

come, for example, they never incorporated themselves in ways that the literati did so successfully during Song times?

Beyond Hartman's core chapter on Song political history the volume also includes chapters on military, fiscal, and legal history. These have reference value, but are not as up to date on the literature as one might hope. Readers interested in legal and military history in particular may be better off reading the longer monographs on which these are based as the summaries here also leave out aspects that would have fitted well within the larger volume, such as the social history of the military or the expansive role of legal experts and expertise in Song society.

Two chapters on intellectual history, an area which has traditionally also drawn much scholarly attention, conclude the volume. Peter Bol's chapter analyzes the intellectual ferment of the eleventh century and sketches out the key differences amongst those who set the tone for later developments. Readers will find this a very accessible and compelling synthesis of Bol's earlier work on the intellectual shifts that accompanied the social and economic changes discussed above. Hoyt Tillman's chapter on Southern Song intellectual developments accounts for the development of the Neo-Confucian movement of the Learning of the Way mainly on the basis of a close reading of intellectual exchanges between Zhu Xi and select contemporaries. Given that this summarizes his important earlier work from the 1980s and 1990s, repeated claims about the neglect of the broader intellectual context within which this central figure operated as well as the paucity of scholarship on other trends in Southern Song intellectual history in modern scholarship are somewhat out-dated.

The editors express regret over the fact that other fields such as foreign relations, literature, Buddhism, and Daoism could not be covered in separate chapters—to some extent the first two topics are covered in *Volume 6. Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* and in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature, Volume 1: To 1375* and the latter are given some attention in Hymes' chapter. Some may wish that topics such as gender history, material culture, urbanization, or technology had been given greater attention, but overall the editor and authors merit our gratitude for a contribution that finally explains key developments in Chinese history during this period in more than the cursory fashion within which they are treated in English survey histories. It will remain up to the readership, however, to tie the diverse strands opened up in these chapters together and tackle bigger questions such as the place of the socio-economic, political, and intellectual developments described here in longue-durée transitions (the Tang-Song model versus the Song-Yuan-Ming model) and in transcultural and comparative frameworks.

Ming: 50 Years That Changed China. London: British Museum Press, 2014 (312 pp. £40 [cloth], £25 [paper]); Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014 (312 pp. \$60 [cloth]).

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The book under review is a fine example of why historians of China should keep up with museum shows. This handsome, readable volume and the exhibition at the British Museum on which it was based make a stimulating contribution to our understanding of the Ming period (1368–1644). Its strengths derive in part from the expertise and efforts of the two organizer-editors: Craig Clunas, professor in the History of Art Department at the University of Oxford, well known to historians of the late imperial era for his capacious understanding of Ming material and visual culture; and Jessica Harrison-Hall, a specialist in Chinese ceramics, curator at the British Museum, and author of the substantial investigation of that museum's collection (*Catalogue of Late Yuan and Ming Ceramics in the British Museum*, 2001, now out of print). The exhibition itself, with

sponsorship from BP, the energy company, drew on twenty-eight lending institutions, one-third of them in China, and ran between September 18, 2014, and January 5, 2015 in London. It did not travel.

The 312-page *Ming: 50 Years* has six substantive chapters that approach China during the first half of the fifteenth century from overlapping perspectives: 1. Craig Clunas, "A Second Founding: Ming China, 1400–1450." 2. Jessica Harrison-Hall, "Courts: Palaces, People and Objects." 3. David Robinson, "Wu: The Arts of War." 4. Clunas, "Wen: The Arts of Peace." 5. Marsha Haufler, "Beliefs: Miracles and Salvation." 6. Timothy Brook, "Commerce: The Ming in the World." Knowing the interests of these scholars, readers may not be surprised to find mention of princely tombs, ceramics, martial spectacles, statues of deities, and world maps, but these essays are in fact quite fresh, focused and strengthened by temporal constraints, and full of unexpected tidbits and interesting insights. Paintings and ceramics (probably the best studied manifestations of Ming material culture) are present, of course, but only as part of a large diverse mix. The five authors use primary as well as secondary sources, come at the objects and themes from different directions, and fluidly turn the volume into a whole greater than a sum of its already excellent parts.

Historians of the Ming have tended to bunch up at the two ends of the dynasty. Scholarship on the "early Ming" has concentrated on the politics of the strong-willed dynastic founder, Zhu Yuanzhang (lived 1328–98). Work on the better studied "late Ming" emphasizes the economic and social change (beginning roughly in the 1550s) that ended in systemic and political collapse. The century and a half in between is usually fragmented inconclusively into accounts of individual reigns. This *Ming: 50 Years* volume, by contrast, argues for a serious reconsideration of 1403–49, a period corresponding to the reigns of three significant emperors (Yongle, Xuande, and Zhengtong). This unusual focus is a productive one, especially when framed within an expansive view of Ming China in the world.

The Yongle emperor is here pulled free from his father's era and positioned in Beijing, the initiator of a half-century of settled rule characterized by cosmopolitan attitudes, products, and foreign relations for which the Mongol Yuan is credited as a source and inspiration. The book presents the epochal voyages of the Muslim eunuch Zheng He between 1405 and 1433 not as aberrations but as characteristic of this era. The importance of imperial military values, religious pluralism, and ethnic diversity in Ming cultural life are emphasized, rather than the more familiar lives of Lower Yangtze scholar-officials. The products of Imperial Household workshops are put on view not only as gorgeous objects but as agents of the constitution and display of Ming cultural power. The battlefield defeat of 1449 at Tumu becomes the turning point toward a "shrunken" and more inwardly focused realm. *Ming: 50 Years That Changed China* thus stands as an eloquent argument that the half-century between 1400 and 1450 was a time of energy and accomplishment that can be understood as a "second founding" and genuinely "formative period" in both Ming and Chinese history.

An even more positive view of this era is articulated in the catalogue by Wang Jun 王軍, director of Art Exhibitions China (Zhongguo Wenwu Jiaoliu Zhongxin 中国文物交流中心), which worked with the British Museum on behalf of the PRC. Wang calls attention to the expanded overseas activity and artistic accomplishments of a time that "enjoyed good government, a stable society, developments in production, and a powerful and prosperous state." He was perhaps thinking of parallels between the post-Mao era and the one that followed Zhu Yuanzhang, a perspective that is not entirely far-fetched.

No book can substitute for a careful walk through an exhibition, but the 263 numbered illustrations in this book are large, clear, and in color. The objects present themselves as pleasingly sumptuous and interestingly made. The book format also allows the captions to be long, detailed, and informative, drawing on both curatorial and scholarly work. The organizers have been particularly scrupulous in seeking and finding objects that come from the first half of the fifteenth century. As a result, many have dates and/or inscriptions, the latter translated by Ms. Yu-ping Luk, now at the

Victoria and Albert Museum (and someone who also helped organize the show). Chinese characters appear in the captions but not in the notes or bibliography.

Challenges of timing make it difficult to create a tight linkage between a museum exhibition and its accompanying catalogue. Essays need to be written even as the loan objects are being determined; for pioneering exhibitions, relevant experts may be unavailable or have incommensurate interests; promised objects can fail to arrive. Close collaboration between the organizers and their institutions was the foundation for overcoming these obstacles. Beginning in 2010 (with support from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council), they hosted a series of meetings in Oxford and London involving many scholars and curators, including the authors of the essays. Because of such consultation and discussion, the chapters are up-to-date, speak specifically to a common pool of exhibition objects, and create productive resonances across the volume. Should it matter that the book is not strictly speaking a catalogue (one cannot identify which objects were actually in London)? Once the ephemeral exhibition has closed, it seems to me that most scholarly readers will prefer a book that has a panoply of relevant images, unencumbered by exhibitionary politics and constraints, especially one so unusually well focused.

Readers of *Ming: 50 Years* can examine images of books, paintings, documents, tomb objects, weapons, clothing, hats, jewelry, accessories (and more) made of porcelain, silver, gold, silk, lacquer, bronze (and more). Some of these object types are familiar, but they have been given new meaning by being placed in this geographically wider and temporally narrower context. Unfamiliar objects, furthermore, leap to life and open new doors in unexpected directions.

Many illustrations show subjects, motifs, and objects that were in motion across Eurasia by land and by sea, their travels exemplifying the reach of Ming culture and their transformations showing new stages in their life histories. We are shown that Zheng He's now famous expeditions were accompanied by dozens and dozens of parallel overland missions to places such as Samarqand, Bukhara, Shiraz, and Isfahan. It is a pleasure to discover objects from the Timurid empire (mentioned in at least a dozen places and with half a dozen images), as well as Tibetan and Mongolian ones. There is much evidence for the idea that "for half a century, Chinese inhaled and even celebrated influences from a wider world," even though one may not be so sure that these were "influences that would linger in Chinese culture all the way to the present" (291) or "change China" in a definitive fashion.

Eastward-looking connections are not neglected, and the Ming is also put in conversation with events and things Japanese, Vietnamese, and Korean. For me, the most exciting object in the exhibition was the Joseon painting (Figure 24) from the National Museum in Seoul showing Korean envoys leaving Nanjing: "Song choch'ŏn'gaek kwiguk sijang to"¹ 送朝天客歸國詩章圖, 송조천객귀국시장도. A large colorful hanging scroll (103 × 163 cm), it shows not only outsized Chinese and Korean figures on the Yangtze side of the city, but the Ming Southern Capital itself in wonderful detail, incomparably better than the gazetteer-type illustrations that seemed to be all we had. There is some scholarship in Korean on the date of the painting, and it will surely repay close inspection by historians of the Ming and of Chinese urban history.

The book emphasizes not only the religious connections of Buddhist ideas and institutions, the many kinds of foreigners who were attracted to the capital at Beijing, but also the multilingualism of trans-empire textual communities. A gorgeous edition of the Qur'an produced in Beijing's mosque in 1401 (Figure 176), held in the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art in London, demonstrates the eye-opening effects of looking beyond conventionally defined "Chinese" objects to understand "Chinese" history.

The half-dozen paintings of palace life held by the imperial collections in Beijing and Taipei, and characteristic of this period, gain by being shown together. They make interesting contrasts with

¹ Ministry of Education romanization: Song jocheongaek gwiguk sijang do.

their now better-known Qing counterparts, and invite, *inter alia*, a closer look at the appearance and functions of the eunuchs who were omnipresent companions of emperors. The vagueness of the English word/idea “court” does not, however, make explicit that *Ming: 50 Years* also provides a concentration of examples of Imperial Household (Neifu 內府) production. By my count, at least half of the Ming objects shown in the book were made by this rich and powerful organization, headquartered in Beijing from the Yongle reign on but with operations throughout the empire and run by yet another sort of eunuch. The volume is thus also a foundation for further study of imperial manufacturing processes, the circulation of monopolized commodities in and beyond Ming lands, and the movement and adaptations of technologies across Asia, including both weapons and writing systems. Considering the power of material display for piety, for protection, for intimidation, and for pleasure, it is not surprising that such objects stimulated imitations and new indigenous creations wherever they went, and we should not be surprised to find them on mugs and scarves.

In October 2014, the exhibition was accompanied by a three-day international conference with twenty-seven presentations on a range of topics that fell loosely within the title of “Ming: Court and Contacts 1400–1450”: City and architecture; Courts and objects; Courts and people; Courts and paintings; Beliefs; Military and rulerships; Maritime Ming; Shared cultural models; Cross-cultural exchanges. We can look forward to the resulting volume, jointly edited by Clunas, Harrison-Hall, and Luk, which should be published in 2016 by the British Museum. Related activities sponsored by the museum may suggest teaching tools: “Music of the Zhihua Temple,” introduced by the musicologist Stephen Jones; the film “Chinese Treasure Fleet: The Adventures of Zheng He” (2005); and the 1959 Hong Kong musical “The Kingdom and the Beauty” 江山美人 about the amorous adventures of the Zhengde emperor!

All these activities had the effect of involving scholars in many fields, old hands and new, and not only aligning the catalogue with current scholarship and using the exhibition to push scholars and collectors in new directions, but strengthening networks with isolated specialists and far-flung museums whose objects are not often exhibited. While 120,000 people were able to attend the exhibition at the British Museum and hundreds more the accompanying events, a far larger number can read *Ming: 50 Years That Changed China* and the forthcoming “Court and Contacts” volume. Historians of China should continue to be part of this ripple effect on Ming studies and global history, and in the future, look for, encourage, and seize a chance to participate in such productive, collaborative museum exhibitions.

Traces of the Sage: Monument, Materiality, and the First Temple of Confucius. By JAMES A. FLATH.
Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2016. 290 pp. \$55.00

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Traces of the Sage studies the Temple of Confucius (Kongzi 孔子 throughout this volume) in Qufu 曲阜, Shandong province, from its earliest beginnings to the present day. Combining information from secondary literature and from Ming and Qing local gazetteers, Flath narrates the political, social, and cultural history of the site and analyzes its structures as an example of “the ways in which societies manage space and material” (xiv).

Kongzi (551–479 BCE) was a fairly obscure figure for centuries. It was only after Confucianism was adopted as a state doctrine that China’s scholars and officials began to venerate the Sage and honor his descendants. A local cult, sustained with local elite support, gradually attracted imperial patronage, even though until the eighth century the object of worship could as easily be the Duke of