



Tony Kirkham photographing the Dadu River in Sichuan. He is attempting to match exactly the image held in his right hand, a print from the original glass plate taken by Wilson a century earlier. Reproduced with permission from Tony Kirkham.

Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham manage to bring some of Wilson's trips to life. The description of their own travels and their photographs complement well Wilson's own writings such as in *A naturalist in Western China* (1913). Wilson travelled for more than eight years in China, Flanagan and Kirkham only for some weeks, so inevitably they describe only some of the areas visited by him. Their book is more a travelogue than a detailed analysis of Wilson's achievements. The authors admit that despite their efforts, Wilson remains something of an enigma. He published many books and papers and at least three biographies have been written, but Wilson the man remains elusive and he reveals little of himself.

In addition, there are some fine photographs of wonderful plants – I was particularly impressed by four *Meconopsis* species: *M. henrici* var. *henrici* with its purple-blue petals, *M. integrifolia* var. *integrifolia* with its lemon-yellow petals, *M. punicea* with brilliant scarlet flowers and *M. racemosa* with blue flowers. Flanagan and Kirkham also describe what each of them considers the ten best Wilson woody introductions. This emphasises how many of Wilson's introductions are not yet widely grown, despite their quality. Worse, very few of Wilson's original introductions of

known provenance are still alive or have been propagated. The authors mention almost in passing that the kiwifruit is probably the single most important Wilson introduction (Ferguson, 2004).

*Wilson's China* is an easy and enjoyable read, even if sometimes rather discursive. It and Roy Lancaster's *Travels in China: a plantsman's paradise* (1989) are essential reading for anyone planning a botanical trip to Sichuan. *Wilson's China* is also a very useful addition to the literature on Wilson and the botanical exploration of China. The illustrations alone make it a book to treasure.

A similar book, entitled *Tracing one hundred years of change*, was recently published (Yin, 2010). This is written by Professor Yin Kaipu, a distinguished botanist and conservationist at the Institute of Biology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Chengdu, Sichuan. He has also used many of Wilson's photographs from early last century to record the changes that have since occurred. Although the text is largely in Chinese, a comparison of the old and more recent photographs should be most interesting.

## References

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## Erratum

2009 Young Horticulturist of the Year. *New Zealand Garden Journal* 12(2): 31. (December 2009).

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