



Name in English: Chin Yang Lee
Name in Chinese: 黎錦揚
Name in Pinyin:
Gender: Male
Birth Year: 1917
Birth Place: Hunan Province, China
Current location: Alhambra, California

Author of *Flower Drum Song*

Profession (s): Author, Journalist

Education: B.A., 1942, Southwest Associated University – Kunming, China; Comparative Literature, Columbia University; M.F.A., Playwriting, 1947, Yale University

Awards: 1949, Best Original Short Story, Reader’s Digest; 1957, Silver Medal Fiction Award, Commonwealth Club of California Book Awards; 1959, Key to the City of San Francisco and Proclamation of February 9th as “Flower Drum Song Day”; 1961, Writers’ Guild Annual Award for Writing Achievement; 1961, Box Office Blue Ribbon Award, National Screen Council

Contribution (s):

Before writing *The Flower Drum Song*, Chin Yang Lee (C.Y. Lee) worked as a journalist for two newspapers based in San Francisco’s Chinatown; *Chinese World*, and *Young China*. In addition, he was a contributor to *Radio Free Asia* and taught Chinese at the Monterey Army Language School. Prior to his immigration to the US, Lee worked as Secretary to the Sawbwa, a chief, of Mangshih, a small principality on the China-Burma border. He drew upon these WWII experiences for inspiration for some of his works.

His first novel, *The Flower Drum Song*, published in 1957, shot up the New York Times bestseller list and was quickly adapted into a successful musical on Broadway, and then a Universal film that has since been added to the National Film Registry that preserves the best of American film. The musical, the first Broadway show in history about Asian Americans, also featured for the first time an almost all-Asian cast. In his 80s, Lee experienced a revival when eminent playwright, David Henry Hwang, produced *The Flower Drum Song* musical in 2001, re-adapting the musical’s themes to make it more contemporary to Asian Americans today.

Set in San Francisco’s Chinatown, *The Flower Drum Song* dealt with a Chinese family’s generational conflict over an arranged marriage set by a traditional father for his Americanized son. *The Flower Drum Song*, lauded as Lee’s best work, exemplifies Lee’s writing style with its sparkling wit and informed knowledge of Chinese and American culture. Following *The Flower Drum Song*, Lee wrote articles published in *The New Yorker* magazine and continued penning works that captured his interpretation of the Chinese experience in America as well as the political and historical upheavals of China

at the time. He has written nine novels and two non-fiction works that have been translated in many European and Asian languages. In honor of Lee, Boston University created the C.Y. Lee Literary Collection at its Mugar Memorial Library in 1989.

Philanthropy:

In honor of his late wife, Joyce, Chin Yang Lee financed the creation of the annual C.Y. Lee Creative Writing Contest and associated scholarship with California State University – Los Angeles in 1997 to encourage and promote creative writing on Asian and Asian American themes.

Publications:

- 1957 Flower Drum Song
- 1958 Lover's Point
- 1959 The Sawbwa and His Secretary: My Burmese Reminiscences
- 1960 Madame Goldenflower
- 1961 Cripple Mah and the New Order
- 1964 Virgin Market
- 1967 Land of the Golden Mountain
- 1987 China Saga
- 1990 The Second Son of Heaven
- 1991 Gate of Rage

External Links:

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C. Y. Lee \(author\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/C._Y._Lee_(author))
- [http://www.rnh.com/people_detail.asp?sub=bio&div=people&id=C Lee](http://www.rnh.com/people_detail.asp?sub=bio&div=people&id=C_Lee)
- [http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-13253992 ITM](http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-13253992_ITM)
- http://issuu.com/boxoffice/docs/boxoffice_010862/11