



# Literary Societies of Republican China

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*Literary Societies in Republican China* provides a new and comprehensive perspective on the fascinating literary world of the most turbulent period in recent Chinese history: the Republican era of 1911-1949. Wedged between the fall of the Empire and the founding of the Communist state, the Republican period witnessed enormous social, political, and cultural changes. Traditionally the period is seen as one of transition: from the country being partially colonized and occupied to being an independent nation-state, from Confucianism to socialism, from writing in classical Chinese to writing in the everyday vernacular. Modern scholarship, however, has become suspicious of such attempts to analyze history, including cultural history, as a journey from A to B via C. Instead, attention has turned to the "thick description" of complex historical phenomena without worrying about whether or not they fit into some neat linear scheme. Inevitably, such scholarship benefits from collaboration and teamwork, from the juxtaposition of different insights and different materials in order to gain in overall breadth. *Literary Societies in Republican China* represents such teamwork and such breadth. The thirteen essays by eleven scholars from North America, Europe, and Asia present detailed discussions of particular literary groups active on the Republican-era literary scene. Some of these groups are familiar representatives of what used to be considered the "mainstream," while others represent literary styles that have hitherto been considered "marginal" or that have been ignored altogether. Each of the essays in this volume looks in detail at literary societies both as producers of literary views and texts and as organizations with sometimes very complex social structures. The result is a unique blend of literary, cultural, and social history, unrivalled in any English-language scholarship on China to date.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Review**

This is a superb work of scholarship that, through its focus on literary societies in the Republican China, vividly conveys the full richness and complexity of the epoch. It is fascinating reading and of great value to anyone interested in modern Chinese cultural history. (Julia F. Andrews, Ohio State University)

Altogether, the book is so rich in both empirical and methodological observations that it is a source that must be engaged in any historical consideration of literature as an institution of the Republican era. (*Journal of Asian Studies*)

Kirk Denton and Michel Hockx have brought together an impressive collection of insightful essays that highlight the institutional structures, social relations, and personal connections through which modern Chinese literature was formed. Arguing against modernist text-based analysis as the be-all and end-all of literary study, the editors and contributors lay a solid and empirically strong foundation to help us understand modern Chinese literature as a social product, in the process illuminating little-studied groups and associations. Students of modern China and anyone interested in the sociology of literature will find this volume to be a valuable resource. (Wendy Larson)

By focusing as intensively as these papers do on the ways by which groups of writers organized themselves, a great deal of information is brought out that adds to our knowledge of literary production as well as social networking in early twentieth century China....The book is a welcome addition to a field that has recently moved away from preoccupation with textual analysis to exploration of the contexts behind the texts. (*Journal of Asian History*)

The volume provides a valuable survey- solid and often innovative- of the sociology of literary practice in China in the first half of the twentieth century. (*Mclc*)

### **About the Author**

**Kirk A. Denton** is associate professor of Chinese language and literature at Ohio State University. **Michel Hockx** is professor of Chinese at the University of London.

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