I saw it, but enriched and validated my existence. I learned that I am not a unique and peculiar aberration, that not every Chinese in America is an engineer or a scientist, that others have also gone the literary route. I realized that uncovering these writers and publishing this book may make the way easier for those who follow. Alice Walker has written that black women with calloused hands have appeared to her in dreams to shake her hand and to thank her for speaking for them.² I too have seen certain of my writers in dreams, and I have spoken with others in the flesh. As Walker says, "If we kill off the sound of our ancestors, the major portion of us . . . is lost." I hope this book will capture the sound of my ancestors and speak to others yet to come.

In one way, this book is also an answer to my father, who asked me a question that has rankled in me since it was posed, when I was 13 or so. "Why is it," he asked in an innocent tone, "that those who excel in every field, even those considered women's specialties—cooking, hairdressing, fashion design—have always been men?" Virginia Woolf, of course, has answered that question in *A Room of One's Own*, and others have answered it as well. That men have excelled is not because women are essentially inferior, which he was slyly implying, but that women have been denied the same opportunities as men. They have been kept out of the libraries and in the kitchen "barefoot and pregnant." So it was especially gratifying to me to discover that in this very specialized field, literature written in English by ethnic Chinese and Chinese Eurasians and published in the United States, the women not only outnumber the men but the women's books are more authentic, more numerous, quite simply—better.

It has been an exciting search, a rewarding project. And a difficult one. First, I did not have such common research tools as the card catalogue and the Library of Congress subject heading directory. In 1980, when I began my research, there was no listing for "Chinese American authors." At the Library of Congress, I asked why and was told no one had yet published a book on this subject, and if no book has been written the subject does not exist, as far as their directory is concerned. Under the heading "Asian American literature" I had better luck, for three anthologies had been published: *Asian American Authors* by Kai-yu Hsu (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), *Aiiieeeee!* by Frank Chin et al. (Washington, DC: Howard University Press,

1974), and *Asian American Heritage* by David Wand (New York: Washington Square, 1974). These pioneering collections gave me a start in identifying some authors. Wayne Miller's *Handbook of American Minorities* (New York: NYU Press, 1976) and Priscilla Oaks' *Minority Studies: An Annotated Bibliography* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1976) were also helpful. Elaine Kim's *Asian American Literature* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1982) was published after most of my basic research had been completed, but Professor Kim gave me some names I had not known. A colleague at Rutgers, Marjorie Li, told me about Lin Tai-yi; another colleague, Peter Li, introduced me to Eileen Chang; and one of the authors I interviewed, Diana Chang, lent me her copy of Chuang Hua's *Crossings*, which she had purchased for one dollar at a garage sale. For a while, I combed the National Union Catalogue and scoured the shelves of secondhand bookstores looking for Chinese surnames, which, fortunately, are not numerous, and in this antediluvian manner I discovered Hazel Lin and Janet Lim.

The next problem was obtaining the books. Those with copyrights as recent as five years were already out of print and most were not available in local libraries. It was further disturbing to discover that the books my university library did own, such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, were shelved as sociology or, as in the case of Mai-mai Sze's *Echo of a Cry* or Winnifred Eaton's *A Japanese Blossom*, as juvenile books, mainly because they dealt with Asians or were illustrated and had children in them. Again, the very idea of Chinese American literature seemed nonexistent to the Library of Congress cataloguers who determine a volume's call number. The exception was the Wasson collection at Cornell University, which has nearly all of Winnifred Eaton's novels and from which I obtained many interlibrary loans. I was disappointed to find no listing for the "Asian American Woman's Experience" in the index to Patricia Addis' *Through a Woman's I, A: Annotated Bibliography of American Women's Autobiographical Writings 1946-1976* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1983), though the index identifies "American Indian Women's Experience" and "Black Women's Experience" and though the bibliography itself includes at least five Asian American women writers.

However, the tide is turning. Not only are Asian American writers increasing in number but they are also gaining wider recognition, beginning in the early 1970s when Lawson Fusao Inada's *Before the War: Poems as They Happened* (1971) was published by William Morrow, a major New York press; and Frank Chin's two plays, *Chickencoop Chinaman* (1972) and *The Year of the Dragon* (1974), were produced at New York's American Place Theatre. In 1976, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* won the National Book Critics' Circle Award for the year's best work of nonfiction. Her second book, *China Men*, won the American Book Award in 1980. In 1981, the Obie Award for the Best New Play went to David Henry Hwang's

"F.O.B." In 1982, Cathy Song won the Yale Series of Younger Poets competition with *Picture Bride*, published by Yale University Press in 1983. *Island, Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island 1910-1940*, edited by Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, published in 1980, demonstrated that the literary impulse among Chinese in America has a tradition and a history. In 1982, Elaine Kim's *Asian American Literature*, the first book-length study of the field, proved that the body of work was large and significant enough to merit serious scholarly attention. In 1985, Genny Lim's play "Island" was aired on National Public Television. In 1987, Garrett Hongo's second book of poems, *The River of Heaven*, won the Lamont Poetry Prize of the Academy of American Poets. In 1988, David Henry Hwang's "M. Butterfly" won the Tony Award for Best New Dramatic Play on Broadway. In 1989, Carolyn Lau's book of poetry, *Wode Shuofa*, and Frank Chin's collection of stories, *The Chinaman Pacific and Frisco Railroad Co.*, won the American Book Awards from the Before Columbus Foundation. Our numbers are growing, our voices swelling. We are no longer a silent minority.

I have had several purposes in writing this book. My initial impulse, to uncover literary gems, I later abandoned, for axiology itself, the study of evaluation and value judgments, is now in dispute among literary theoreticians and critics, Barbara Herrnstein Smith and Jane Tompkins among them. Barbara Herrnstein Smith's finely reasoned essay, "Contingencies of Value," among other works, brought to the open the questionable but hitherto unquestioned systems of evaluation within the academy, among critics, reviewers, publishers, and librarians governing notions of "classic," canonical, or Great Literature. She calls into question the assumptions that "objectivity" governs the evaluator and that "universality" is a gauge of "quality."³ Jane Tompkins, in reexamining *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, asks her reader "to set aside some familiar categories for evaluating fiction—stylistic intricacy, psychological subtlety, epistemological complexity." She wants us to see the texts she examines "not as an artifice of eternity answerable to certain formal criteria . . . but as a political enterprise . . . that both codifies and attempts to mold the values of its time."⁴ Tompkins' request for suspension of the "familiar categories" for evaluating texts is particularly pertinent since these conventional criteria are not always applicable to the writers of my study. Without understanding the social and historical contexts of these authors' work, full comprehension and appreciation would not be possible, and judgment without full comprehension is useless:

And yet, so often the mistaken attitude prevails: if a writer falls into oblivion it must be because s/he was unworthy, and therefore fully deserving of oblivion, for surely, if a writer is "truly outstanding," this greatness cannot help but be apparent and "will stand the test of time," as cream rises to the top. But such an attitude does not take into consideration fluctuations of taste; personal idiosyncrasies and individual purposes; political and histor-

ical conditions; perspectives and proclivities of the scholars and critics who keep an author's work in the limelight and thus in the canon. That the canon has changed may be readily seen by perusing the table of contents of literary anthologies over an extended period.

Thus, fully aware of my personal interest in the subject and equally aware that this project had never before been undertaken, yet was worthy of the undertaking, I plunged in. Setting myself a narrow focus, I have attempted, nonetheless, to be as comprehensive as possible. This book, then, is an introduction, and a history, as well as my own readings of the full-length prose narratives (autobiographies, memoirs, fictionalized memoirs, and novels) written in English and published in the United States by women of Chinese or partial Chinese ancestry. I have arranged my material roughly in chronological and thematic order to give my readers a sense of the length and breadth of the tradition. The diversity of their themes has been great, yet all the writers have obviously been conscious of their difference in a white society, a society whose attitude towards them as "other" has fluctuated depending on political circumstances. How each author has reacted to this consciousness of difference, to the between-world condition, and to the political and social environment around her is my major unifying theme.

My purpose in writing this book has been to show off the flowers in my mother's garden. I want to put these writers on the scholarly map, to give them a heading in the Library of Congress Subject Catalogue, to validate their existence and their work, to retrieve them from oblivion. With this study, I hope that other women like me will not grow up without models, in ignorance of our own history. Among these writers and their books, I hope such readers will find a source of inspiration and of communal and personal pride. Women and readers from other bi- and multicultural backgrounds will understand much in this book, for the experience of marginalization and the need for self-affirmation is common to us all. And for those who are neither Chinese American, bicultural, or female, I know that the kind of curiosity, openness, and stretching that leads such readers to investigate the experience of the Other will bring its own reward.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank all who helped in the creation of this book: Katharine Newman, who pointed me down the road of ethnic literature, read an early draft of this manuscript, and generously gave me invaluable criticism and encouragement; Eleanor Withington, my composition professor from freshman days at Queens College and a loyal friend ever since; Elaine Kim, Abena Busia, and Shirley Lim, who helped me sharpen some fuzzy thinking; Gelston Hinds, Sr., who advised me to take a less defensive tone; Hilary Hinds and Waichee Dimock, who urged me to keep writing; Linda Ching Sledge and Laura Bromley for continuous sympathy and reassurance; Paul G. Rooney, L. Charles Laferrière, and Eileen V. Lewis, descendents of the Eaton family, who generously provided me with family anecdotes, newspaper clippings, and photographs; James Doyle, who shared his research on Edith Eaton's early Canadian publications and her interactions with her brother-in-law Walter Blackburn Harte; Silvia Xavier for her careful reading and thoughtful suggestions; Han Suyin for her interest, encouragement, and generosity in writing a foreword; and my editor, Gloria Bowles, for her critical acumen and faith in the project.

My father's question: "Why are men best in everything?" challenged me to prove him wrong. My mother's life as a Chinese child adopted by an unmarried American missionary nurse to China gave me the unifying theme. Without my husband, Gelston Hinds, Jr., whose love and unfailing belief in me and in this work took the form of oceans of babysitting and seas of pep talks, and without the understanding of my children, Arthur and Catherine, that Mommy at times had to work instead of play with them, this book would never have been launched. I thank them all for their assistance and encouragement in this project, but I must lay claim myself to the blemishes that still remain.

For Mother and Father
and everyone
between worlds.

. . . “we’re caught in between times and in between
worlds . . . There are no uncomplicated Chinese left
anymore.”

—Lin Tai-yi, *The Eavesdropper*

Contents

Foreword	ix
Preface	xi
Acknowledgments	xvii
Chapter	
1. Writing As Rebellion: Historical and Contextual Backgrounds	1
2. Pioneers and Paradigms: The Eaton Sisters	21
3. Focus on China: Stances Patriotic, Critical, and Nostalgic	56
4. Focus on America: Seeking a Self and a Place	104
5 Righting Wrongs by Writing Wrongs	158
Notes	181
Bibliography	191
Index	201
About the Author	213

Chapter 1

Writing As Rebellion: Historical and Contextual Backgrounds

In many ways writing is the act of saying I, of imposing oneself upon other people, of saying *listen to me, see it my way, change your mind*. It's an aggressive, even a hostile act.

—Joan Didion, "Why I Write"¹

Ladies of the diplomatic corps do not write books. The set in which I lived considered writing an unwomanly occupation, destructive of one's moral character, like acting.

—Han Suyin, "Foreword" to *Destination Chungking*²

A woman without talent is a woman of virtue.

It is more profitable to raise geese than daughters.

—Traditional Chinese Proverbs

1. WOMEN IN CHINESE TRADITION AND HISTORY

For women of Chinese ancestry, perhaps even more than for Joan Didion, writing is not only an act of self-assertion but an act of defiance against the weight of historical and societal injunctions. Historically, the Chinese have assigned their women to an inferior and even expendable status, as exemplified in the two traditional Chinese proverbs cited above, in Han Suyin's remarks, and in the practices of footbinding, concubinage, female slavery, and female infanticide, to cite only a few examples. In the early dawn of history, as Julia Kristeva suggests in *About Chinese Women*, Chinese society may have been matrilineal, but by the first century B.C., using as evidence the ancient classic, *The Book of Songs*, whose datable poems range from 800

to 600 B.C., patriarchal power already had been long established and women were being trained from birth for an inferior place.

One poem from *The Book of Songs* presents the sharply contrasting receptions and expectations for male and female offspring beginning at birth. The poem begins with good wishes to the lord and then a description of the construction of a sturdy house for him. The lord sleeps in his house and dreams of black bears, brown bears, and of snakes, and the diviner interprets this dream:

'Black bears and brown
Mean men-children.

Snakes and serpents
Mean girl-children.'

So he bears a son,
And puts him to sleep upon a bed,
Clothes him in robes,
Gives him a jade sceptre to play with.
The child's howling is very lusty;
In red greaves shall he flare,
Be lord and king of house and home.

Then he bears a daughter,
And puts her upon the ground,
Clothes her in swaddling-clothes,
Gives her a loom-whorl to play with.
For her no decorations, no emblems;
Her only care, the wine and the food,
And how to give no trouble to father and mother.³

The association of boys with the powerful bear and of girls with the slithery, lowly snake sets into immediate relief their relative values in the society as well as describing, metaphorically, what the author takes as their fundamental natures. The preferential treatment for the boy and the infinitely higher expectations for his lordly future compared to the humble treatment and low expectations for girls ensure that the latter will know and be conditioned from birth to their inferior place.

A second poem from *The Book of Songs*, part of a general lament, makes a very pointed complaint about adult female behavior:

A clever man builds a city
A clever woman lays one low;
With all her qualifications, that clever woman
Is but an ill-omened bird.
A woman with a long tongue
Is a flight of steps leading to calamity;
For disorder does not come from heaven,
But is brought about by women.
Among those who cannot be trained or taught

Are women and eunuchs.

Given the sexual discrimination advocated by the first poem, the second poem would be its natural outcome; if women could not be a respected part of the social structure, it was hardly in their interests to help maintain it, especially if such maintenance was at their own expense. One might well say that the second author was only reaping the fruits of the seeds sown by the first, for a child trained to believe herself inferior could well grow into a frustrated, destructive adult.

Confucius (551–479 B.C.) wrote very little about women, but his classification of women with slaves and small humans ("hsiao ren") so clearly revealed his attitude that he has been called an "eater of women."⁴ About their education, he did write, "The aim of female education is perfect submission, not cultivation and development of the mind."⁵ His well-regulated, hierarchical state depended on the maintenance of three principle bonds of loyalty and subordination, that of minister to prince, son to father, and wife to husband.⁶ His followers in later periods were more explicit in their insistence on the inferiority and repression of women. Here are the words of Yang Chen (d. A.D. 124):

If women are given work that requires contact with the outside, they will sow disorder and confusion throughout the Empire . . . The Book of Documents warns us against the hen who announces the dawn in place of the rooster . . . Women must not be allowed to participate in the affairs of the government.

and Han Shu:

When a newborn baby comes into the world, if it's a boy as strong as a wolf, his parents are still afraid that he might be too weak; whereas if it's a girl as sweet and as gentle as a little mouse, her parents still fear she might be too strong.

and Sima Guang of the Sung Dynasty:

Give a woman an education and all you will get from her is boredom and complaints.⁷

In the first century A.D., a code governing the behavior and training of women, called the Three Obediences and Four Virtues, was promulgated by imperial decree throughout China and remained continuously effective, helping to maintain patriarchal power, until the early twentieth century.⁸ (The Three Obediences enjoined a woman to obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her eldest son after her husband's death. The Four Virtues decreed that she be chaste; her conversation courteous and not gossipy; her deportment graceful but not extravagant; her leisure spent in perfecting needlework and tapestry for beautifying the home.) The authorship of this oppressive code has been attributed to Ban Tso (A.D. 42?–A.D. 115?), a highly educated woman about whom we shall have more to say later.

Until the practice was forbidden by imperial edict in the eighteenth cen-