FOREWORD

With this issue, \textit{NAN.NU} now has a new subtitle: ‘Men, Women and Gender in China’. The Board of Editors recently decided that a minor name change is in order. As China scholarship increasingly comes to explore the blurriness of the common parameters and intellectual paradigms that came to bind its chronology, such as ‘premodern’ or ‘modern’, it seems appropriate to reconsider how the concept of gender conforms to this historiographical shift. In a discussion among the \textit{NAN.NU} Board of Editors, one member noted that there is an ‘...artificial distinction between traditional and modern in China studies, not least because the twentieth century is now what the nineteenth century used to be, and will seem more and more premodern and remote as we go along. “Modern” is a sliding category. And it is necessary always to remind modernists of the organic picture of China. The change of title would be consistent with this position’. Hence, our new subtitle! At the same time we should like to inform our readers that we plan to keep the chronological range of \textit{NAN.NU} the same, i.e. from the beginnings of civilization in China to the twentieth century.

\textit{NAN.NU} is also still committed to its original purpose: to provide a public forum for senior and junior scholars to present the first results of their research which might be developed later in other forms of publication. Following this practice, this particular issue offers a series of essays first given at a symposium ‘Chinese Tradition and the Challenge of Modernity: Politics, Poetics, and Gender in the Late Qing Period, 1840-1911’, co-organized by Grace S. Fong and Nanxiu Qian, and funded and hosted by Rice University in March 2003. Like the earlier theme issue on female suicide [\textit{NAN.NU} 3.1 (2001)], this number of the journal will appear both as a separate volume, and a special theme issue. In this way, we hope to reach a broad audience and to encourage further research on the matter of women and the late Qing reform movement.

The Introduction to this issue validates the change to \textit{NAN.NU}’s subtitle. ‘Re-mapping’ China’s late imperial juncture with twentieth-century sensibilities raises all kinds of doubts about the appropriation
of binary or linear teleology. Gender, genre, and cosmopolitanism intersect as one unravels the complexities behind the dramatic changes generated in China during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. As men and women literally-or metaphorically-crossed into new geographical worlds, they came to express their understanding of the expanding universe in a variety of ways which could not be neatly labelled either traditional or modern. And, as Susan Mann writes in her Introduction to this volume, the creativity of these writers marks a new moment in historical and literary practices, and may be compared to the ingenuity associated with the Warring States period’s Hundred Schools, or the late Ming consumer revolution. We hope this issue will help stimulate our readers to consider these matters in their own evaluation of this dramatic time in China’s long term development.

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