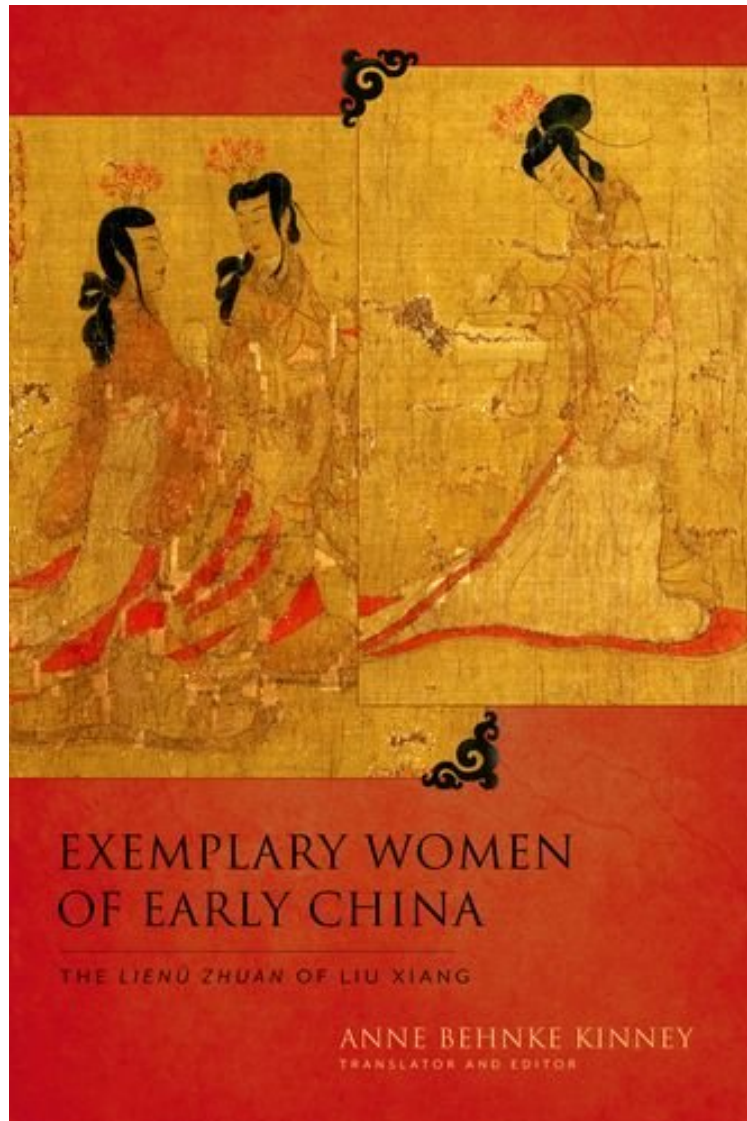


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Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lien zhuan of Liu Xiang (Translations from the Asian Classics)

Xiang Liu

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Xiang Liu : Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lien zhuan of Liu Xiang (Translations from the Asian Classics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Exemplary Women of Early China: The Lien zhuan of Liu Xiang (Translations from the Asian Classics):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Moral Education By John S. Major For more than 2,000 years the

Lien zhuan (Categorized Biographies of Women) played a central role in the education of young women, teaching them the norms of behavior that Confucian society demanded of them. They learned to be modest and self-effacing, yielding gracefully to their fathers, brothers, and husbands and avoiding anything that would bring discredit to their families. They learned that death was preferable to dishonor, and that suicide was an honorable way out of situations that offered only bad moral choices. Young women, generation after generation, learned to emulate the conspicuous virtues of the exemplary women depicted in these pages, and to shrink in horror from (though perhaps they were secretly fascinated by) the counter-examples of bad women, like the sexually voracious serial widow Lady Xia Ji. Anne Kinney's graceful and faithful translation of this important text is both instructive and entertaining; these biographies make wonderful stories. Her extensive introduction places the work in context; her voluminous notes enhance the biographies but do not get in their way. This is an indispensable guide to the position of women in imperial China, and a fascinating read.⁷ of 8 people found the following review helpful. Women in Ancient China By E. N. Anderson This is a fantastic job. The translation is very readable (I don't have the original by me to check for accuracy but it seems extremely good). The introduction is a really superior job of putting the book in context. This is a must-read for anyone interested in China or in the status of women in early societies. The stories often reflect incredible courage in the face of a society not only very sexist by modern standards, but pretty blood-drenched by any standards, including its own. The book causes me to speculate at great length, but, being a nonexpert in this field, I will spare the reader and confine myself to recommending the book.

In early China, was it correct for a woman to disobey her father, contradict her husband, or shape the public policy of a son who ruled over a dynasty or state? According to the Lien zhuan, or Categorized Biographies of Women, it was not only appropriate but necessary for women to step in with wise counsel when fathers, husbands, or rulers strayed from the path of virtue. Compiled toward the end of the Former Han dynasty (202 BCE-9 CE) by Liu Xiang (79-8 BCE), the Lien zhuan is the earliest extant book in the Chinese tradition solely devoted to the education of women. Far from providing a unified vision of women's roles, the text promotes a diverse and sometimes contradictory range of practices. At one extreme are exemplars resorting to suicide and self-mutilation as a means to preserve chastity and ritual orthodoxy. At the other are bold and outspoken women whose rhetorical mastery helps correct erring rulers, sons, and husbands. The text provides a fascinating overview of the representation of women's roles in early legends, formal speeches on statecraft, and highly fictionalized historical accounts during this foundational period of Chinese history. Over time, the biographies of women became a regular feature of dynastic and local histories and a vehicle for expressing and transmitting concerns about women's social, political, and domestic roles. The Lien zhuan is also rich in information about the daily life, rituals, and domestic concerns of early China. Inspired by its accounts, artists across the millennia have depicted its stories on screens, paintings, lacquer ware, murals, and stone relief sculpture, extending its reach to literate and illiterate audiences alike.

Kinney's painstaking translation fills a curious lacuna by making this foundational work available to a broad audience of scholars and students of Asian history. The book is a significant contribution to the field in terms of both its efforts to illuminate the history of gender relations in East Asia and the quality of its translations. (Miranda Brown, University of Michigan) Exemplary Women of Early China is valuable not only for what it reveals about the culture of early China but also because of the influence the Lien zhuan had in the centuries that followed. As it provided examples of the good that women could do, through word and deed, it became a favorite book to teach to girls. Anne Behnke Kinney's faithful and elegant annotated translation makes this classic of women's history accessible to both students and scholars. (Patricia Ebrey, University of Washington) Finally, the 125 women who lived their honorable, violent, pernicious, or mythical lives in China centuries before the birth of Christ have met the interlocutor worthy of their name. Anne Behnke Kinney has changed our views about governance, Confucian morality, and social civility in the early empire by showing the centrality of women in politics and in society. This is not the first English translation of this justifiably famous collection of biographies, but it will likely be the last. (Dorothy Ko, Barnard College) Exemplary Women of Early China is essential for understanding China's premodern gender regime, Confucian ideology, and women's sense of self. The Lien zhuan provided later authors and artists with an endlessly rich source of moral exemplars to reveal behavioral norms for both genders. Kinney's elegant and erudite translation brings to life the words and deeds of these remarkable women. A wonderfully inspiring read. (Robin D. S. Yates, McGill University) Kinney's faithful translation and her erudite annotations and introduction make this classic of women's history accessible to a broad audience of scholars and students of Asian history... This book is an essential sourcebook for women's and gender history collections. Highly recommended. (CHOICE) With her extensive and meticulously presented introduction, with her precise and readable translation, and with her careful annotation of historical and textual references, Kinney has done both students and scholars of early China a great favour. (Chinet) Anne Behnke Kinney's faithful and eloquent translation presents a ground-breaking effort that will allow readers to rediscover a foundational book of early Chinese women's life, moral code, and inspiration... A brilliant, fresh, and scholarly contextualized introduction... A must-read book. (Journal of the American Oriental Society) By

making this key work on women's history more accessible to the international academic community than ever before, Kinney's translation of Liu Xiang's monumental collection will surely be accepted as the new standard. (Bret Hinsch N)Elegant and judiciously footnoted.... this scholarly and thoughtful translation places Kinney in the long lineage of Chinese female authors who have made this text the focus of their intellectual and moral concern. (Joan Judge The Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies)About the AuthorAnne Behnke Kinney is professor of Chinese at the University of Virginia.