

the language problem in Yüan China”, *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 5/1–2 (December 1967: 68).

If the study of Chinese in ‘Phags-pa could really give us more insight into what colloquial Chinese of the Yuan dynasty was like and its relation to earlier and later stages of the language, it would be well worth the study. Unfortunately, I do not see how Coblin’s book helps us in this regard. He does, of course, offer one more presentation of ‘Phags-pa Chinese which, hopefully, some scholars may find useful.

Edwin G. Pulleyblank

MICHAEL LOEWE:

The Government of the Qin and Han Empires, 221 BCE–220 CE.
xviii, 224 pp. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing,
2006. £8.50. ISBN 0 87220 818 4.

The appearance of a new book by Dr Loewe, the veritable dean of Han history, is always welcome. While the specialist will probably find much of the material already familiar from Loewe’s previous works, particularly *The Men Who Governed Han China* (Leiden, 2004), it has now been made available in a more concise and certainly more affordable form. As the introduction notes, the book is addressed to non-specialist readers, and I know of nothing in English that gives a similarly comprehensive introduction to early imperial government in China.

The book is organized into twelve thematic chapters, each treating one aspect of Qin and Han government, such as the emperor, provincial and local government, the military, and law. The chapters are relatively brief, and tend towards the descriptive rather than the narrative: that on the emperor, for example, contains only the barest outline of the lives of the founding emperors. Readers interested in how these figures came to rule will be better served elsewhere. There are a number of anecdotes in each chapter to illustrate certain features of the government, but no real narrative cohesion. The book focuses on presenting information rather than on telling a story, and its style, and the very large number of names the reader must deal with, would make it challenging reading even for advanced undergraduates, in my opinion.

In terms of topics the book is quite thorough. A particular strength is the demonstration of considerable continuity between the Qin and Han dynasties; for example, in terms of law. This should help correct the misconceptions originating from Chinese traditional historiography that the Qin government was oppressive while the Han was benevolent. Particularly welcome are the chapters that deal with the common people (9 and 10), partly because of the paucity of information on non-elites in most histories of early China, but also because Loewe takes advantage of recent archaeological discoveries, such as the Zhangjiashan, Shuihudi, and Yinwan documents, thus giving the reader a sense of current developments in early Chinese history.

Naturally, in a book of this size there is always material one would have wished to see. I believe at least a couple of topics deserve more extensive coverage: for example, foreign relations – the threat from the Xiongnu had important effects on the Western Han military, and the pressures of the yearly gifts had a substantial impact on the political economy; outside threats are touched on in the chapter on weaknesses and problems, but more complete coverage would have been welcomed by this reader.

As is to be expected of a book that aims to be a general introduction, scholarly apparatus is quite limited. There are no footnotes as such, though at the conclusion of each chapter there are notes for further reading for those interested in following up on the topics addressed. That this is not a book for specialists is further reinforced by the very brief bibliography, which contains just one secondary Chinese source and none in Japanese. On the other hand, additional material which would help the general reader is also somewhat lacking. There are maps of the administrative units of the empire at three different points during the Han dynasty, but they do not show the borders of modern China. For two of the maps, the surrounding area is so limited that readers unfamiliar with the geography of China are likely to be confused. There is a table of emperors and their reign dates, and the index does help keep track of all the names. A glossary of official titles would have been useful. Even better, some kind of organizational chart of the important imperial offices would help the reader gain a better sense of the government hierarchy.

The most serious problem, which is especially unfortunate in a work directed towards a wider audience, is the lack of careful editing. Everyone makes mistakes and one's own proofreading invariably misses some errors. English typos are not likely to cause misunderstanding because it is generally obvious what was intended, but the problem with this book lies with the Chinese. Now, this is unlikely to concern those readers who do not know Chinese and are not that interested in precise titles or names: for those readers, I highly recommend the book. However, I imagine many potential readers will be students and scholars of other periods of China, and will look to this book as a reference. They would be better off relying instead on Dr Loewe's other works.

Let me give some examples that could cause confusion. The character for "statutes" is incorrect on p. 119. A careful reader might notice a different (and correct) character is used on p. vii, but most people will probably not read the book straight through and notice the discrepancy. There is a mistake in one of the characters for "noble of the interior" on p. 136. And even those who are not interested in Chinese characters might be puzzled if they notice that the first emperor of Qin is Ying Zhao in the table on p. 202 and Ying Zheng on p. 2. This forces the reader to check another source to see which is right. These kinds of errors make the book unreliable as a reference. This is truly unfortunate, considering the high quality of Loewe's other work and the convenience of the present volume. A little more care by Hackett would have made this an excellent introduction to early imperial government. It is still very useful, but it could cause problems for the unwary reader.

David Elstein

PAMELA KYLE CROSSLEY, HELEN F. SIU and DONALD S. SUTTON (eds):
Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China.

(Studies on China, sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies.) x, 378 pp. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2006. £35.95. ISBN 0520 23015 9.

The question this book tries to answer is how did the early modern Chinese "other" and the "in group" relate and what opportunities can frontiers provide