

# CHINA CROSSROADS

Monday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025, 19:30 – 21:00

## Print, Censorship, and Immoral Modernities in Republican China: Zhang Jingsheng's "Sex Histories"

Geng Yushu

Postdoctoral Fellow

NYU Shanghai

Center for Global Asia

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This talk explores the extraordinary lives and afterlives of Zhang Jingsheng's (1888-1970) [Sex Histories](#). Published in 1926, Zhang claimed his Sex Histories to be a scientific study of sex and served as a tool of education and social rejuvenation. Most contemporary elite and popular audiences, however, considered his work obscene and nicknamed him 'Dr. Sex'. Meanwhile, Republican-era book sellers and publishers quickly cashed in on Zhang's reputation as a writer of smut and produced several books under the name Zhang Jingsheng with the same title Sex Histories. Locating Zhang and his Sex Histories in the print market and the censorship mechanisms of early twentieth century China, this talk will trace the evolution of nine different counterfeit books – all titled Sex Histories – alongside Zhang's original Sex Histories, and the ways in which they tested the shifting boundaries of obscenity and modernity in early twentieth century China.

[Geng Yushu](#) is a cultural historian of modern China and a Postdoctoral Fellow at NYU Shanghai. She received her BA in History and MA in Modern History from Durham University and obtained an MPhil in Gender Studies and a PhD in History from the University of Cambridge. Prior to joining NYU Shanghai, she worked as a postdoc at Trinity College Dublin between 2021 and 2023, investigating the changing meanings of childhood in twentieth-century China. Her PhD project looks at the circulation and regulation of Chinese-language obscene publications in Republican China and colonial Singapore. Her broader research interests include history of gender and sexuality, print culture, feminism, and global history. Her work has been published in China Perspectives, Historical Journal, American Historical Review, and Modern Asian Studies.

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a "crossroads" of the world and itself at a "crossroads" in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at [editor@shanghai-review.org](mailto:editor@shanghai-review.org).