

These discussions of the outward realm allow the narrative in the final two chapters to turn back to mind cultivation outcomes, especially contrasting Chan and Pure Land as paths to progress, and thus to the question of how to evaluate those outcomes. The short section on conclusions that rounds everything off carries the title “From vision to realisation: grappling with the self, grappling with tradition”, though in the very last place a fascinating appendix demonstrates the nature of the tradition by listing not only all members of the fellowship mentioned in the correspondence, but also all earlier figures whose names occur, whatever their religious affiliation. The author is as well aware of course as the figures she studies that epistolary discussions of religious questions had taken place in earlier times too, specifically mentioning the correspondence of the Song Chan master Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (pp. 42, 361). But the index to the Japanese edition of this correspondence translated by Araki Kengo 荒木見悟, *Daiei sho* 大慧書 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1969) – unfortunately, though Araki is cited in several places, this study and all his writings have escaped the bibliography – shows that Zhuhong’s Song dynasty predecessor kept very much to Chan themes, repeatedly referring to the late Tang figure Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 and to the classic question of whether or not a dog possesses the Buddha nature, whereas Zhuhong himself seems only to mention Zhaozhou once, in passing (p. 317). If anything, it would appear that Zhuhong steered the Buddhist epistolary tradition in new directions, for a glance at the letters of a twentieth-century master such as Yinguang 印光 shows that he was happy to extol Pure Land practice ahead of Chan, preaching the word in season and out of season, and occasionally referring back to Zhuhong himself.

Yet the most thought-provoking aspect of this study remains the boundaries between traditions within the Ming environment itself. Buddhists and Confucians were plainly communicating with each other without any inhibitions at this point, for Buddhists had always found a place for secular wisdom, while the Confucians involved do not seem to have been sticklers in their intellectual reservations about Buddhists over such matters as the treatment of the emotions – a matter exhaustively studied for secular sources of the period by Paolo Santangelo but apparently not as such central to the writings of the fellowship. Daoist Inner Alchemy we glimpse only at the margins of the fellowship’s concerns, and Daoist public ritual not at all. Three teachings there may have been in the late Ming, but this stimulating research directs us away from simplistic summary into much more intriguing areas. I hope it proves a model for others, even if well-wrought monographs in this challenging area will probably continue to remain less than plentiful.

T.H. Barrett

SOAS University of London

ROBERT FORD CAMPANY:

A Garden of Marvels: Tales of Wonder from Early Medieval China.

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From the third century BCE, Chinese literati compiled diverse works on the strange, recording ordinary persons’ otherworldly encounters, near death experiences,

prophetic dreams and the like. This book brings together 225 previously untranslated “tales of wonder” selected from what remains of some 25 compilations of anomaly accounts (*zhiguai* 志怪) originally dating from the third–seventh centuries CE (many now found only in later collectanea). The volume, taking its name from the work contributing the most tales, the *Yiyuan* 異苑, *A Garden of Marvels*, compiled by Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔 (fl. early fifth century), is primarily directed at undergraduates and non-specialists and designed accordingly in terms of length and price. With this readership in mind Robert Campany provides a 25-page introduction to the genre: the processes by which the compilations came into being, how they were preserved and why they are worth reading today. These tales were regarded with ambivalence, “a guilty pleasure for many” (p. xxi): Emperor Wu of the Jin (r. 265–289) chided the compiler of a major collection reminding him Confucius did not include materials on ghosts and gods in the classics he edited, nor did he “deign to speak of ‘prodigies, feats of abnormal strength, disorder or spirits’”. The Emperor, concerned people would “be startled by what they have never read before and marvel at what they have never seen”, requested the work be substantially reduced lest it “frighten and confuse later generations”. Nonetheless, he kept the shortened version “in his personal book chest and perused it on his days of leisure” (pp. xxi–xxii).

Contemporary readers, even those familiar with the genre, will also find themselves startled (not to mention amused and entertained) by many of the tales assembled here. But the purpose of this book is not merely to divert on days of leisure: these accounts, rather than being treated (as they often are) as an early stage in the development of Chinese literature, are “a sort of crystallization of collective social memory” (p. xxvi) and provide “unparalleled material for the history of Chinese religion, as well as evidence that there was religion beyond the great traditions and their specialists”, enabling us to glimpse an “enormous amount of religious terrain” (p. xxxix). The porous boundary between the living and the dead, and the relationships between those on either side of that divide, is a major theme. Rich detail of popular conceptions of the afterlife are provided by reviving returnees from the land of the dead and the manifestation of ghosts to the living, frequently through the medium of dreams. Students will be able to observe the interactions between the major traditions and local beliefs: Daoists seek to constrain powerful local cults (item 59) and use talismans to control ghostly visitations (item 152). The extent to which Buddhist ideas had permeated the popular consciousness in the centuries following its introduction is evident both in pro-Buddhist compilations and those of wider scope. Several stories illustrate Buddhists triumphing over indigenous beliefs: wicked local gods are converted (item 3); local spirits scatter in fear when monks enter a shrine (item 91); Buddhists chanting scripture triumph over Daoist libationers filing petitions in riding a family of a ghostly nuisance (item 61). Readers can also observe contestation over sacred space as the foreign faith is embedded in the physical fabric of China when a mountain god cedes his territory to a monk (item 49). It is not just students of religion who will find much worthy of further research here. The relationship between humans and animals, for instance, is another major concern of many of these stories, complicated by the shape-shifting that animals and non-humans frequently indulge in.

Given the intended audience, it seems surprising that the author has chosen to leave the translated materials without commentary, leaving readers “to form their own interpretations” (p. xix). Some tales probably defy analysis, for instance the cushion-like object which unfurled itself to reveal “it was completely lined with eyes that moved and winked in a revolting way” (item 62). For others, the lack of

commentary might mean beginners underestimate the complexity involved, and more experienced students would undoubtedly welcome Company's insights. Determining when a tale betrays signs of Buddhist influence is sometimes difficult: is there a karmic element in the fate of the mollusc harvester, devoured one night by a mass of molluscs who "fed in a frenzy on her flesh" leaving only her skeleton behind, for example? (item 87). Does a mourning mother dog's collection and burial of the bones of her pup made into a medicinal soup (item 54) illustrate a wariness about harming animals for the benefit of humans stemming from an acceptance of animals as fellow sentient beings? That said, leaving these tales without commentary, only annotating when details might "otherwise mystify" (p. xix), eschewing the sinological habit of annotating to the "nth degree" (p. xiii), just pointing the reader to the relevant scholarship in brief footnotes, will enable undergraduates without the relevant language skills to engage in a very direct manner with the materials and use them to begin their investigations into a vast range of topics. Company's introduction, the distillation of three decades of study of this genre, is a portal through which the reader can access his earlier works as well as other relevant scholarship and is more than adequate to point the inquiring student in the right direction. This fascinating volume will undoubtedly encourage independent thought and prove a useful pedagogical tool, and while initially sceptical of the publisher's book-jacket claim that this work "will likely find its way to bedside tables" (perhaps the modern equivalent of the Emperor Wu's personal book chest), this reviewer's copy will remain on hers for some time. However, these tales provide so much stimulating material (not to mention on occasion the frankly grotesque and alarming) that light sleepers should exercise caution if they are in need of a good night's rest.

Janine Nicol
SOAS University of London

LUCA GABBIANI (ed.):

Urban Life in China, 15th–20th Centuries: Communities, Institutions, Representations.

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Ever since the seminal publications by G. William Skinner (1925–2008) and Frederick W. Mote (1922–2005) in the 1970s, the urban history of late imperial China has been a thriving and productive field of research. While the pioneers in the field approached the Chinese city in history primarily in socio-economic terms, an established second line of cultural-historical inquiry focuses on cities as envisioned realms, as represented in literature, history and pictorial arts, and as places with a distinct urban culture of their own that set them off from the rural hinterland.

This volume, edited by Luca Gabbiani, includes both approaches, though the majority of the contributions emphasize cultural aspects, while the editor himself, in his introductory mapping of the field of Chinese urban history, clearly prioritizes economic, social and administrative issues. The volume's 12 contributions are arranged in pairs under six different subtopics: space, consumer culture, envisioning, religion, administration, and sociability, which convey of the broad thematic range covered by the contributors. The thoughtful arrangement facilitates dialogue among at least some of the contributions. Geographically there is a noted emphasis