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**Kenneth Edward Brashier (2011), *Ancestral Memory in Early China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 474 pp. ISBN 978-0-674-05607-7, \$49.95, £36.95.**

Being a Tang intellectual historian, the question occurred to me: Why review a book on early imperial ancestral rites? There are three main reasons for this: firstly, Brashier's book serves as a prequel to the late Howard Wechsler's seminal *Offerings of Jade and Silk* (New Haven 1985). Secondly, the ancestral religion of the Tang 唐 cannot be properly understood without a substantiated knowledge of the discursive groundwork laid through the early imperial era (in Brashier's chronology: from Qin 秦 through to Cao-Wei 曹魏, 221 BCE– 265 CE). Thirdly, the history of that institution, which was so crucial for the legitimacy of any ruling house until the end of imperial China, in the 400 years between the Han and Tang remains what Germans like to call 'a research desideratum'. It thus should be worthwhile for scholars of all periods of Chinese history to take notice of this contribution to the study of early imperial Chinese ritual.

This study is about what its author felicitously dubs "structured amnesia", but contrary to that, the reader does not easily forget the joys of reading it. The core of its five parts, subdivided into no less than 31 sections, is Part II, "A History of Remembering and Forgetting ..." (pp.102–183), though the fact that it merely covers a quarter of the book gives an idea of how far the author casts his net. The introduction, "The Han Tree of Knowledge", alone stretches over 45 pages. It is an analysis of the vocabulary with which early Chinese thinkers organised their intellectual map into what Sinological tradition labelled 'schools' (*jia* 家) and Brashier might have us call "tributaries" or "branches". He richly supports this with textual evidence, although the reader sometimes wishes the author had not finished his translations all so quickly. He subdivides the Chinese "Metaphors They Lived By" (Lackoff & Johnson, Chicago 1980) into rivers, trees, roads, and lineages, and then singles out the last as the predominant metaphor in Early China as opposed to the Graeco-Roman "argument is war" (p.19), arguing that Chinese thinkers believed their

views to have sprung from the same ‘trunk’ (zong 宗), some merely being closer to the source than others. What Brashier fails to mention, however, is that this, in the course of intellectual history in China (and ultimately in East Asia), led to an attitude well-known as *compartmentalism* – different schools being responsible for different domains of the spiritual world – and an aversion against forcing one’s convictions or “creed” upon others. In the final section (pp.35–45), Brashier proceeds to “re-evaluat[e] our ‘religious’ vocabulary”, criticising earlier attempts at pigeonholing the Chinese classicist (better known as “Confucian”) tradition as “religion” or “non-religion”. Instead, he identifies the behavioural norm of “filial piety” (xiao 孝) as opposed to faith as lying at the very heart of the Chinese ancestral cult, and contrasts the “exclusivist” (p. 40) partiality of Abrahamic religions with the inclusivist (again: like branches on the same tree) agnosticism of most classical Chinese thinkers. The argument is reminiscent of Robert F. Campany’s “On the Very Ideas of Religions” (*History of Religions* 42.4, 2003), which only underlines that comparative semantics à la “Understanding Cultures through Their Keywords” (Anna Wierzbicka. Oxford, 1997) can fruitfully be applied to China, and should do so more often. The juxtaposition of “argument is war” against “argument is tracing out lineage” in Early China seems slightly overdrawn and harking back to the cliché of East Asian societies placing harmony over individual interests, but that may be justified in view of the elucidation it yields about how Early Chinese thinkers organised their tree of knowledge.

In Part I, “An Imaginary Yardstick for Ritual Performance” (pp.46–101), Brashier turns away from the corpse-strewn territory of the religious towards the hardly less mined field of ritual theory. Based on the late Catherine Bell’s theory of ritual as performance, he attempts to re-read the ritual classics such as *Yili* 儀禮 and *Liji* 禮記 (discussing their differences on pp.48–9) not as reflections of actual practice, but performative texts that framed people’s mindsets regarding space, social relations, and collective memory. As he points out (p.57), “Some of these acts [...] were in fact more discussed than practiced.” This is no surprise, as the prescriptive rather than descriptive character of the texts in question has been pointed out earlier, as Brashier duly acknowledges (p.47). What is more surprising is that he sticks to performance theory as his main theoretical angle, when apparently performances played such a minor part compared with the scholarly discourse about them. The way these texts, or rather their three-dimensional

realisations, the ancestral temples, framed the minds of Early China in how it commemorated its ancestors, is one of two major concerns of the book; the other one is how these minds shaped the texts and why hardly any aspect of the ancestral cult remained uncontested. Brashier coins the term of “loose-leaf ring binders” to account for this, the contents of which could be easily reshuffled, new ones hooked into, and undeserved ones sorted out.

On p.61, Brashier elucidates the crucial distinction of *zu* 祖 and *zong* 宗 ancestors. The title *zu* (as in Gaozu 高祖) usually was conferred upon “he who had first acquired (or extended) the territory” (*kaiguo* 開國 or *shifeng zhu jun* 始封之君); *zong* was applied to the ‘expendable’ ancestors in the series of *Zhao* 昭 and *Mu* 穆. Section 8 (pp.74–101). This illustrates how far the reality of an ancestral temple, as revealed by the archaeological record, could deviate from the ideal. Here, Brashier draws a line between the ancestral remembrance “lettered” and “unlettered classes” (p.76), which might be considered controversial, and problematically bases his assumption about the latter on the written testimonies of the former.

In Part II, Brashier translates and interprets court debates on the intricate configuration of the ‘great ancestral temple’ (*taimiao* 太廟; I prefer ‘temple’ over ‘shrine,’ the latter may refer to the niches for single ancestors within the *taimiao*) from the reigns of the Second Emperor of Qin 秦二世 (209 BCE, pp.104–107) to Emperor Ming 明帝 of the Wei (227–239 CE, pp.178–181). Its main sources are the standard (a.k.a. “dynastic”) histories *Shiji* 史記, *Hanshu* 漢書, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, and *Sanguozhi* 三國志. I do not delve into the details of these debates here, as their topics are highly variegated. Suffice it to say that this is the best part of the book, as the author succeeds in integrating the material in a consistent and convincing narrative.

Part III analyses the “Spectrum of Interpretations on Afterlife Existence” (pp.184–228), from *do-ut-des* relationships and the belief in ancestors as sentient beings to the denial of ancestral existence (or at least their being conscious of the world of the living). Part IV tries to give an overview of emic theories of performance and the mental gestation of ancestors, moving from correlative cosmology of the body in terms of ‘breaths’ (*qi* 氣) and Five-Phases 五行, and its expression in emotions and music (pp.234–51), to the minds’ (of both commoners and rulers) framing the physical and spiritual world (pp.252–273), the latter recalling Michael Puett’s “self-divinization” (in *To Become a*

*God*. Cambridge, MA, 2002). The fifth and last part, “The Symbolic Language of Fading Memories” (pp.280–345), is the most challenging one when it comes to theory. It shows how the dead gradually moved from the bright realm of life into the darkness of the great muddle beyond, evoking ideas of Chinese transcendence as knowing no sharp divide between ‘Diesseits’ and ‘Jenseits,’ but concentric circles in which the uncivilized, raw periphery (darkness) is moving ever farther away from the refined, civilized centre (light).

The problem of this second half of the book is threefold. Firstly, it could have been condensed into one chapter on religious imagery in Early China. Secondly, it rests overly upon outdated Western scholarship on religion (there certainly is more recent and less phenomenological literature around than Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade). Finally, its three parts do not seem to be thoroughly related to the historical Part II: there the selection of sources was clear and consistent, whereas here it seems rather random. In addition, the rawness of at least parts of the book is highlighted by the frequent usage of lists instead of linear arguments (and the alternating employment of bullets vs. numbers) and the brevity of the conclusion (less than three pages!). These beauty spots notwithstanding, Brashier’s *Ancestral Memory* is an outstanding contribution to research into the roots of ancestral religion and a must-read for every scholar of religion interested in Early China in particular, or the ancient world in general.

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**Chihyun Chang (2013), *Government, Imperialism and Nationalism in China: The Maritime Customs Service and its Chinese staff*. London: Routledge, 237 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-53142-9, \$155, £90.**

The Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS) was one of the most important institutions in the history of modern China. Its historical role oscillated between being a means of imperialist control and a source of stable revenue underpinning the construction of the modern Chinese state. Rather unsurprisingly, therefore, the CMCS has aroused the interest of China

historians since at least the 1930s. Chang Chih-yun's carefully researched monograph adds to this tradition of scholarship.

After the introduction, which sketches previous research and suggests several interpretive frameworks but lacks a clear statement of the aims and method of the enquiry, the book proceeds chronologically. This enables Chang to follow the twists and turns which impacted on the relationship of the CMCS with successive Chinese governments. Part I, consisting of the first three chapters, delineates the rise of the CMCS in the early twentieth century. There is, of course, a lengthy discussion of the towering figure of Sir Robert Hart, who headed the institution for an impressive 45 years. It was in Hart's time that Customs revenues were pledged for the indemnities that China was forced to pay after the war with Japan in 1894/95 and the Boxer War of 1900/01. Chang makes it clear how Hart's relationship with the Chinese government rested on "[m]utual trust, complete autonomy and absolute subordination" (p.38) and this continued into the *Xinzheng* (New Policies) era between 1901 and 1911, when the Qing government took steps to bring the CMCS under closer supervision.

However, it was not under Hart but under his successor Francis Aglen that the power of the Inspector General (IG) of the CMCS reached its apex. Owing to the political and military instability after the Qing had been overthrown in 1911, Aglen became "China's Supreme Minister of Finance" (p.43), effectively pulling the financial strings of the young and financially strained Republic and steering his institution through years of civil war, trying to accommodate various political sides and military groupings. At the same time, Aglen did comparatively little to improve the status of the Chinese staff, although the Customs Service's own training college had started to produce qualified graduates since 1913, and by the 1920s had become the institution's main source of manpower.

In the second part (again comprised of three chapters), Chang traces the history of the CMCS under Nationalist (Guomindang) rule in the 1920s and 1930s. Like the Qing dynasty before it, the Nationalists downgraded the Inspectorate to a medium-ranked post by establishing a supervisory body (the Guanwushu) that was itself placed under the Ministry of Finance. At the same time, the Nationalists continued to rely on the expertise of the new IG, Frederick Maze and his staff. Internally, equality between Chinese and foreign employees became an ever more pressing issue, although distinctions

between the two were abolished and the hiring of foreigners was discontinued in the late 1920s. That the Customs College was designated as the “sole recruiting ground” for the CMCS acted as a further counterbalance to the IG’s authority.

Chapters 7-9, forming Part III, deal with the fate of the CMCS during the turbulent years of World War II between 1937 and 1945. Up until the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the CMCS headquarters remained in Shanghai, serving both the collaborationist government of Wang Jingwei in Nanjing and Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government. After the outbreak of the Pacific War, the post of IG fell to the Japanese Kishimoto Hirokichi, who had distinguished himself during his long career in the Customs Service. Kishimoto not only protected the Chinese employees; it was also he who abolished the last inequalities among the Customs staff. From 1941 and then after the victory over Japan, the Service was gradually rebuilt from Chongqing and integrated the Customs stations in Manchuria and Taiwan, lost to Japan in 1931 and 1895 respectively. Foreigners returned to play a prominent role in the upper echelons and again a Briton was appointed IG, despite the availability of suitable Chinese candidates. The Customs Training Institute, split up during the war, moved from offering a curriculum in general education to becoming a vocational training institute.

The two remaining chapters (Part IV) trace the legacy beyond the watershed date of 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party took power in China. On the Chinese mainland, the Customs Service was subordinated to the CCP’s political control; for the former Chinese staff, their long-standing affiliation with foreigners became a liability, as it made them easy targets in the political campaigns launched by the Communists. There was less political pressure and a greater continuity from the pre-war institution in Guomindang-ruled Taiwan, although here too the Customs Service was brought more closely into the fold of the state.

Contrary to what the title suggests, Chang analyses the history of the CMCS on two levels. On the one hand, he looks at the top levels of the institution and their relations with the respective governments. Occasionally, political power changed hands with such rapidity that the CMCS leadership was at a loss which side to take. On the other, he examines the status of the Chinese staff; the chapters on the Customs College, in particular, seem to have been appended to the main narrative and are rather detached from it. Occasionally,

the details of the argument are a bit puzzling: what exactly was the relationship between the Sterling Allotment for foreign staff and the conflict between various categories of employees (pp.106-8)? And did the powerful chief of the GMD's security apparatus, Dai Li, want to incorporate parts of the CMCS into his institution—or did he, conversely, want the CMCS to undertake security work for him (pp.140-42)?

Overall, however, Chang presents a solidly argued study, drawing on in-depth archival research. He demonstrates convincingly how most Chinese governments exerted influence on the CMCS, albeit in different degrees. Despite being directed and partly staffed by foreigners, the Customs Service was always a Chinese institution. Chang's book is of great interest to students of China's foreign relations as well as of its administrative institutions.

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**Marjorie Dryburgh and Sarah Dauncey (eds), *Writing Lives in China, 1600-2010: Histories of the Elusive Self*. (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, ISBN 9781137368560, \$95, £55.**

This volume is a collection of essays which began life as papers presented at a 2008 workshop in Sheffield, organised by the editors.

At first glance, the scope of the book's theme appears alarmingly broad. Spanning over four centuries of Chinese history and adopting an inclusive and wide-ranging definition of life-writing, to cover both biography and autobiography, all literary genres, fiction and non-fiction, diaries and blogs, this is clearly a bold endeavour. Questions the editors seek to address are stated in the introduction as: "conventional periodisations....and our assumptions of their implications for genre and content in life writing practice"; and "what life narrative was designed to do -- Whose lives are written, and why? Is the subject of the life narrative public or private, social or interior? How far are life stories understood as 'history telling' as well as personal narratives?" A key aim of the book is to see the gap between what is recorded in biographies and the reality as a "focus of enquiry" rather than as a

shortcoming. Even before noticing that one chapter is dedicated to writings in a non-Chinese language, facing such an apparently broad range of inquiry, the wary and cynical reader finds herself preparing to be underwhelmed.

However, the first chapter, co-authored by the editors, Marjorie Dryburgh and Sarah Dauncey, goes a long way to providing answers to these questions. The argument to focus not on the *classification* of the genre but rather on the *clarification* of its development is a persuasive one, and, one by one, my initial anxieties over the scope of the project are addressed, and dispelled, beautifully. After this illuminating first chapter, we are then led on a fascinatingly diverse journey through seven individual case studies, each of which provides both detailed and often intriguing insights on the particular life (or lives) in question, while also contributing to the broader questions raised about the nature of life-writing.

By examining the modes of self-representation in his dramas, Alison Hardie provides a lively argument for a re-evaluation of the late-Ming official and literatus Ruan Dacheng (1587-1646), and by so doing questions the veracity of the overwhelmingly negative caricatures of Ruan in sources such as the official histories. Hardie successfully demonstrates how literary works can serve the author as a fruitful repository for autobiographical detail. This essay immediately lends strong support to the editors' choice to include both fictional and non-fictional writings in a single study.

Harriet Zurndorfer highlights the treatment of women's life-writing by historiographers in the early twentieth century, in her study of Wang Zhaoyuan (1763-1851). Zurndorfer details how the narrative of Wang's life was subject to the predilections of the male historiographers, with the likes of the reformer Liang Qichao keen to devalue any achievements of women in imperial China, and how Wang was effectively written in, and out, of history accordingly. In her conclusion, Zurndorfer underscores the usefulness of the perhaps less fashionable traditional chronological biography (in Wang's case authored by Xu Weiyu), noting that such detailed biographies are truly rich repositories of information about their subjects.

Marjorie Dryburgh traces one man's journey from public official to collaborator with Japan, in her study of the diaries of Zheng Xiaoxu (1882-1938). Through her search for the elusive Zheng, and with reference to theorists such as Lejeune and Eakin, Dryburgh makes many stimulating comments on the broader function of the diary itself, noting in an elegant and



thought-provoking conclusion that “the diary persona is not a product of self-expression but a defensive carapace that stands between the fugitive self and the gaze of the reader.”

Nicola Spakowski’s chosen focus is autobiographical writing by women veterans of the Communist revolution. Her subtle analysis and close readings of three of these texts demonstrate how the very use of detail in these writings can convey varying degrees of compliance in what are, superficially, part of a one-dimensional Party narrative. Specifically, she identifies two distinguishable voices evident throughout these works: “we find the authoritative voice of the Party in explicit evaluation whereas women’s ‘subjective’ voices are represented in detailed description.”

Moving to more contemporary lives, Chloë Starr considers the well-known author Zhang Xianliang (b. 1936) through the lens of his diaries and autobiographical writings. Starr explicitly rejects any attempt to separate ‘fiction’ from non-fiction’ in considering these works as biography. In a chronological survey of his work Starr traces a development from naive idealist to broken cynic, and argues for the adoption of a Marxian framework to fully understand this body of narrative, arguing memorably that: “Zhang’s own experiences have to be narrated in the political terminology of Mao Zedong (even if recreated ironically) because of the umbilical cord linking self-perception with the words and presence of Mao.”

Sarah Dauncey’s focus is the life-writing of people with physical disabilities, contextualising these writings within the broader discourse about disability in China today. Dauncey focuses mainly on Zhang Haidi (b. 1955), but also considers the lesser known Yin Xiaoxing (b. 1970) and Chen Yan (b. 1973). In a truly thought-provoking study, Dauncey concludes that, since the post-CR proliferation of this sub-genre, most of the body of published writings about, or by, disabled people, still perpetuates “a discourse on the primacy of the community at large over the individual and the utilisation of personal stories for public ends.” Intriguingly though, Dauncey argues, in this age of blogs and social media, the situation is changing and there is finally space for these writers to express themselves as individuals.

Finally, with Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy we turn to the twentieth century autobiographical writings of Tibetans, published in the PRC. To set the scene, Henrion-Dourcy notes the major contrast between the quantity, and content, of life-writing published since 1950 by Tibetans living in China and those in

exile. It is the former, much smaller, body of writings that are the focus here. These writings, Henrion-Dourcy concludes, need to address different readerships and balance different expectations: “the PCC who requested, edited and published the texts, the protagonists of the events described...and the future generations of Tibetans who will judge the deeds of the author”. The close and nuanced readings of these life-writings, commissioned in the main for overtly political agendas, illuminate the authorial strategies and degrees of compliance within them.

There is no conclusion *per se* to this volume, as the conclusions are revealed in Chapter 1 – a very minor criticism would be that this chapter, which does such a fine job of pulling together all the strands from the various articles, might be more effective at the end. But maybe I have been too influenced in my approach to reading by the King’s advice in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. If I had a list, my only other wish would be to have an indication in the preface or introduction about the subject-matter of the other papers at the workshop which didn’t make it into the volume. A keynote by Wu Pei-yi is mentioned, but no indication of content provided.

In sum, however, the end result of this project is a collection of seven separate, fascinating case-studies, with many interesting insights drawn together in the Dryburgh and Dauncey chapter about how these each, in their different ways, contribute to our understanding of life-writing as a genre. Without a project such as this, in an age where library and book-based browsing research is increasingly replaced by digital, more targeted searches, I imagine most readers with interest in any one of the ‘lives’ narrated here would be unlikely to find themselves reading about more than, say, one or two of the others. In our current academic environment, where both academics and publishers can fall prey to REF-fuelled obsessions over output-types, the relative status of the conference volume as an entity is sometimes called into question. I would suggest that the rich diversity, and yet surprising intellectual coherence of this volume provides an excellent example of why this sort of endeavour is precisely what Chinese Studies needs.

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**Mackenzie, Colin with contributions by Lu Ling-En (2011), *Masterworks of Chinese Art: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 103 pp.; ISBN: 978-0-615-48882-0, \$29.95.**

**Johnston, John and Chan Lai Pik with an essay by Lin Shwu Shin (2011), *5,000 years of Chinese Jade: featuring selections from the National Museum of History, Taiwan and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 130 pp.; ISBN: 978-0-615-47180-8, \$29.95.**

**Liu Yang, with contributions by Edmund Capon, , Albert E. Dien, , Jeffrey Riegel, Eugene Wang, Zhongyi Yuan (2013), *China's Terracotta Warriors: the First Emperor's Legacy*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 302 pp., ISBN: 978-0-9800484-9-0**

These three volumes all take very different approaches in presenting masterworks of traditional Chinese art.

*Masterworks of Chinese Art: the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art* is aimed at the general visitor coming to the Nelson-Atkins Museum and seeking a memento of their visit. The introduction gives a broad-brush overview of Chinese art history and then twenty seven objects from the Museum's collection are presented in full-colour, with full-page photographs accompanied by what the cover describes as a series of 'short essays'.

This is not a book aimed at the Chinese art specialist. The introduction, while well written, is aimed at readers with no background in Chinese art. The essays accompanying each object are also very short. At around 300-350 words each it is a stretch to call each one an 'essay': extended label might be more accurate. As the museum has around 8,000 objects in its Chinese collection the specialist might also have wished for a much larger number to be included in a catalogue, rather than just 27. Taking all of that into account, the works that are depicted are nevertheless of the highest quality. Overall the selection lives up to the billing of "masterwork" with pieces ranging in date from the Bronze Age to the Qing dynasty in jade, ceramic, metalwork, lacquer, sculpture and on paper.

The outstanding aspect of this book is the photography. Anyone who has worked on a project like this knows just how hard it is to obtain outstanding

images of such diverse objects. The photographers working on this project are to be commended on their excellent work. It is also obvious that no expense was spared in the production of this volume. This is especially noticeable in the presentation of three particularly challenging objects: the sarcophagus of filial piety dating to the Northern Wei dynasty, the illustration to the second prose poem on the Red Cliff attributed to Qiao Zhongchang, dated to the Northern Song dynasty, and the Yuan dynasty monumental mural of the Assembly of Tejabraba. The sarcophagus and mural are both presented using a fold-out page to allow extended images of the whole length of these large objects to be shown. In the case of the hand scroll this is taken to another level with four additional fold-out pages allowing the reader to view the whole length of the scroll in detail.

The only criticism of the photography would be that some of the objects would have benefited from additional detailed images. A particularly obvious example of this is entry no. 6, an Eastern Han tomb model of a tower. The description tells us that “the second floor has small windows and a balcony, on which sits a figure of the landlord”, but the photograph used is taken from an angle whereby the landlord is hidden from our view by a watchtower in front. A detail showing this interesting feature would have been a very welcome addition.

*5,000 years of Chinese Jade* is an exhibition catalogue of quite a different type. Created to accompany a 2011 exhibition at the San Antonio Museum of Art, this work is much more academic in its approach. After three short introductory essays, the 89 pieces in the exhibition are all presented, each with a half page photograph and detailed entry with extensive use of footnotes and references to other relevant publications. The three essays begin with an introduction to the importance and changing uses of jade. This is followed by an essay of the development of *bi* discs in the late Bronze Age, focusing on the size and placement of the discs within burials. The third essay discusses the jades from the Jia and Yi tombs in Liulige, Huxian, Henan Province providing some context for several of the pieces loaned for the exhibition.

The loan from the National Museum of History in Taiwan forms a significant part of this exhibition. Other pieces included were loaned by the Smithsonian Institution, the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum in

Springfield Massachusetts and a private US collector. A small number of pieces from SAMA's own collection are also included. Many of the pieces included in the exhibition are well known and have been previously published in other books and catalogues. In the case of these objects, the value in this catalogue comes in the form of the footnotes to each piece which often include references to recent archaeological excavations and their publication, drawing the reader's attention to parallels now found within a excavated context.

The selection of pieces has been designed to provide an overview of the development of the use of jade in China from the Neolithic until the Qing dynasty. It does this very successfully, including one or two examples of the most characteristic forms, from early bi discs and jade weapons to the elaborate carvings and vases of the later dynasties.

The only major criticism of the volume would be that the very detailed physical descriptions at the beginning of each catalogue entry reduce the amount of space left for interpretation and additional contextual information. With a full-colour photograph accompanying each entry some of these descriptions could have been shortened to give more room for discussion of the significance of the piece. Also, only a very few objects are shown from more than one angle. A few of the pieces would have benefited from additional photography (for example entries 71 and 72: both entries tell us about the carving on the reverse but this is not shown).

One final minor issue is that some entries (for example 35 and 36) refer the reader back to Chan Lai Pik's essay on bi discs for discussion of the evolution of the dragon head motif. Chan's essay does not really discuss this at all: its focus is on the size and distribution of bi discs.

While the fact that most of this material has been published before means that it does not present much that is new for the specialist, this book would provide an excellent introduction to the changing use and significance of jade in China for students getting to grips with the field. Its clear chronological layout and careful selection of pieces give a useful overview. There is a wealth of information and each entry is well footnoted and referenced. The inclusion of references to recent archaeological publications is to be particularly commended. As such this is a useful volume for those beginning their study of Chinese jade.

The final volume reviewed here is *China's Terracotta Warriors: the First Emperor's Legacy*.

The discovery in 1974 of the famous terracotta guardians of the first Qin emperor's tomb generated an international wave of interest that has scarcely abated in the succeeding 40 years. Unsurprisingly, it also spawned a vast literature; ranging from specialist academic works to coffee-table publications and souvenir guides aimed squarely at the tourist market. Adding to this already extensive bibliography, recent exhibitions of material from Qin Shihuang's tomb have been supported by lavish and erudite publications, perhaps most notably *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army*, edited by Jane Portal in conjunction with the 2007 exhibition of the same name hosted by the British Museum.

Portal's work set out firmly to embed the Terracotta Army in its historical and archaeological context and Liu Yang deserves praise for having edited a volume that builds upon that legacy. Written to accompany the 2012-13 exhibition at the Minneapolis Museum of Arts, the volume seeks to perform the dual role of exhibition catalogue and up-to-date archaeological survey. This can be a difficult circle to square, and many editors have struggled to balance the demands of general readers with those of a more specialist audience. Supported by an excellent team of contributors (Jeffrey Riegel, Albert E. Dien, Yuan Zhongyi, Edmund Capon and Eugene Wang), Liu Yang has however pitched the volume perfectly.

The work is divided into three chapters: "Before Empire: Qin in the Spring & Autumn and Warring States Periods"; "Unified Under Heaven: The First Empire and the Qin Dynasty"; and "Quest for Immortality: The First Emperor's Tomb Complex and Terracotta Army". Within these chapters, eleven excellent and extensively illustrated essays are supported by up-to-date and expansive footnotes. The two catalogue sections, covering some 123 objects, are similarly comprehensive. The writing throughout is of a consistently high standard, and succeeds in being both informative and accessible. The photography is similarly of a universally excellent quality and both maps and reconstruction drawings are appropriately used.

Inevitably given its subject matter, there is much in this volume that will be familiar to those with an interest in Chinese archaeology. There is however also much material that will be less so, including a review of material recently

excavated from earlier royal tombs and a thought-provoking discussion of the iconography of the Qin Shihuang figures. Overall, this volume represents a rare and happy marriage of high production values with exemplary scholarship. It deserves a space on every Sinologist's bookshelf.

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**Yuri Pines (2012), *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. viii + 245 pp. ISBN: 9780691134956, \$ 42.00, £28.95.**

To most specialists and non-specialists of Chinese political culture, probably the most intriguing question is why the Chinese empire, one of the largest political entities in human history, attained against all odds its unparalleled longevity for more than two millennia from 221 BCE to 1911. Building upon his previous study of the formation of China's unique imperial ideology prior to the foundation of the first dynasty (*Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era*, 2009), Yuri Pines, an established expert on early Chinese political culture, moves on in his new book *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* to concentrate on "the dynamic interplay between the empire's ideological guidelines and their practical adaptation" (p.5). Challenging the once-popular "environmental determinism" developed by Karl A. Wittfogel (*Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, 1957) and the conventional notion of "authoritarianism" advocated by liberal thinkers of the New Culture Movement in the early twentieth century, Yuri Pines stands at the nexus of China's intellectual and political history to explore the underlying reasons for the unprecedented durability of the Chinese imperial system: "the empire's exceptional ideological prowess" (p.3).

Pines starts his provocative narrative with the Mencian dictum "stability is in unity" (p.1). Chapter 1 expounds this overarching argument by diving into ancient texts dating back to the Warring States period (453-221 BCE). Centuries before the Chinese empire came into existence, the idea that "All-under-heaven" should be unified under the aegis of a single ruler had already

been repeatedly reinforced through official rhetoric and historiographical and philosophical writings. Pines acknowledges that unity does not automatically result in stability, as he describes rules like the Qin (221-207 BCE) as “a nightmare of bloodshed and cruelty” (p.30). He also agrees that ages of disunion were not always periods of stagnation and despair, recalling the “ideological richness of the Warring States, the Buddhist flowering under the Southern and Northern dynasties, and economic expansion and technological innovativeness under many of the post-Tang [618-907] regional kingdoms” (p.42). But Pines immediately reminds readers of the devastating destruction brought up by political fragmentation and interstate wars and forcefully suggests that the idea of unity, “the pivotal principle of Chinese political culture” (p.41), remained unchallenged even in times of division or under non-Chinese rules.

In the following chapter, Pines discusses traditional conceptions of rulership - arguably the most crucial issue in Chinese political culture. Based on an extensive reading of early texts, he traces the evolution of the concept of the omnipotent monarch, the ritual supremacy of the emperor, and different institutions on how to prevent the dangers of malevolent rulers' ineptitude or of power abuse. Instead of agreeing with the often idealised but erroneous instinctive assumption that Chinese emperors were all sacred and sagacious “sons of heaven,” Pines sharply points out that in fact most of them were rather mediocrities. To cope with such dangers, there developed a series of “checks and balances” to distinguish between the institutional and the personal power of the monarch, or in other words, to restrain the ruler from actively exercising his power, and relegating everyday tasks to his entourage (p.64). This resulted in a major paradox, since emperors ostensibly enjoyed unlimited power, but were more often than not discouraged from exercising it. In consequence, these unique imperial architects created “a unified system of decision making [which aimed] at preventing internal disorder” (p.74). Despite frequent tensions and conflicts between the emperor and his underlings generated by such contradictions, this mode of emperorship proved to be not only quite successful but also manageable in the long term.

The formation of this group of scholar-officials is traced in the following two chapters, devoted to the upper segment at the imperial core and the lower in the localities, respectively. In both chapters the main discussion focuses on their “voluntary attachment to the ruler's service as their single most



significant choice" (p.77). Through a lucid outline of historical changes in the character of the literati and local elites and in their relations with the imperial system, Pines aptly shows that these people became the "bearers of the realm's cultural tradition and its political leaders" (p.102), bringing outstanding "economic, political, and cultural benefits" to the empire and contributing to the "imperial bureaucracy's vitality" (p.131). However, I remain doubtful about his decision to allocate separate chapters to the two groups of *shi*, or in Pine's words "intellectuals." As in most other early cultures, education in pre-modern China required vast investment of both time and capital, so that the majority of the literati came from the better-off land-owning families, though cases of exceptions are not rare. It is thus understandable that once these men became officials, they shared the same interests as the men of power in the localities. Without the support of these local magnates, most magistrates would have found their task difficult. Hence, more probably than not, the literati and the local elite together formed a collective stratum which maintained cultural, political, and economic dominance in imperial China. Readers familiar with Pine's earlier book may recall that these two groups are indeed dealt with together in one section.

The next chapter is devoted to another component of the imperial polity, the people. Affirming Thomas Meadows' argument that "the right to rebel" was a "chief element of ... national stability," Pines explores various ideological and social factors in imperial China to identify the reasons for the recurrence of large-scale rebellions. He laments the devastating destruction brought by such insurrections, but he also points out that they also have positive contributions to the imperial order. The danger and prowess of rebellions was "a major impetus for much greater concern for the lower strata's needs" (p.150) and could therefore stimulate more people-focused policies, bringing "improvement of the commoners' lot" and "of the empire's functioning in general" (p.161).

In the final chapter, and the most provocative one, Pines proceeds to explore the modern trajectory of the major aspects of Chinese political heritage that he has covered in the previous chapters. The collapse of imperial China in February 1912 involved profound changes in both the institutional structure and ideological norms of the Chinese polity. Through this new assessment of the fate of the imperial political culture in the modern age, Pines forcefully suggests that though the imperial Chinese empire is

diminished, its legacy still persists today. For instance, acknowledging that the vast changes in China's political and social structure in the past hundred years have weakened the traditional leadership of the intellectuals, Pines further speculates that "in due time the CPC [the Communist Party of China] ... might replace the imperial scholar-officials as China's cultural, ideological, and sociopolitical elite" (p.175). Observing the diminishing appeal of Marxism-Leninism and revolutionary zeal in contemporary China, Pines concludes his narrative by identifying three major aspects of traditional Chinese political culture that are still applicable today: the hegemonic position of the political centre (now the CPC) as the single legitimate locus of power, the concept of political unity, and political elitism (p.181-2).

The most intriguing aspect of Pines' book is his facility for fine-grained analysis based on a wide array of primary sources, in particular ancient texts from the pre-Qin period. For example, he quotes the *Lüshi chunqiu* (Annals of Lü Buwei), a text compiled on the eve of the final wars of unification of the Qin, to argue that unity is the guarantor of peace and stability (p.44); he makes deliberate use of excerpts from the writings of Xunzi (ca. 310-230 BCE) to underline the legitimacy of, and necessity for, the True Monarch (p.51); copious quotations from Mencius, Han Feizi (ca. 280-233 BCE), Li Si (d. 208 BCE), and Dong Zhongshu (ca. 195-115 BCE) are offered to provide a comparative examination of early conceptions of, and attitudes towards, intellectuals' relations to the throne (p.84-87). By vividly narrating what happened to the relevant concepts during the following two millennia, Pines successfully builds a bridge that links ideology and reality, history and present-day, facilitating a nuanced comprehension of the coherence of the development of political culture in the long course of imperial China. Moreover, Pines also brings into focus the relevance of history for politics in contemporary China. Building upon his thorough analysis, Pines convincingly argues that "studying China's past is essential for an understanding of China's future" (p.183), because lessons and experiences of the Chinese empire - the most durable political entity in human society - have immediate relevance for China both today and in the future.

Some readers may be surprised to find that three factors that are significant in the formation and the transformation of the political culture in imperial China are underestimated: the writing system, non-Chinese peoples, and demographic and geographic changes. Although both factors are mentioned in

Pines' work, they deserve more in-depth consideration. Firstly, unlike the European experience, although spoken dialects within China vary enormously, alternative systems of transcribing written vernaculars never developed. The nature and the durability of the unified Chinese written language, largely divorced from speech, contributed greatly to a strong sense of cultural community and supported the ideal of unity. Secondly, although conventionally deprecated as "barbarians" undergoing a "sinicization process" and largely overlooked by traditional historiography, various non-Chinese peoples played important roles in shaping the history and culture of China, leaving their own marks. Despite the strenuous efforts of scholars of the New Qing History to rectify some of the biased attitudes surrounding the concept of "sinicization," this term still, unfortunately, persists throughout Pines' narrative of non-Chinese rule (p.69, p.75). Thirdly, any historical atlas will disapprove Pines' claim that later empires occupied "more or less the same territory" as the Qin (p.3). The prolonged and large-scale migration of the Chinese to the mountainous regions of south and southwest China, Manchuria, the Mongolian steppe and Tibet had a profound impact on the politics of the empire at various periods. Pines was right that the power of the environmental deterministic approach should by no means be over-emphasised, yet no one could deny the density of population and wealth of the North China plain means that the ruler who holds it may dominate East Asia.

Certainly these minor quibbles should in no way diminish the great achievement of Yuri Pines' *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy*. The durability of the Chinese empire defies easy explanation, thus Pines should be applauded for providing a painstaking and thought-provoking analysis of the reasons hidden behind the extraordinary sustainability of the Chinese empire. It not only brings a new and important perspective to the study of Chinese political culture but also offers a reliable approach to comprehend its relevance for today. Such an ambitious work will be invaluable to both non-specialists and scholars of Chinese political history, and it will definitely inspire further future studies.

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