

The Masculine Bee in Classical Chinese Literature

中國古典文學中的雄性蜜蜂

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Date 日期: May 11, 2021 (Tuesday)

Time 時間: 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Venue 地點: via Zoom Language 演講語言: English 英文

<https://hku.zoom.us/j/92859787654?pwd=NjFqcXVobm8xWTBIZDNVOVhPdnlmUT09>

Zoom Meeting ID: 928 5978 7654

Password: 099410

Abstract:

From antiquity to the present day, the products of honeybees are crucial to many industries and aspects of human life. As a result, honeybees have been the subject of intense study and interest, but this has not necessarily served to advance understanding about lifecycle of these insects. Bees are in fact eusocial insects, divided into three castes: queens, drones, and workers. As with other eusocial creatures, all castes have to be present for the colony as a whole to survive. However, in China, from the Jin dynasty onwards, literature about honeybees stressed that all bees were male. Observers had noted egg-laying and mating behavior, but in poetry and prose Chinese literati continued to write about bees as male insects, living in an ideal patriarchal society without any female involvement. This paper will explore literary representations of “king bees” (fengwang) / queens; “prime minister” (xiangfeng) or “general bees” (jiangfeng) / drones; and “vassal bees” (fengchen) / workers to show how these insects were used to idealize a militarized patriarchal society. However, some writers found such representations profoundly alienating, and instead turned to Buddhist images, where honeybees were an allegory for study and effort.

從古至今，蜜蜂的產物對許多行業和人類生活至關重要。即使蜜蜂因此成為了被關注和研究的主題，也不一定更增進人們對它們生命過程的了解。蜜蜂實為真社會性昆蟲，分為蜂后，雄蜂，工蜂三類。但在中國，從晉代起，相關文學作品都強調蜜蜂皆為雄性。本文將探討蜂王、相蜂/將蜂、蜂臣的文學表現形式，以呈現它們是如何被用來理想化已軍事化的父權制社會。不過，也有其他學者轉向蜜蜂是象征學習和努力的佛教意象。

Bio:

Olivia Milburn is currently Professor in the Department of Chinese Language and Literature, Seoul National University. Her major publications include a study of the history of the kingdom of Wu, and gazetteers for the city of Suzhou. In addition, she has translated a number of classical Chinese works into English, such as the Yuejue shu and Yanzi chungiu. Her translations from contemporary Chinese literature include novels by Mai Jia, Feng Jikai, Jiang Zilong, and Fang Fang. Olivia Milburn's research concentrates on the history and culture of Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, and also literary presentations of marginalized people.

米歐敏現任國立首爾大學中文系教授，研究方向為中國古代江南曆史及文化和邊緣人群（殘疾人、女性等）。其主要出版著述涉及春秋時期的吳國文化遺跡和蘇州地方志，英譯了古籍《越絕書》及麥家、馮驥才等現當代作家的小說。

ALL are welcome