

Obituaries

JAMES P. GEISS 1950–2000

James P. Geiss, 50, died suddenly at his office in Princeton on 19 December 2000. A resident of Princeton since 1972, Jim graduated from Williams College and completed his doctoral research on “Peking under the Ming (1368–1644),” at Princeton in 1979.

He published two chapters in the Cambridge History of China, Vol. 7: *The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644* Part I, “The Cheng-te Reign” and “The Chia-ching Reign” (1988), which were complemented by the more specialized studies “On the Significance of the Reign Title Chia-ching” (1990) and “The Leopard Quarter during the Cheng-te Reign” (1987), both in *Ming Studies*. In Chinese, he published “Ming Wuzong yu Baofang” (“Wuzong and the Leopard Quarter,” 1988) in the *Gugong Bowuyuan Yuankan*, an article taken very seriously by Chinese scholars.

He was engaged in several large projects still ongoing at the time of his early demise. The range of these unpublished studies—material culture during the Ming (especially food, prices and clothing, about which Jim was a foremost expert), Mongol influence on early Ming culture and society, Wuzong’s connection with Central Asia, and an assemblage of research materials on the complex issues surrounding the execution of the controversial eunuch Liu Jin—only begins to suggest the breadth and the depth of Jim’s scholarly curiosity about Ming China.

Jim’s expertise in Classical Chinese also found expression in his work for a series of textbooks in cooperation with Naiying Yuan and Haitao Tang, including the recent *The Grammar of Classical Chinese: A Basic Introduction*, *Classical Chinese: A Basic Reader* (1994), *Readings in Classical Chinese Poetry and Prose* (1994), *Selections from Classical Chinese Historical Texts* (1993) and *Selections from Classical Chinese Philosophical Texts* (1993). With Chu Hung-Lam he collaborated to translate original Chinese texts for Louise Levathes’ popular book *When China Ruled the Seas* (1994). At the time of his death, he was revising his work on classical Chinese grammar.

In addition to his scholastic interests, Jim also served since 1984 as Treasurer for Pro Re Nara, Inc., a Princeton-based consulting firm that specializes in the health care and pharmaceutical industries in China. Since 1998 he was also editor-in-chief of the PRN Interactive Profile, a monthly trade newsletter analyzing policies and trends pivotal to the pharmaceutical market in China.

He is survived by Margaret Hsü, his wife of 28 years, and his brother, Peter T. Geiss, M.D., of Wisconsin. His many friends will remember him as generously kind with his time and help. Numerous graduate students at Princeton University recall his unflinching and incisive help with their theses. Professors, friends, and students benefited from meticulous comments with respect to style and content. Jim’s insistence on eminently readable history based upon in-depth understanding of the subtleties of the original texts were an example to them; and few could match this mastery of scholarly eloquence.

MARTIN HEIJDR
Princeton University