

This observation is important, not only because it warns readers of the ideological nature of these works, but also because it belies the narratives these works put forward about the triumph of literati governance during the Song. In a companion volume (now in press) to the present book, Hartman will recount the contest between Confucian and non-Confucian practices of governance during the Song, and thus reconstruct the periods of technocratic governance that *daoxue* historiography has misrepresented or omitted.

Because much of the interest and merit of *The Making of Song Dynasty History* lies in the precise, telling philological detail of Hartman's analysis, a summary of its chapters and arguments can give only a general impression of its admirable accomplishments. Details matter in this book. By patient philological analysis, Hartman identifies the layers of source texts that compose the compendia and digests, including source texts that do not survive and are known only from descriptions. He counts the number of entries about successive reigns in the major historical sources of the Song in order to show the increasing disproportion between their treatment of the reigns favored by advocates of Confucian literati governance and their treatment of the reigns of emperors and officials opposed to such governance. He proves with greater authority than any previous historian that many cherished anecdotes and tropes of Song political history—such as Emperor Taizu's retirement of his generals over a cup of wine at a banquet and the correlation of the political character of a reign period to the personal character of the reigning emperor—were invented to create false precedents for advocates of literati governance.

In sum, Charles Hartman demonstrates exemplary precision in his methods and in his arguments. With a combination of traditional and innovative approaches, he shows the narrative and ideological cohesion of voluminous historical works and exposes as a fiction what centuries of historians have accepted as fact. Readers should discover the riches of Hartman's research and analysis for themselves, whether they are interested in the political and intellectual history of the Song dynasty or in history and historiography more generally. For the study of the Song dynasty, certainly, *The Making of Song Dynasty History* is an indispensable book.

## *The Politics of the Past in Early China*

By Vincent S. Leung. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 202 pp. \$99.99 (cloth), \$28.99 (paper), \$23.00 (eBook)

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This book examines historical rhetoric in early Chinese texts dating from the Western Zhou 西周 (ca. 1045–771 BCE) and Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國, 475–221 BCE) periods to the Qin 秦 (221–210 BCE), and ending in mid-Western Han 西漢 (202 BCE–9 CE), with a final chapter analyzing the *Shiji* 史記 (comp. ca. 87 BCE). As

Leung puts it, the centuries that this period comprised saw the emergence of a new use of the past as “ideological capital,” which became a “powerful resource in the contentious imagination of relations of power” (3). Leung follows manifestations of this rhetoric across five chapters prefaced by an introduction that examines modern studies of early Chinese historiography and notions of the past. The book’s strengths include Leung’s readable and nuanced summaries of secondary scholarship, novel juxtapositions of sources, and clearly rendered interpretations.

The introduction traces developments in the study of traditional historiography and the Chinese “attitude to the past,” noting that recent decades have seen moves beyond a long-standing understanding of Chinese history-writing as a “moralizing endeavor” with a “deep-seated didactic purpose” (6). In a highly skilled overview of large bodies of modern scholarship spanning more than a century, Leung notes that the latest studies show a) early Chinese texts in fact discuss the past for a variety of reasons; b) a diverse range of historicizing rhetoric can be found within even individual texts; and c) a unified tradition of “historiography” is anachronistic for much of the early imperial period. Leung situates himself within this more recent research before launching into chapter 1, which charts a shift from a “genealogical” understanding of the past in the Western Zhou to an open recognition by the early Warring States that “time was out of joint” (73). While Western Zhou bronze inscriptions assumed historical continuity with the Zhou founders and exemplary lineage figures, exhorting generation after generation to emulate the ancestors, the *Analects* and the *Mozi* no longer assumed that “family history” provided a sufficient model for individual action. Rather, the former called for “personal evaluations” of the past rooted in “the moral interiority of an individual” (45), while the “etiological” perspective of the latter rejected such evaluations as necessarily subjective and the cause of disorder. The *Mozi* in turn called for unchanging standards of behavior based on Heaven and the sage kings.

Chapter 2 argues that such attempts to re-establish a sense of historical continuity, however cautious, were rejected in later Warring States texts. The *Laozi* offered a cosmogonic “deep history” (79) that equated an originary Dao with a cosmic Mother (implicitly refuting a patriarchal, lineage-based model of the past). Meanwhile, the *Mengzi* so radically centered ethical action in a “compassionate mind” (*ce yin zhi xin* 惻隱之心) shared by all humans that historical models were unnecessary (95). Chapter 3 moves to discuss the relationship between *fa* 法 (laws or models) and the past in texts such as the *Shangjunshu* 商君書 and *Han Feizi* 韓非子. Such “Legalist” texts had “trouble with history” (113), insofar as their emphasis on historical discontinuity raised an awkward question: if the “times changed” (*shi bian* 時變) constantly, why assume that the systems advocated by the *Shangjunshu* and other texts would not become similarly irrelevant and outmoded? By Leung’s estimation, the “authoritarian government” (125) of Qin provided a resolution, for it advanced a strongman theory of centralized rule in one emperor who had so fully transcended all historical precedent and created such a perfect order that an “end of history” was at hand.

The notion collapsed along with Qin’s quick fall, and according to chapter 4 the early Western Han figures Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169 BCE) and Lu Jia 陸賈 (d. 170 BCE) offered alternative understandings of the past that could help their new dynasty avoid Qin’s fate. In his *Xinshu* 新書, Jia Yi echoed (without explicitly citing) the historical rhetoric of the *Analects* by reasserting “former affairs” (*qian shi* 前事; also translated by Leung as “historical precedents”) as important touchstones for assessing the viability of any political program. In his *Xinyu* 新語, meanwhile, Lu Jia championed

the *wu jing* 五經 (Five classics) and *liu yi* 六藝 (Six arts) for providing “orthodox—i.e. singular and normative ... governing principles” that replaced the authoritarianism of Qin and also allowed Lu Jia to “transpos[e] ... political authority from the emperor to classic specialists such as himself” (149). Chapter 5 moves into different territory, analyzing the “Huo zhi lie zhuan” 貨殖列傳 (Accounts of commodity growth) and the “Ping zhun shu” 平準書 (Treatise on balanced standards) of the *Shiji* to chart Sima Qian’s “critical” approach to the past. For Leung, the former text depicted an economy so rooted in natural order and human desires that “government is not a necessary thing in the world” (163). The latter, meanwhile, claimed imperial expansion was driven by an assumption that only the Han imperial system could ensure peace and order. The contrast between the two chapters, Leung writes, reveals a hidden argument: even if the Han saw itself as “a fashioner of order from original chaos,” in fact it was perhaps a “destroyer of natural order” (174). Sima Qian thus offers “critical” and skeptical approaches to the past without articulating a clear exit from the mess of imperial overreach.

*The Politics of the Past in Early China* is an elegantly written book, and Leung’s pithy summations provide food for thought and allow readers to easily follow his claims. We read, for instance, that in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions “all history must be family history” (37); that by highlighting its principles of argumentation the *Mozi* became a “text about its own methodology” (55); and that the *Shangjunshu* and *Han Feizi* offered the conundrum that “historical knowledge is both necessary and useless” (115). I almost applauded at Leung’s apt statement that searching for a unitary “Legalist” tradition is less helpful than focusing on “where the ideas in the texts become unsystematic and contradictory” (120). Some of these aphoristic characterizations, however, stray a bit far: is the “moral interiority of the individual” really such a dominant focus in the *Analects*? Was the Qin truly an “authoritarian government” that called for “bureaucratic amnesia” in order to achieve an “end of history”? Did pursuit of an “orthodox” set of “governing principles” represent the totality of Lu Jia’s political vision? My disagreements at such points notwithstanding, I appreciated the clearly written provocations, for they helped crystallize my own questions and understandings of the sources.

Leung offers deeper rewards than *bons mots*, however, including his engagement with a wide variety of secondary scholarship and his original juxtapositions of texts. I will happily be mining Leung’s footnotes for a long time, for they offer small, clearly written crash courses in the history of different strands of scholarship on early historiography and Warring States philosophy. They also provide a model for the focused application of a huge range of reading both within and outside the field. For these reasons alone, the book should be read in graduate and advanced undergraduate seminars. Meanwhile, Leung juxtaposes familiar texts along surprising axes. The *Analects* and the *Mozi*, of course, have been endlessly compared by countless scholars, but I still found useful Leung’s claim that the two texts shared an interest in re-establishing historical continuity, albeit on highly different grounds (with the *Analects*, by Leung’s reckoning, more “tenuous” in this regard; 73). The affinity Leung draws in chapter 2 between the *Laozi* and the *Mengzi* is another example. While many readers will probably be familiar with the former text’s cosmogonic “deep history” and the latter’s focus on biophysical morality, Leung’s suggestion that both can be understood as a shared turn away from lineage-based and sage king-oriented notions of the past deserves consideration; that *Laozi* offered a “gendered inversion” (p. 89) of the patriarchal past reflected in Western Zhou inscriptions was a particularly effective observation.

More connections to that patriarchal past would have been welcome, for the lineage discourse outlined in chapter 1 tends to fall away as the book moves forward. Leung recognizes that with the collapse of Western Zhou “family history” never went away (see p. 39), but at times the book does not fully grapple with that fact. For instance, the Qin, no less than any other Warring States ruling house, was highly concerned with the integrity of its ancestral sacrifices and lineage temples (not to mention its historical annals). The First Emperor’s inscriptions, preserved in the *Shiji* (a text intimately aware of the religious and political significance of families), engaged these ideas of the patriarchal past as much as they responded to the conundrums of Legalist philosophy. To take one illustrative example, seen in one of the inscriptions discussed by Leung, the First Emperor claimed to have “unified All Under Heaven into a single family” (*yi jia Tianxia* 一家天下). A deeper acknowledgment of the endurance of this family and lineage discourse might have helped complicate the idea that Qin truly desired a total break from the past; certainly the idea is present, but the sources are by no means univocal on this point, and other readings are possible.

A disconnect sometimes emerges between some of the grander claims in the introduction and the analysis that follows. After Leung’s excellent summary of secondary scholarship, for instance, we read the following intervention: instead of understanding treatments of the past “as an epiphenomenon of social, economic, or political changes,” the book will treat them “as the phenomenon itself” (17). This claim does not always square easily with the subsequent chapters, however, which sometimes do highlight textual responses to the external world by situating sources within particular contexts (as in the discussion of the *Shiji* chapters as responses to Han imperialism). Sometimes, however, such contextualization is mostly absent: chapter 2, for example, states only that in late Warring States the world remained “politically divided” (78). The book’s attempt to show that, “the field of the past was implicated ... in the imagination and construction of relations of power” (19) would seem to require more consistent contextualization, for how else can we account for any particular text’s construction of power relations? Part of the problem here is the ever-difficult question of dating texts, as well as the sheer enormity of the book’s timescale: almost a full millennium, as Leung acknowledges (17). Such a vast chronological stretch no doubt renders full contextualization impossible and the array of texts necessarily selective (raising the question, never fully answered, of the criteria used to select sources). In any case, the reader occasionally finds himself suspended between a world of decontextualized “pure thought” and a down-and-dirty tale of grasps at political and economic power. I am hardly unfamiliar with this sort of ambivalence, as I struggle with it myself and often find it cropping up in my own readings of the sources. Nonetheless, I could not stop wishing at times for Leung to articulate more firmly and clearly his understanding of the long-vexed issue of text vs. context.

Such wishes, of course, are hardly relevant in light of the rewards to be found in *The Politics of the Past*. By offering both sophisticated readings and highly approachable overviews, Leung has managed the difficult task of writing a bridge-spanning book that will interest specialists as well as students just starting to explore early historical rhetoric and, indeed, Warring States and early imperial thought more broadly. I look forward to Leung’s further considerations of these and other topics. While I would generally agree with his echo of Virginia Woolf and Rebecca Solnit that “the future is uncertain, for it has yet to come” (180), in the particular case of Leung I am entirely certain that the future will bring new and stimulating studies from this thoughtful scholar.