

moving between the two sections increases the chance of serendipitous discovery. Such serendipity, however, is only made possible by the sustained hard work of the author, who should certainly be congratulated on a boldly conceived idea conscientiously and painstakingly executed.

T. H. Barrett

SOAS, University of London

YING LIU, ZHONGPING CHEN and GREGORY BLUE (comp.):

Zheng He's Maritime Voyages (1405–1433) and China's Relations with the Indian Ocean World: A Multilingual Bibliography.

xxvi, 200 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2014. €98. ISBN 978 90 04 28016 8.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X15001366

Finding a way into the complex subject of “Zheng He studies” and into the maritime setting of the Indian Ocean before the arrival of European powers has become easier. This is good news, and it is the unquestioned merit of a bibliography, published by Brill, compiled by three authors who know well the field. Compiling a bibliography on this topic poses additional challenges: the large number of languages involved (thirteen are represented in the book); the interdisciplinary character of the material, including subjects from history through geography to archaeology; and the long period of time over which works referring to Zheng He were written.

Managing this range of dimensions is certainly a strength of the book and is reflected in its detailed and elaborate structure. The book is divided by genre, beginning with primary sources and leading through academic books, book reviews, articles and book chapters to popular literature, academic theses and web sources. The most important chapters, “academic books” and “articles and book chapters”, are themselves divided into eight similar parts which are again subdivided. This leads to a clear organization which easily allows readers to find literature on their special field of interest. Unfortunately, there is little or no cross-referencing between the chapters, so each entry appears only in exactly one place in the book. A carefully compiled index, however, alleviates this problem.

It is not helpful to argue in detail about omissions or possible additions to the bibliography: who would be able to trace everything there is in this place, or judge conclusively what still has to be included and what not? One decision taken here, however, is truly questionable: the exclusion of virtually all mainland Chinese academic articles published before 2003. The reason the authors give in the introduction for this huge omission is that they can be found in Zhu Jianqiu 朱鉴秋's *Bai nian Zheng He yanjiu ziliao suoyin* 百年郑和研究资料索引 [Bibliography of a century of Research on Zheng He, 1904–2003], a Chinese bibliography published in 2005. This is of course true, but in taking this decision, the authors lose the opportunity to make this a truly complete bibliography. Including these articles and annotating the most important of them would have provided readers unable to read Chinese with the chance to gain a very practical overview of the Chinese literature on this topic.

Giving comprehensive descriptions of all or just the majority of the works listed would not have been possible within the scope of this book, and is not necessary. The existing annotations are, however, unfortunately often of very limited value. They either repeat the content of the title in different words, or explain keywords from the title in an encyclopaedic way as one may easily obtain it from any internet

search engine within seconds. The conclusions of research results provided in a publication, or its contribution to a related academic discourse, can rarely be found.

One interesting aspect of the book is that it explicitly does not confine itself to academic literature in a classical sense, but also includes popular literature and web sources. Though these sections may be far less complete than the others, it surely adds value to the book and realistically accommodates demands established by the expansion of new media.

In conclusion, in spite of the shortcomings listed above, this is a very useful tool for anyone wishing to engage with the topic of Zheng He's voyages – no more and no less. Since Zhu Jianqiu's bibliography from 2005, the closest comparable work, is only available in Chinese, focuses principally on Chinese sources and as a matter of fact does not include works published in the past twelve years, in which the field was very active, it truly fills a gap in the literature.

Though with 200 pages the book is modest in size, the price of €98 falls within the normal range of academic publications. Nonetheless, one might surely wish that a reference work as fundamental and as widely useful as this could be afforded by a larger circle of students.

Alexander Jost
Peking University

MANLING LUO:

Literati Storytelling in Late Medieval China.

xvi, 242 pp. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015.

\$50. ISBN 978 0 295 99414 7.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X15001378

Literati Storytelling in Late Medieval China is about stories – prose tales, narrative poems, anecdotes and other prose accounts – authored or recorded by the educated men who made up the class of scholar-officials, the *literati*, during the period from the Tang dynasty (618–907) to the Song dynasty (960–1280). This Late Medieval period “witnessed the emergence of an unprecedentedly large number of recorded stories, both singly and in collections, creating a range of new thematic and narrative prototypes that would have enduring influences on later Chinese writers” (p. 4). Manling Luo's book offers a well-researched and thought-provoking exposition of the ideas and attitudes found in this corpus of texts. Many of the famous tales under study are available in English translation in anthologies such as Ma and Lau, *Traditional Chinese Stories. Themes and Variations* (Boston: Cheng and Tsui 2002 (original edition 1986)), and Minford and Lau, *An Anthology of Translations. Classical Chinese Literature, Vol. 1: From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000). The chief concern of the author of the present study is the close reading of a large spectrum of stories from the Tang and its aftermath in search of “four dominant themes: sovereignty, literati sociality, sexuality, and cosmic mobility” (p. 13). The four main chapters of the book are devoted to these themes. The analyses of the philosophical, political, religious and sociological aspects of the stories are competent and well written. The book is the first major study to take up in earnest detail the plurality of “discourses” about life and death expressed in the narrative prose of that period. It definitely fills a gap in Western research on Chinese literature.