

a staff forming the character for “mountain”, i.e. a trident. Note also *Journal of Chinese Studies* 61 (July 2015), p. 316, n. 2, for what looks like a similar usage.

On p. 234, n. 45, the phrase *shouyi* 守一 is in fact a very general term for meditation with a long history in Chinese Buddhism and a yet longer history before then: cf. Benjamin Penny (ed.), *Daoism in History* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 42; it cannot be said to derive from Daoism, even if used in Daoist circles.

On p. 238, n. 19, the term *hunyi* 渾儀, which seems to have stumped even Yanagida, means quite precisely an armillary sphere. As to why such an object should have been used as a metaphor for Buddhist practice, a very full explanation is given in Antonino Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock: The Tower, Statue and Armillary Sphere Constructed by Empress Wu* (Rome: ISMEO, and Paris: EFEO, 1988).

On p. 242, n. 45, the term *chongxuan* 重玄 here may be purely rhetorical, but it does have two technical meanings in Chinese Buddhism of this period, and Yanagida reads it as a specific reference to one of them: cf. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1982/1, pp. 38–40.

A revised edition or lightly corrected reprinting might also dispose of some minor errors – on p. 253 for example Daoxin has unaccountably turned into Daoxuan. I do hope Sam van Schaik’s work here gains the attention it deserves and merits rapid reprinting, and yet more I hope that it inspires others who read it to take up the demanding yet important study of the Dunhuang manuscripts that is so well exemplified here.

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DOROTHY KO:

The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China. (A William Sangki and Nanhee Min Hahn Book.) xii, 315 pp. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2017. \$45. ISBN 978 0 295 99918 0.

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Inkstones have long been considered one of the four treasures of the Chinese scholar’s studio, and yet they have often been overlooked as art objects within existing scholarly literature. These carved stone basins, in which ink is prepared for use in writing or painting, are intimately tied to the very nature of imperial-bureaucratic rule and to the construction of Chinese Han literati culture. And yet, despite this, as Dorothy Ko tells us in her impressive new book, *The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China*, Chinese culture’s tendency to privilege mental over manual labour has meant that both the materiality of the inkstone and the creativity of the craftsmen and women who made them has been overlooked. Ko’s effort to redress this by focusing her book on the artisans who made the inkstones rather than just the scholars who used them results in a fascinating confluence of material culture and intellectual history, and reminds us that no matter how far removed elites may see themselves from the world of objects, cultural capital is always, in part, material.

The first chapter fits somewhat awkwardly with the rest of the book, but is, in itself, convincing. Our understanding of Qing history has changed drastically over

the past few decades: where we previously saw a “sinicized” Qing court, we now see a flexible multi-ethnic empire that tailored its performance of leadership to each of the subject peoples. The Qing interest in inkstones is a fascinating new example of this. It is well known that many Qing emperors were deeply versed in Han literati culture, but Ko describes how the newly enthroned Manchu rulers – especially the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors – created a new aesthetic of inkstones that attempted simultaneously to conform to the expectations of the Han elites and yet also remain distinctly Manchu. This was done through the promotion of a new stone – Songhua – from the traditional Manchu homelands of north-east China, as well as through the creation of a distinctive aesthetic. What is striking, however, is how little these Songhua stones featured in the rest of the book: the Manchu rulers did create a distinctive style, but not one, it seems, that the Han literati particularly cared about.

The rest of the book follows the life of the inkstone through its process of production and consumption. We start by travelling to the Duan quarries of Guangdong to hear the story of China’s most famous inkstones. Here, dedicated to restoring a dignity to those who quarry and craft the inkstones, Ko digs deep into the technical process of mining and carving. In the third chapter, we meet the star of Ko’s book, the female artisan Gu Erniang, who grew to national prominence in the early eighteenth century. Ko untangles the complex ways in which Gu’s gender both helped create her “super-brand” at the time, but perhaps also worked against her: we currently do not have a single inkstone that can be securely attributed to Gu. While Ko’s effort to bring Gu Erniang to life is ambitious and impressive, and backed up by impeccable research, it also falls ever so slightly flat. Gu Erniang as a woman, as an individual, remains just beyond comprehension. It is primarily through Gu’s patrons that we know her work, and it is the stories of these figures, who, because they were literate and empowered enough to write and publish their own stories, make the final chapters of Ko’s book its strongest part.

The arrival of the Qing dynasty changed the career trajectory of many budding scholars: with Mongols and Manchus taking a more substantial role in the bureaucracy, a newly-enlarged group of Han would-be scholar-officials who would never make it into office emerged. They were, however, both literate and deeply inculcated in literati culture, and so were able to use this cultural capital to create new opportunities. Ho particularly focuses on a circle of inkstone aficionados in Fuzhou, who both built and capitalized upon their cultural capital through inkstone carving and collecting. The group’s heightened attention to the material objects themselves also changed the fields of both creating and collecting. Ko argues that seemingly clear-cut identities such as artisan and scholar became increasingly unstable and overlapping in the early Qing period. Because of the transformed political environment, these Fuzhou collectors developed a level of not just aesthetic expertise, but also technical command that earlier connoisseurs lacked. They are, then, “scholar-artisans”. And it is through these collectors that the social life of these inkstones really emerges: they become objects with which scholars could write, but they are also collectibles and conduits to social networking, financial opportunities and community building at a time of rapid change for the scholarly elites.

Ko’s book positions inkstones, their makers, and collectors, in the socio-political context of the early Qing without ever losing sight of her aim: to dwell with the often-illiterate miners and artisans who drew on deeply embedded rituals, experience and local knowledge in their production of exquisite objects. Ko’s engagement with the objects themselves is indeed masterful; while the book has dozens of high-quality images, her textual explanations bring them to life in a way the flat surface of a page can never do. You start to appreciate the complex interplay of natural rock

and crafted design, to comprehend the number of stages and hands the rock goes through before it ends up with its owner, and the complex social, political, and economic contexts in which inkstones – somewhere between art and craft – lie. You feel Ko's empathy for the forgotten figures and her desire to make material the lives of not just the inkstones, but the inkstone makers. For those interested in material culture histories, Chinese art history or Chinese culture more broadly, this is a must-read.

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JOY LIDU YI:

Yungang: Art, History, Archaeology, Liturgy.

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In this monograph, Joy Lidu Yi combines several tools of analysis – archaeological, textual, iconographic and stylistic – to build up a social art history of the fifth-century CE Buddhist caves of Yungang 雲崗, in Shanxi province. Placing herself in the lineage of Japanese scholars Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio, and the archaeological and typological methodology initiated by Su Bai in the 1950s, Yi chooses to emphasize social motivations when determining the caves' chronology and function, with special attention devoted to sutras translated by the enigmatic Tanyao 曇曜 (pp. 67–8): the *Fufazang yinyuan zhuan* 付法藏因緣傳, the *Zabaozang jing* 雜寶藏經 and the *Dajiyi shenzhou jing* 大吉義神咒經 (p. 69). One can only welcome this effort at correlating a specific literature to the spaces and images, paired with considerations on the role of the patrons and the relative chronology of the caves.

The challenge of delivering a contextual study in a short monograph is met by the structure of the book, with a first chapter clearly laying out the historiography of the topic followed by a second chapter introducing the site, three chapters (3, 4 and 6) for each of the construction phases, and one case study (chapter 5) on the liturgical function of certain caves.

In chapter 1, the author seeks a delicate balance between locating herself in the historiography of the topic or within the community of research that surrounds Yungang and avoiding internal disputes. Still, the literature review could include comparable research on the question of relating text and image in cave temples, with similar methodologies applied to Dunhuang, Kizil and Kucha.

Chapter 2 covers recent archaeological excavations, after first reviewing Japanese digs in the 1940s through to early Chinese digs in the 1970s–90s. One gets a glimpse of the two monasteries above cave 39 and caves 5 and 6, composed of rows of residential cells and a stupa (pp. 32–8). The author argues that freestanding monasteries predate the rock-cut complex, which was thus not meant to introduce Buddhism (p. 11), and the temples above the caves are where the monks lived and translated texts, which explains why Yungang has no vihara cave. The excavations would have been better conveyed by a groundplan, combined with the drone photographs. For the contextual study promised by the author, only two maps are available: Plate 1, a map of Shanxi province with no information on the physical