

one generation to the next, and so there is much scope for the introduction of scribal errors.

Each of the sixty words is accompanied by two maps, one showing the distribution of the most frequent characters for the word, and one that shows the pronunciation of the corresponding Zhuang word in the local dialect. For a few words the maps do show some correlation between local pronunciation and manuscript character forms, but in most cases there is no obvious correlation. However, from Holm's analysis of the sixty key words it seems that the choice of how to represent a particular Zhuang word in Chinese or Chinese-like characters depends more on the local Chinese dialect than on the local Zhuang dialect, so the second map is less useful than the first.

One obvious problem with attempting to map the geographic distribution of Zhuang character forms is that although a particular manuscript may have been collected from a certain location, there is no guarantee that its text was written at the same place by a local resident. Indeed, Holm describes patterns of migration by Zhuang ritual practitioners, and he points out that at least one of the source texts was not written at its nominal location. Nevertheless, Holm argues persuasively that on the whole the mapping of source texts does help explain how and why different characters are used to represent the same word in different manuscripts.

This book will be an essential tool for anyone studying the Zhuang character script, and will be particularly useful for researchers studying Zhuang manuscripts, as the word list (in conjunction with the valuable Zhuang character index) should help them to identify the Zhuang character script tradition behind the manuscript and even the general location where the manuscript was produced. Important as this book is, it is only the first stage in an ambitious project by Holm and his colleagues to document systematically the Zhuang character script. He plans to follow this up by publishing the Zhuang source texts used in this book as a Traditional Zhuang Texts series, with photo-reprints of the original manuscripts, transcriptions, glosses, translations and textual notes, as well as sound recordings of the texts. At a later stage Holm plans to produce a set of Zhuang character dictionaries for key localities, based on a selection of texts from each area. This approach should revolutionize the study of the Zhuang character script, and I eagerly await the publication of future stages of this project.

**Andrew West**

WILT L. IDEMA and STEPHEN H. WEST (ed. and trans.):

*Battles, Betrayals, and Brotherhood: Early Chinese Plays on the Three Kingdoms.*

xxx, 467 pp. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2012. £21.95. ISBN 978 1 60384 813 8.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X14000330

*Battles, Betrayals, and Brotherhood* offers the English-language reader an unprecedented insight into the early formation of one of the most important narratives in Chinese history and literature, the saga of the Three Kingdoms era, as performed on the Chinese stage. The term "Three Kingdoms" (Sanguo) refers to the period of the declining power of the great Han dynasty and the fight for supremacy of a succession of warlords and power brokers leading to the division of China into three warring kingdoms. As the translators note in their preface, the saga ultimately

came to be regarded as China's "greatest story ever told" (viii) and has been endlessly repeated in storytelling, novels, theatrical production and films.

Wilt L. Idema (Harvard University) and Stephen H. West (Arizona State University and California University Berkeley) have collaborated on a large and significant body of critical analysis and translation of early Chinese theatrical works over the course of several decades. *Battles, Betrayals, and Brotherhood* is one of a series of English-language translations spanning the major works of performance art and narrative from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries. Volumes include *The Story of the Western Wing* (University of California Press, 1995), *Chinese Theater 1100–1450: A Source Book* (Steiner, 1982) and more recently, *Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals: Eleven Early Chinese Plays* (Hackett, 2010).

This volume comprises seven carefully chosen plays about heroes of the Three Kingdoms, each based on the earliest available edition and each representing a particular stage in the story-cycle. In addition, one finds appended a plot summary of the *pinghua* or prose version of *The Records of the Three Kingdoms*, and an extract from an early prosimetric narrative related to the Sanguo theme, the *Tale of Hua Guan Suo*. As the translators note, the selected dramas reflect the story before the earliest appearance of the masterwork narrative, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In addition, the translators rely on the earliest extant versions in preference to the highly revised texts produced by Zang Maoxuan at the end of the Ming in his *Selection of Yuan Plays* (although one such example is provided for comparative purposes in the Appendix). As demonstrated by the authors in other publications, Zang's *Selection*, formerly regarded as reflecting Yuan-period *zaju* drama, was in fact a much revised and more literary version amended to suit the taste of elite readers. With the benefit of this carefully compiled scholarly translation, one can now trace the development of the Sanguo themes "from fact to fiction, from history to myth" (p. vii). Some of the plays have been translated before into English but never with the same regard for fidelity to the original text and attention to philological and contextual accuracy. The earliest plays translated here, "Zhuge Liang burns the stores at Bowang", "The Great King Guan and the single sword meeting" and "In a dream Guan and Zhang, a pair, rush to Western Shu" are from a text dating back to the Yuan period (*Thirty Yuan Plays*). Due to the lack of inserted dialogue these are very difficult to interpret and translate. The reader will be particularly grateful for the inclusion of these otherwise obscure dramatic scripts.

With the exception of the three Yuan-period works above, the other plays are strongly associated with Ming court performance during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. All were subject to censorship and strict codes of propriety during an era when the absolutist power of the monarch reached a new height. Due to a ban by the first Ming emperor, it was no longer possible to show the role of emperor on stage. Playwrights made ingenious modifications to ensure that imperial claims made by Sanguo heroes such as Liu Bei would not become an offence of *lèse-majesté*. Ming emperors, while rendered invisible on stage, were nonetheless always present as part of the intended audience. From this perspective one can better understand the significance of the rich spectacles offered in the court scripts, particularly the constant paeans to the emperor and protestations of undying loyalty to the ruler. For example, "The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard" climaxes not with the oath of brotherhood but with a messenger bringing an edict from the reigning Han emperor. They are commanded to take up the posts of generals and the responsibility of defeating the Yellow Turban rebels. The final line of the play goes: "Express your gratitude with a bow while you face the imperial palace" (p. 19).

One of the Sanguo heroes, Guan Yu, was not just a historical figure but also became a deity, a process of canonization that proceeded apace throughout the

Ming period. Zhu Youdun's play on Guan Yu, "Guan Yunchang's Righteous and Brave Refusal of Gold", contains a preface by Zhu, grandson of the Ming founding emperor, composed during the reign of Zhu Di (1416), who had earlier usurped the throne in bloody conflict with his nephew. In this play Zhu sets up a eulogy for Guan Yu as the epitome of loyalty and righteousness, a man who refuses the repeated inveigling of the crafty Cao Cao, who seeks to retain the hero in his own camp. Another play, "Liu Xuande goes alone to the Xiangyang meeting", focuses on the qualifications of Liu Bei to revive the waning Han dynasty by taking on the post of emperor to continue the Han lineage. Liu narrowly misses assassination when he is recognized as a descendant of the Han and a man of "encompassing benevolence and deep virtue" (p. 179).

This volume provides a superb overview of the Three Kingdoms story-cycle as performed from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, mostly within court circles. It offers insight into the earlier form of the tale before the widespread circulation of the novel form, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Due to the careful contextual analysis of the translators, this volume offers an unparalleled grasp of the performance characteristics and intended audience for these plays. The English language is faithful to the original, vigorous, and pleasing to the ear. The introduction, appendixes, list of suggested reading and scholarly apparatus provide a wealth of detail to assist student and scholar alike. This text will be indispensable to those with a serious interest in early Chinese drama, in the formation of the Three Kingdoms story-cycle, the interaction between theatre and narrative in imperial China, and the social history of court entertainments during the Ming period.

**Anne E. McLaren**

University of Melbourne, Australia

M. THERESA KELLEHER:

*The Journal of Wu Yubi: The Path to Sagehood.*

xliii, 187 pp. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013.

£9.95. ISBN 978 1 62466 042 9. £9.95.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X14000342

Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1392–1469) is known primarily as the early Ming Neo-Confucian initiator of a trend that deviated from the orthodox tradition of cultivation of mind based on the study of principles of external things (*li* 理) associated with Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) to reach back to the introspective study of mind (*xinxue* 心學) associated with Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–85) and Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 (1139–93). Wu's disciples Lou Liang 婁諒 (1422–91), Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434–84) and Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428–1500), members of the "Chongren 崇仁 school" named for Wu's native district in Jiangxi, transmitted Wu's teachings to Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529), whose philosophy of mind grounded in subjective idealism is one of the great achievements of the Chinese tradition. Wu is also credited with providing the model for the subjective diary form, popular throughout the Ming–Qing era.

*Journal of Wu Yubi* is an account of Wu's daily pursuit of the goal of sagehood. The introduction, consisting of "Neo-Confucianism and the Ming dynasty", "The life of Wu Yubi", and "Notes on the translation", is followed by a translation of all of the 329 entries in the *Rilu* 日錄 (*Journal*) contained in Wu's *Kangzhai ji* 康齋集 (*Siku quanshu zhenben* ed.), and a brief selection of letters and essays