



Asian Studies Center  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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## 31st Annual Joseph & Lucy Lee Memorial Lecture

Thursday, December 4, 2025  
International Center, 3rd Floor

# Clement Egerton's Translation of The Golden Lotus (Jin Ping Mei)

Reception: 6:30 PM  
Lecture: 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM



## 31st Annual Joseph & Lucy Lee Memorial Lecture



The Joseph & Lucy Lee Memorial lecture series in an annual event in memory of Joseph Lee (1929 - 1993), Professor of Chinese Literature and Culture in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages at Michigan State University and Lucy Lee, his wife. He also taught for many years in the Humanities Department, and in the Department of American Thought and Language.

Professor Lee received his B.A. from the Chinese Naval Academy, and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Maryland. He joined the MSU faculty in 1963. Lee was a specialist in Tang and Song dynasty poetry. He contributed to the collection of Chinese poetry, *Sunflower Splendor*. He published a number of books on poetry in Chinese, and served as an editor and contributing member of the Chinese national project on Tang literature. Later in his career, he became a member of the Chinese Association for the Study of Tang literature and an honorary professor in the Institute of Classical Studies at Peking University. He was also a devoted and valued member of the Asian Studies Center Core faculty.

Lucy F. Lee (1931 - 2017) was born in China in 1931, moved to the U.S. in 1949, and obtained her Ph.D. in biochemistry from Michigan State University in 1967. Lucy joined the USDA-ARS-Regional Poultry Research Laboratory (now Avian Disease and Oncology Laboratory (ADOL)) in 1968. Over the ensuing 43 years at ADOL, she built a distinguished career conducting research on avian tumor viruses. Much of her work focused on Marek's disease virus (MDV). She was the first to obtain a complete genetic sequence of MDV. She contributed significantly to the development and characterization of vaccines against MD, and the knowledge on avian leukosis virus and reticuloendotheliosis virus. Lucy is revered in China as a teacher and as a scientist, and is held in high esteem by her own students (and their students) in the Chinese tradition. She earned the respect of her colleagues, co-workers and students with her high standards of professional achievement, her substantial research contributions, her strong collaborations, her skill as a mentor and teacher, and her warm and engaging personality.

## Clement Egerton's Translation of The Golden Lotus (Jin Ping Mei)

### Welcome & Introduction

**Siddharth Chandra**

Director of the Asian Studies Center & Professor at James Madison College,  
Michigan State University

**Wei Lu**

Secretary-General Gu Wei Hui,  
Associate Professor, Peking University

### Lecture

**Professor Xuanlong Zhou**

Department of Chinese Language & Literature, Tsinghua University



### "Clement Egerton's Translation of The Golden Lotus (Jin Ping Mei)"

**Abstract:** In 1939, two English versions of Jin Ping Mei were published simultaneously in the English-speaking world: one was the 'complete translation' titled *The Golden Lotus* translated by Clement Egerton from Chinese, and the other was an abridged version titled *Chin P'ing Mei: The Adventurous History of Hsimen Qing and His Six Wives*, translated by Bernard Miall

from Franz Kuhn's German abridged edition (*Kin Ping Meh: oder, Die abenteuerliche Geschichte von His Men und seinen sechs Frauen*). Seventy years later, American translator David Tod Roy published his full English translation between 1993 and 2013 (*The Plum in the Golden Vase*). Indeed, Egerton has not studied Chinese for long, yet he eventually completed the translation without reference materials or any Chinese punctuated modern versions of Jin Ping Mei, which is nothing but a miracle. Egerton's version was published earlier and conveys the spirit and charm of the original work quite well; in terms of literary quality and readability, it seems no less than Roy's full translation, thus this version got many reprints and significant impact in the English-speaking world. However, readers who carefully compare it with the original Chinese will find that there are many problems in the details of Edgerton's translation. Therefore, summarizing the types of errors in Edgerton's translation and analyzing their causes is of great importance for understanding Egerton's working process, the publishing and dissemination of *Golden Lotus*, and exploring the standards of cross-cultural translation activities.

### Interpreter

**Jiahang Li, Ph.D.**

Michigan State University