

Thus as historical fate would have it the medieval Europeans were the only people who had not only the three ingredients, but also apparently the wherewithal to put them to good use. A fully scientific culture therefore first appeared in Europe, and fuelled the scientific revolution, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and indeed created the modern world. Now, however, Beckwith believes that we are under threat of losing this scientific culture. Indeed, picking up the thread from his earlier book, *Empires of the Silk Road*, Beckwith argues that true “science” is currently under attack by his *bête noire*, “Modernism”, which “continues its unbridled course of destruction and antipathy toward anything that smacks of science outside of technologically critical fields” (p. 152). Thus the scientific method and the critical thinking that it fosters are not only under attack in the Western world, but in other places as well.

And nowhere does the situation seem more dire than in East Asia, where “[s]cience was accepted . . . quite late, and at first only as a necessity, insofar as it could help them to achieve military (and thus political) parity with the West. Other than in the physical sciences (including medicine) and related technology, science was soundly rejected” (p. 157). As a result, they still do not have a “full scientific culture”. Beckwith does not address whether he thinks East Asians can think scientifically; however, he is greatly troubled by the fact that none of these peoples – Chinese, Japanese and Koreans – know how to do a critical edition. “These cultures are therefore still fully nonscientific with respect to text philology . . . the crucial distinction is accordingly between a scientific field with a theory and method, on the one hand, and a nonscientific field, on the other. Historically, this distinction applies to cultures as a whole” (p. 158).

What to make of this odd late-in-the-game defence of philology, especially in relation to the author’s larger argument about how East Asians continue to be not properly scientific is an open question. Or perhaps it is an open invitation to employ the scholastic method in order to challenge his arguments.

Johan Elverskog

Southern Methodist University

EAST ASIA

HYUNHEE PARK:

Mapping the Chinese and Islamic Worlds: Cross-Cultural Exchange in Pre-Modern Asia.

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Exchange between West Asia and the Far East in pre-modern times forms the topic of innumerable academic studies. These works look at archaeological, pictorial and/or textual evidence. Geographically, they are concerned with different segments of the land-based silk route “system” or with the maritime corridor through the Indian Ocean; in some cases they also try to highlight events in both these spheres, arguing there were periods in history when maritime exchange was more important than caravan trade, or vice versa. The present book, essentially designed as a synthesis of earlier knowledge, presents certain standard views, but it also offers fresh ideas

related to a narrow “sub-topic” of the “greater model”: in terms of space, it gives preference to the maritime connections between China and a cluster of successive West Asian empires located mainly in the Iranian world, on the Arabian peninsula and in several adjacent territories, including parts of coastal East Africa. Its timeframe extends from the Tang period and the rise of Islam to the early sixteenth century, just prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in Asia. Within these limits, Park is not so much interested in the exchange of material goods as such; rather, she wishes to analyse the circulation of knowledge, especially varying perceptions of the “Other”. This concerns several dimensions: what do geographical accounts produced in China tell us about the Islamic civilizations in West Asia, and how do West Asian materials present China? Did both sides influence each other, what can we say with regard to cosmological models and concepts of space in different periods? Have these elements remained stable over time, or can one identify significant changes?

Above all, Park has dedicated her study to one particular stratum of the geographical sciences: the art of map-making in pre-modern China and the Islamic world. Like texts, ancient maps mirror different views – simply put, they embed topographical knowledge in visual constructions of the “world”. This includes details related to political entities, trade and navigation. Moreover, there are different kinds of maps, drawn with different intentions: not infrequently the conventions applied by cartographers to such depictions vary from one period to the next. It is these and many other questions that Park’s synthesis addresses from a bird’s-eye view, by screening Chinese and “Islamic” maps alike, and by explaining how one should “read” them and what their iconography and internal configuration may tell us. Although such drawings are regularly discussed in academic works, up until now there has been no English-language monograph that juxtaposes the cartographic products of both sides in such a condensed form. This is certainly the most remarkable feature of Park’s book.

To ensure easy access to her account, Park has chosen a simple “narrative” structure. There are three time segments: the first covers the years from *c.* 750 to *c.* 1260; the second deals with the Mongol era; and the third looks at the period from *c.* 1368 to *c.* 1500. Within each section, the Chinese side comes first, thereafter, readers move to the Islamic sphere. The internal arrangement of all three parts considers basic political and cultural developments, especially of “bilateral” relations and exchange; this is essential for a better understanding of the relevant texts and maps. Where necessary, Park also comments on minor issues such as editorial problems, the identification of toponyms, incorrect presentation of certain facts, conceptual issues (for example, the early depiction of Africa and its triangular form on Far Eastern maps), drawing styles, standards of measurement, etc. But it is not her intention to decipher all details encountered in a particular work; as was said, she is more interested in summarizing essential facts and techniques. Seen from this vantage point, her book is a finely written and enlightening monograph apt to stir the curiosity of two different sides – scholars interested in Islamic geography and students of Sinology.

Park believes that Chinese knowledge of the Islamic world gradually came to surpass the knowledge of China as reflected in Arabic and Persian sources. Political changes after the disintegration of the Mongol empire were important in that regard, as were the early Ming expeditions. But there was no major innovation in the further course of the fifteenth century. Such innovations were only brought about by the Europeans. By and large, this conclusion is acceptable, although one may question the validity of certain comments on individual points.

As mentioned above, a synthesis such as this has to rest, in part at least, on a selection of secondary sources. Evidently Park has decided to exclude many

works from her agenda. I list here some omissions pertaining to the Chinese “side”: the books by Hartwell and Bielenstein on tribute contacts; Netolitzky’s translation of the *Lingwai daida*; Kauz’s monograph on the Timurids and Ming China; recent research by Liu Yingsheng and others on the Ming world map; Yu Changsen’s synthesis of Yuan maritime trade; Hsiao Hung-te’s thesis, which links the early Ming voyages to the Timurids and Mongols; many “classical” accounts by Pelliot and other early scholars; as well as several smaller investigations of Chinese material referring to locations in maritime West Asia. Furthermore, many details available in *Song huiyao* and *Ming shilu* are not fully explored, and the internal arrangement of some sources could have been discussed at greater length to outline viewpoints, etc. In sum, Park’s book is a fine sketch of selected key elements associated with an open, yet narrow matrix, but it does not provide all details of Sino-Islamic exchange – the aim was not to expose philological expertise. These factors notwithstanding, it is a courageous account and may serve as an excellent introduction to this field of study.

Roderich Ptak

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich

PHILIP B. YAMPOLSKY (trans.), with a new foreword by
MORTEN SCHLÜTTER:

The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-huang Manuscript.

(Translations from the Asian Classics.) xx, 259 pp. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. £22.50. ISBN 978 023115 956 2.

MORTEN SCHLÜTTER and STEPHEN F. TEISER (eds):
Readings of the Platform Sutra.

(Columbia Readings of Buddhist Literature.) xii, 220 pp. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. £19. ISBN 978 023115821 3.
doi:10.1017/S0041977X13000293

Columbia University Press may not be unrivalled in the number of monographs it has published in East Asian studies, but its commitment to tertiary education on Asia as exemplified both by its long-established translation series and now by its new series on “Readings of Buddhist Literature” is plainly second to none. That this has involved not simply pedagogical aims but also the very highest standards of scholarship is amply illustrated by the volume by Philip Yampolsky now reissued with a cross-referencing table from his Wade-Giles names and terms to pinyin with also a brief foreword by our leading contemporary expert on the textual history of the work translated. In its day Yampolsky’s study served an invaluable purpose in showing that the literature of early Chan Buddhism could be studied to meaningful levels of scholarship only if one was prepared to take into account the international state of relevant scholarly publications in Chinese, Japanese and French – a lesson that an entire cohort of researchers in North America learned to excellent effect, so that within a generation they have completely transformed our knowledge of the development of early Chan as presented in the English language.

As an initiation into the international field of foundational scholarly research on the *Platform Sutra* Yampolsky’s detailed and illuminating introductory remarks to his carefully annotated translation remain indispensable, so that Morten Schlütter