factor of several tens or hundreds of times. Yet somehow all these copies of the Buddha's words represented his legacy in a way that partook of the nature of a relic. The question of authenticity, and the Chinese term *zhen* 眞 which tends to underlie the English word, though later prominent, are not raised at this stage in the book, despite the fine treatment given to the appearance of mechanically accurate copying achievable through printing. This is intriguing, in that secular writing did know the concept of the "true copy" or *zhenben* 眞本, though that term was used in what is to me a slightly puzzling way: cf. *BSOAS* 69/2, 2006, 332–3. But a couple of chapters on text are followed by three on images, another instance of the Buddha's relics that preserved neither his bones nor his words but his appearance, and here questions of authenticity are much more overtly to the fore. Two final chapters then turn to the products of cremation honoured by reliquaries, and as shown by the eleventh-century author already cited we are here too grappling with some very unfamiliar yet important phenomena, and the discussion reveals yet more clearly how something can be replicated and even fabricated, but real at the same time.

The richness of this volume is most gratifying, a solid testament to the advantages of not rushing into print with the research results of doctoral work but rather taking the time to explore complex issues over a wide array of materials, however lengthy and taxing that process may be. The materials in question are furthermore amply documented throughout by means of illustrations, to a degree that I imagine will be readily appreciated by art historians. But this book deserves a much wider readership than simply one concerned with material culture, since it touches on some of the most important aspects of religious belief in China throughout the period covered. There are certainly aspects of the topic that are not directly addressed here, such as the political manipulation of sacred objects, but the writing is disciplined enough not to risk too many discursive ventures into areas already known to scholarship. The reading of the meaning of material culture may perhaps be modified in future by discoveries within written sources, though the initial exploration by Jonathan Silk suggests that progress in this direction is unlikely to be rapid. For now, however, Hsueh-man Shen's work sets new standards in challenging us to rethink our ideas about many things. It will, I am sure, be much cited, and with good reason.

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GE ZHAOGUANG (trans. Michael Gibbs Hill):
What is China? Territory, Ethnicity, Culture, and History.
xv, 201 pp. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018. £28.95. ISBN 978 0 674 73714 3.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X19000570

In *What is China?* Ge Zhaoguang, a historian and public intellectual, tackles historical problems relating to "Asia" and "China"; scholarship, politics and identity; and global, national, and regional history (p. 1). Readers will find it both fascinating and frustrating: fascinating for the insight it provides into Chinese debates on these crucial issues; frustrating as the reader may hope for a more detailed discussion of contemporary problems. Ge is responding, in part, to certain strains of the Mainland New Confucian movement and is a moderate voice in these debates,

concerned that "tradition fever" and "national learning fever" do not become "scholarly practices or forces that mobilize nationalism or statism" (p. 121). In his introductory chapter ("On the historical formulation of 'China' and the dilemma of Chinese identity"), Ge is critical of those lacking historical knowledge, such as politicians unable to "separate questions of historical lands and territorial domains and actual territory" (p. 2) who might otherwise apply such knowledge to reach accommodation with their neighbours. Throughout, Ge looks to Chinese history to answer the question "What is China?" arguing that the complex nature of China cannot be understood "through a simple application of the European concept of empire" nor by using "definitions or theories of the early modern European nation-state" (p. 3). China's "rise" (a word Ge dislikes) has caused questions about "how China will get along with Asia and the rest of the world in terms of culture, politics, and economics" (p. 1). Ge recognizes China has "already run into a number of difficulties", mentioning the Diaoyu, Paracel and Spratly Islands, Outer and Inner Mongolia, independence movements in Xinjiang and "issues concerning Islam", problems with Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, and the China/India border (pp. 1–2). The question "What is China?" is fundamental to all of these, and Ge hopes that a better understanding of China's history might make resolution of these "difficulties" (none of which are discussed in detail) more likely.

Chapter 1 ("Worldviews: from 'All-under-Heaven' in ancient China to the 'myriad states' in the modern world") outlines the shift away from ancient ideas of China's centrality (the civilized surrounded by the "barbarian") to an awareness that it was "not necessarily the centre of the world" (p. 48). Chapter 2 ("Borders: on 'Chinese' territory") has in its sights "scholars who speak from the ideological position of the state [and] attempt to establish the legitimacy of the current political territory of this "China" *first* [and] then turn back to retrace and narrate the various histories held within this space in the belief that their methods can protect the legitimacy of state territory as it exists today" (p. 53). This chapter examines the emergence of clear borders during the Song (960–1279), and the complex legacy of expansion beyond the traditional boundaries of China during the Qing (1644–1911). Ge is clear: "We cannot use the borders of modern states to trace our way back to a narrative of the domains of dynasties of the past; just as we cannot use the territorial domains of dynasties in the past to make assertions about the borders of modern states" (p. 54). Nor, he argues, can concepts translated from the history of Europe necessarily be of any help in resolving these China-specific issues (pp. 54–63). Chapter 3 ("Ethnicity: including the 'Four Barbarians' in 'China'"?) is a historical overview of the debates about ethnicity in China which ends with a debate that took place after the Japanese invasion in the late 1930s. In chapter 4 ("History: Chinese culture from a long-term perspective") Ge isolates "five key facets" of Han Chinese culture: the use of Chinese characters; the structure of the family, clan and state in Ancient China; the belief system of "three teachings in one", Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism each having their own sphere of use, supplementing one another, none able to lay claim to ascendancy over the others or the secular authority of the emperor; the idea of "the unity of Heaven and man" in the universe; and, the notion of All-under-Heaven as a unique way of explaining China's place in the world (pp. 96–8). But Ge emphasizes that culture is not static and reminds his readership of the plurality of Chinese culture, ancient China comprising many different national groups and cultural elements (p. 120). Chapter 5 ("Peripheries: how China, Korea and Japan have understood one another since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries"), discusses the idea of "China" from the perspective of its neighbours, and the notion of an "East Asian identity". In the final chapter (6, "Practical questions: will cultural differences between China and

the West lead to conflict?"), Ge makes a plea: "Is it not possible now, then, that we could find the spirit of peaceful coexistence from within the history of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in China?" (p. 142). Globalization and modernity, he argues, need not be destructive forces, but peoples will need to evolve an ethical consensus. The problem lies "in how to preserve and maintain with care the many different cultures as they operate under the principles of modern civilisation". The book concludes with a question and a warning: can selective and creative interpretation of Chinese culture be a resource inspiring new ways of thinking about peace; would it be "possible to align globalisation and Chineseness, as well as universal values and Chineseness?" If not, "when All-under-Heaven is brought to life, when imagined versions of the tribute system are taken to be real, and memories of the Celestial Empire are unearthed, then it is likely that Chinese culture and national sentiment will turn into nationalism (or statism) that resists both global modern civilisation and regional cooperation" (p. 148). The stakes are indeed high, and anyone seeking to understand the contemporary debates on Chinese identity in a world where nationalism is on the rise would do well to heed Ge's measured voice. His carefully reasoned, erudite arguments provide an important perspective and deserve a wide audience among scholars and students of China and beyond.

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PETER FRANCIS KORNICKI:
Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia.
xxix, 393 pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN 978 0 19 879782 1.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X19000582

There is much to like about this hefty, handsomely produced volume. The first thing is the title, which reflects the author's intelligent decision to focus on: 1. Three distinct but related, linguistic phenomena, viz., languages, scripts, and texts, 2. Recognizing the plurality of the languages in question, 3. Placing them in their proper areal context. These guiding principles ensure that the book, though extensive in scope, is tightly organized and lucidly presented.

Another aspect of this monograph that pleases me is Peter Kornicki's use of "Sinitic" to identify the common language that bound together the literary cultures of China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Large chunks of the presentation have to do with the vernacular, which is a quite different matter from Literary Sinitic / Classical Chinese (LS/CC). The author's treatment of the complex relationship between the literary and the vernacular is both sensitive and sophisticated.

Kornicki is one of the leading figures among a small, but growing, group of researchers (also including Ross King and Wiebke Denecke) who study the East Asian sinographic sphere as an integral whole. The illuminating results of this new approach are abundantly evident in the volume under review.

Particularly noteworthy is the author's emphasis on Dunhuang, a key point on the Silk Road that lay at the western end of the Gansu/Hexi Corridor, where an enormous cache of invaluable manuscripts was discovered around the turn of the twentieth century. Not only does Kornicki place Dunhuang first in his geographical survey of places that are important in his narrative of the development of writing in