In Memoriam: Professor Dr. Yan-Ling Liang (1934–2021)

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Professor Dr. Yan-Ling Liang, our family-like friend, respected colleague, and renowned mentor, passed away suddenly and peacefully in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, on 8 December 2021, at the age of 88, survived by his wife, two sons, and two grandchildren.

Professor Liang was born in Meizhou (Meichow), Guangdong Province, China, on 24 February 1934. His siblings included one older sister, one older brother, one younger sister, and two younger brothers. Professor Liang lived in Meizhou throughout his early years until graduating from secondary school. He then enrolled in Wuhan University, graduating from there in 1956, and soon after began working at the Institute of Hydrobiology (IHB), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), continuing there for 43 years. Early in his professional career, he studied aquatic oligochaetes under the guidance of the famous oligochaetologist Professor Yi Chen at Nanjing University in Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province (China) (1956–1958), and visited the University of California, Santa Barbara (USA) (1979–1981). After returning to IHB-CAS in Wuhan from the USA, his responsibilities expanded to include Academic Dean of the State Key Laboratory of Freshwater Ecology and Biotechnology (1993–1996), Dean of the IHB Center for Freshwater Ecology (1987–1996), and as the President of Hubei Oceanography & Limnology Society (1996–2008). Professor Liang was a perennial member of the International Symposium on Aquatic Oligochaetes (ISAO) group. In collaboration with other IHB scientists, he was instrumental in organizing and hosting the 10th triennial meeting of ISAO in Wuhan in October 2006, with 66 participants representing 20 countries.

Throughout his career, Professor Liang devoted himself to aquatic ecology and taxonomy of invertebrates, particularly freshwater oligochaetes. His work ethics and dedication to science greatly influenced three generations oligochaete taxonomists, systematists, and aquatic ecologists—in Hubei Province, throughout China, and elsewhere in the World.
In collaboration with colleagues, several of whom were former students, he described one genus and 29 species of aquatic oligochaetes, and one genus and two species of branchiobdellidans as new to science; these are listed below in Appendix 1. Citations for publications by Yan-Ling Liang and collaborators in which oligochaetes and branchiobdellidans (Annelida, Clitellata) are discussed, including those in which new taxa are described, are listed in Appendix 2.

Professor Liang was a very humble man, sharing his knowledge, wit, humor, and broad insights with us about life—far beyond science and worms. He was always kind and respectful when working with his contemporaries, and equally with younger generations—always willing to teach us with patience and fun. He was proud of his Chinese lineage: Hakka / Hakka Han, associated with the Kejia or K’o-chia ethnic group, ‘the guest people’, that lived originally in North China before migrating to southern Chinese provinces during the 1270s.

His interests were broad and diverse—painting, writing calligraphy, composing verses, making audio amplifiers (especially collaborating with electronic technocrats at the Tube Factory in Wuhan), performing as well as listening to diverse music genres, and collecting and carving ink stones and stamps. He made friends absent of prejudice—with artists, common workers, carpenters, farmers, citizens everywhere, and regardless of their socio-economic status, professional involvements, or avocational pursuits. He had so many stories to tell and shared them often with longtime friends as well as people he would meet for the first time. He always embraced the diversity of life and cultures—evident every time he spoke with us, and always with quiet advice and a simple direction forward for all around him. We benefited deeply from his sincere interest in each of us.

To all who knew him, his passing is equal to that of losing a family member. Thankfully, his impact on each of us—as friends, colleagues, and renowned contributor to science—will ensure that the memory of our mentor and family-like friend Yan-Ling Liang remains “immortal”!

The State Key Laboratory of Freshwater Ecology and Biotechnology at the Institute of Hydrobiology, Chinese Academy of Sciences in Wuhan hosts a website (http://benthos.ihb.ac.cn/Liang%20YL.en.htm) that summarizes additional information for Professor Liang with pictures highlighting his professional life.

APPENDIX 1. Aquatic annelid genera and species described as new to science by Yan-Ling Liang and co-authors (citations for publications in which these taxa were described are listed in Appendix 2).

Amphichaeta asiatica Liang, 1958;
Vejdovskyella simplex Liang, 1958;
Paranaïs mobilis Liang, 1958;
Pristina acuminata Liang, 1958;
Aulophorus varians Liang, 1958;
Aulophorus heptabranchionus Liang, 1958;
Branchiodrilus hortensis var. bifidus Liang, 1958;
Nais inflata Liang, 1963;
Pristina amphibiotica changtuensis Liang, 1963;
Caridinophila Liang, 1963;
Caridinophila unidens Liang, 1963;
Stephanodrilus truncatus Liang, 1963;
Alldero prosetosa Liang, 1964;
Sinencytraeus Liang et Hsū, 1979;
Sinencytraeus glacialis Liang et Hsū, 1979;
Limnodrilus ambylysetus Brinkhurst, Qi & Liang, 1990;
Piguetiella denticulata Liang et Xie, 1997;
Pristinella aequidentata Liang et Xie, 1997;
Chenidrilus Liang et Xie, 1997;
Lumbricillus incisus Wang et Liang, 1997;
Limnodriloides bulopenitus Wang et Liang, 1997;
Fridericia multisegmentata Wang, Xie et Liang, 1999;
Enchytraeus athecatus Wang, Xie et Liang, 1999;
Fridericia chongqingensis Xie, Liang et Wang, 1999;
Hemiencytraeus planisetus Xie, Wang et Liang, 1999;
Hemiencytraeus brachythes Xie, Wang et Liang, 1999;
Bothrineurum grandisetosum Wang, Xie et Liang, 2000;
Fridericia unisetosa Xie, Liang et Wang, 2000;
Fridericia paraunisetosa Xie, Liang et Wang, 2000;
Bryodrilus longisetosus Xie, Liang et Wang, 2000;
Bryodrilus macrotheca Xie, Liang et Wang, 2000;
Enchytraeus chaoyangensis Xie, Liang et Wang, 2000;
Marionina changbaishanensis Xie, Liang et Wang, 2000;
Limnodrilus ambylysetus Wang et Liang, 2001;
Fridericia nanningensis Xie, Liang et Wang, 2001;
APPENDIX 2. Citations for publications by Yan-Ling Liang and collaborators in which oligochaetes and branchiobdellids (Annelida, Clitellata) are discussed. Citations are annotated with the names of taxa newly described therein.


