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The Politics of the Past in Early China. Vincent S. Leung. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xii + 202 pp. Hardcover US \$100, ISBN 9781108425728; Paperback US \$30, ISBN 9781108443241; E-book US \$80, ISBN 9781108619196.

Reviewed by Lothar VON FALKENHAUSEN, *Art History Department, University of California Los Angeles*

In his introductory chapter, Leung forcefully dismantles the essentializing notion, pervasive in older Sinological writings, that references to the past in early Chinese texts were overwhelmingly didactic in their motivation. He instead proposes to focus on the “deliberate mobilization of the field of the past as ideological capital toward the construction or deconstruction of various political arguments and ethical ideas” (p. 13). So far, so good, but can anyone come up with a new and truly superior understanding? As one reads on, such initial doubts are quickly dispelled. Chapter by chapter, Leung carefully builds a compelling and, as far as I am able to judge, quite original argument that does justice both to the diversity of the texts and the agency of their authors in their historical and sociopolitical circumstances. The textual loci adduced in support of this new narrative are judiciously chosen and conscientiously translated. Rather than attempting to cover every pertinent text, Leung deliberately restricts himself to a limited range. The result is a slim but intelligent volume that is eminently worth reading.

Chapter 1, by far the longest in the book, ranges from the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions to the Confucian Analects and the *Mozi*. In contradistinction to the protagonists of the Bronze Inscriptions, who dwelled upon their genealogical links to illustrious ancestors in ritual settings, Confucius—in what strikes one as an astonishingly

modern gesture—was the first to treat the past as a veritable smørgåsbord of precedents available to all comers, regardless of background, to help them determine their course of action as autonomous moral agents in the present age. The authors of the *Mozi*, while sharing a similar outlook on the past, flipped Confucius’s vision by treating the past as a series of negative examples illustrating the chaos that would ensue if individuals were to exert their autonomy instead of submitting under the discipline of an orderly régime imposed by a sage ruler.

Chapter 2 juxtaposes the *Laozi* (as represented in the manuscript text excavated at Guodian, Jingmen [Hubei]) and the *Mengzi*. According to Leung, these two approximately contemporaneous texts both implicitly deny the relevance of any historical reference: the *Laozi* by initiating a “cosmogonic turn” and tracing the origins of the world way back to a patently mythical female figure; and the *Mengzi* by insisting that it is only one’s inborn moral nature, rather than any precedent from history, that will determine human action in concrete situations of the present.

Chapter 3 treats the attitudes to the past espoused in the writings of the Warring States-period Legalist thinkers and the imperial Qin ideologues. While the former constantly referred to the past as a way of emphasizing that times had changed and historical precedent was useless in dealing with new circumstances, the latter proclaimed

the end of all history. The Qin world order was intended to work like mechanical clockwork, creating a never-varying pattern that accommodated all conceivable situations and events, and that, if successfully imposed, would have removed all need to account for individual cases; in other words, it would have assimilated human life to natural history.

In chapter 4, Leung describes how the early Western Han thinkers Jia Yi and Lu Jia reacted to the failure of Qin by reviving, in Jia's case, a Confucian vision of autonomous agency guided by historical precedents (which now included the failures of the Qin), or anchoring, in Lu's case, a new view of the world in the study of the Confucian classics, which were now reinterpreted as revealed knowledge transmitted from the sages of the past.

Chapter 5 zeroes in on two chapters in the *Shi ji* that deal with economic issues. Leung juxtaposes the anarchist model of a natural economy that works best without any institutional interference presented in the "Huozhi liezhuan [Biographies of the money-makers]" chapter against the reality of grievous economic mismanagement described in the "Pingzhunshu [Treatise on the balanced standard]." Leung demonstrates how the *Shi ji* authors enabled their informed readers to use the past in a comprehensive and utterly devastating critique of current government practices.

As evident even from this brief summary, the past is a moving target for Leung. Quoting R. G. Collingwood and Pierre Nora, the author helpfully explains in a footnote (though this seems important enough to have merited mentioning in the main text) that "this study does not engage with the question of *memory* in early China. *Memory* is what one remembers from the past, and *history* is those pieces of the past that fall outside collective memory and therefore need to be put into narratives" (p. 19n36; italics in the original). This distinction is hard to sustain with respect to an age with little archival documentation, especially since whatever documentation existed at the time was likely unavailable to the intellectuals who made arguments involving the past. Many of the "historical" narratives in Leung's sources were undoubtedly drawn from cultural memory, tweaked

whenever necessary to fit the respective author's agenda. Of course, for Leung's purposes, the historical validity of the assertions made about the past in the texts under study does not matter, since his concern is meta-historical. But in order to measure their persuasiveness in their time, it may not be entirely pointless to try to ascertain the factual basis, or lack thereof, of the historical examples (or counterexamples) adduced in pre-Qin and early Imperial-period texts. Absent supporting archival sources, archaeology may be able to provide a kind of yardstick for examining at least some of these cases.

Leung does not make a pronouncement on whether his five successive stages constitute an evolutionary development or a gradually emerging typology. The latter alternative seems more likely. What is traced in the book is an emerging panoply of modes of engagement with the past that did not replace one another, but continued to exist side by side and, as time went on, were occasionally hybridized. Leung does not claim that the variants he has identified are altogether representative, nor that they constitute the totality of approaches to the past that were available in their time.

The book, though reasonably well written, still bears some traces of its origins in a doctoral dissertation. It seems to be mainly directed at a small but growing number of scholars writing in English, most of them young, who are dealing with early Chinese texts mainly as a source of concepts, while deemphasizing the detailed consideration of philological detail that has for so long been at the center of traditional Sinology. A look at the bibliography makes this abundantly clear. At the same time, one is struck at the paucity of secondary works in Chinese or Japanese referred to. I suspect that the reason is by no means an oversight on the part of the author, who clearly has both the linguistic skills and the access to library resources necessary to engage with such scholarship. The problem may be, simply, that there are not very many scholarly writings in East Asian languages in existence that resemble, not to mention engage with, the Anglophone literature here adduced. What might explain this apparent

bifurcation of interests among specialists based in East Asia and their (much less numerous) colleagues in Europe, Australia, and North America? Are the former still bogged down by the hard work of philology, freeing the latter to cherry-pick issues that relate to the broader themes of current concern to the Western humanities? Are we, in other words, witnessing a disjuncture—or an emerging pecking order—between the erudite and the sophisticated? This situation, if real, obviously cannot be blamed on Leung, but it may call for some intellectual bridge-building in the future.

In any event, if a book like this one were to aim at making an effective contribution to the wider discourse in the Humanities, it would help if it were explicitly comparative. Leung, to his credit, gives the reader numerous

pointers (mostly in footnotes) in such a direction, but, perhaps due to the time constraints of dissertation writing, does not follow up on them. Here, as well, remains a challenge to future scholarship.

Although it is too narrowly focused to be suitable for ordinary undergraduate-level teaching, the book deserves a careful reading by China specialists of all stripes. It is also of potential value to scholars interested in comparative historiography. To profit fully from Leung's insights, the reader will need some previous acquaintance with the texts under discussion and with the basics of early Chinese intellectual history. Fortunately, such background knowledge is relatively easy to acquire today, even for the nonspecialist, since the relevant texts are all available in decent English translations.

World Heritage and Human Rights: Lessons from the Asia-Pacific and Global Arena. Edited by Peter Bille Larsen. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. xxii + 325 pp., 26 figures, 2 tables. Paperback US \$43, ISBN 978-1-13822-422-3; Hardback US \$124, ISBN 978-1-13822-421-6; E-book \$27, ISBN 978-1-31540-278-9.

Reviewed by Michael HERZFELD, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University

Heritage and rights, ethical domains that sometimes overlap like Venn circles, also often erupt into discord, pitting local cultural values against a universalism born of colonial domination and still embedded in the lofty presumptions of what UNESCO recognizes as “Outstanding Universal Value.” Regional (Asia-Pacific) coverage is necessarily uneven both because the record is itself highly variable and because authors are treading on political eggshells. That much is clear from the nine case studies and five legal reviews laid out in this cautiously optimistic volume. Amid multiple contradictions in legal writ and practice, several important common themes emerge. Consent, participation, and prosperity, along with a near-worldwide commitment to according dignity to all, loom large as

rights, including the right to heritage, but also the right to ask, “Whose heritage?” Ownership itself is a conceptual quagmire for socialist societies or where land and material objects are not culturally viewed as individual property.

Micro-histories of struggles for recognition challenge the triumphalism of national and international heritage regimes. Larsen argues that the UNESCO World Heritage program's “original sin” (p. 7) is reflected in the absence of people from narratives of success; Alexander H. E. Morawa and Gabriel Zalazar call for “cross-referencing” (p. 198), allowing local groups and the international bureaucracy to learn from each other. As Larsen suggests (p. 16), “vague win-win language” can mask a variety of damaging concessions to economic