

Princeton University
Honors Faculty Members Receiving
Emeritus Status



June 2007

The biographical sketches were written by
colleagues in the departments of those honored.

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Andrew Henry Plaks



Andy Plaks has been at Princeton since 1962 as an undergraduate, a graduate student, and a member of the faculty. Valedictorian of his high school class in Long Island, at Princeton he discovered Chinese language and all to which it gave entrée. He started on the career path that he still pursues.

Before majoring in Chinese studies in what was then the Oriental studies department, Andy took an intervening year in Taiwan to study Chinese language and literature. With a senior thesis that was a translation and study of a short story from a celebrated collection printed in the 17th century, Andy graduated *summa cum laude* in 1967. That June he immediately went to Israel to aid in its defense during the Six Day War. After a tour of duty teaching in the New York City school system, he entered the Ph.D. program in the new comparative literature department. With his superior preparation in languages (which now include the classical languages—Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Hebrew—as well as modern languages, Chinese, Japanese, French, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, Hungarian, and Romanian, among others) and literatures, Andy quickly completed his dissertation, published by the Princeton University Press in 1976 under the title *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber*. In 1973 he began as an assistant professor in the East Asian studies and comparative literature departments, and he has been a full professor since 1980.

Andy has published significant work in three scholarly languages. Among his many publications in English stands his monumental study on 16th-century literati fiction, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton University Press, 1987, with a Chinese translation published in 1993). It is the preeminent critical account of four long narratives that are at

the center of the new form of prose fiction that began to be printed in the late Ming period. Andy's book was awarded the Joseph Levenson Prize by the Association for Asian Studies as the year's the best work on pre-20th-century China. Andy continues to be recognized as one the premier experts in the world on Ming-Qing fiction.

Andy's massive book (600-plus pages) in Chinese is the *Hong lou meng piyu pian quan* (1987), a critical selection of Qing dynasty linear comments on the great 18th-century novel, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (also known as *Story of the Stone*) that he rightly called "a landmark of Chinese civilization." *The Dream* has generated an enormous literature in Chinese written by scholars and others over the last 250 years. By contributing critical insights of his own for nearly every chapter, Andy fully participates in the ongoing scholarly discussion of a Chinese treasure.

The third scholarly language in which Andy contributes is Hebrew. He has published scholarly, annotated translation of two of the four books that were foundational texts in Chinese elite education for the past thousand years or so. (His translations of the two books are also published in English as part of the Penguin Classics series.) For the past dozen years and more Andy has taught Chinese literature and Chinese Classics at Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the fall and at Princeton in the spring.

During the summer months in Princeton Andy always has made himself available to graduate students in Chinese literature and history to work intensively, and usually individually, on the texts that are integral to their dissertation research. Those students over the past 30 years have gone on to take up appointments at major universities in the United States and East Asia. In the years to come, he will continue to be involved in his commitment to enhancing understanding of China's cultural heritage represented in its classics and other literary texts.