

Savage Exchange: Han Imperialism, Chinese Literary Style, and the Economic Imagination. By Tamara T. Chin. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series 94. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014. Pp. xxiv + 363. \$49.95 /£36.95.

Every now and then, the collective scholarly consciousness is stirred up by a new book that makes unexpected connections among well-known “facts” and thereby fundamentally changes the perception of an entire epoch. Tamara Chin’s *Savage Exchange* is such a book. The present review, besides presenting an overall idea of its contents, will endeavour to comment from an archaeological perspective.

Recent archaeological discoveries have amply confirmed what historians had dimly realized for a long time: namely, that China from early on was integrated into trans-Eurasian networks of exchange. Focusing on the Han period—particularly on the reign of Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (141–87 B.C.)—Chin wishes to show how the awareness of these links to the outside influenced the self-perception of participants in Han civilization, and how this self-perception developed and changed over time. Her analysis of relevant source materials—mostly texts, but also incorporating a small number of archaeological finds—sheds new light on the controversy between the “Modernist” and the “Reformer” factions at the Han court.¹ The book provides a new framework for understanding Emperor Wu’s expansive policies, as well as for conceptualizing what happened when Classicist (“Confucian”) ideology became preeminent during the first century B.C. Of particular interest is Chin’s literary analysis of writings documenting early Chinese economic thought, which she uses as a basis for a novel and compelling discussion of key aspects of Han society.

Unusually for a work anchored in the discipline of comparative literature, *Savage Exchange* does not engage in comparisons between the literary traditions of different language communities, but is concerned solely with Chinese materials—inevitably so, given that the “Others” with whom the subjects of the Han empire interacted left behind no texts of their own. Rather than in the raw material or textual documentation of Western contacts, Chin is interested in the “relationship between literary form and social history” (p. 1)—the reflections of Han contacts with the outside world in the minds of participants in Han culture and in Han “politics of representation” (p. 6). As she puts it, “[m]y subject is thus not the Han dynasty frontier or the newly monetized market per se, but rather the unraveling and ‘re-raveling’ of a classical matrix that organized frontier, market, agriculture, commerce, kinship, gender, sexuality, politics, culture, and literature in mutually constitutive relations” (pp. 11–12). Fed up with the

¹ The best treatment in English of this controversy is still Michael Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict in Han China, 104 BC to AD 9* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974).

prevailing, overly teleological views of Han history, she wishes to scrutinize “‘dead ends’ in cultural history—that is, the uses of genre and language, and the symbolic practices that failed to become hegemonic” (p. 4). This amounts to nothing less than a new, alternative mode of historical inquiry—one that shares with archaeology the aim of capturing the conditions “on the ground” in a given time, unprejudiced by the knowledge of what happened thereafter.

Savage Exchange takes the reader on an excursion across different literary genres that are normally considered separately: philosophical texts, the standard histories, rhapsodic poetry, technical manuals and dictionaries, and even coin inscriptions. Since the now-standard literary forms were not defined until considerably later, Han-period intellectuals might well have found these transitions less unexpected than modern-day Sinologists. In this sense, as well, Chin’s approach may well be a means of coming closer to the historical reality of the period under study. Sandwiched between a substantial introduction and a shorter “Coda,” the book’s two main parts (entitled “Genres” and “Practices”) comprise a total of five chapters of unequal length (between 37 and 74 pages). Like the two main parts of the book, each chapter is headed by a catching single-word main title (“Abstraction,” “Quantification,” “Competition,” “Alienation,” and “Commensuration”); for the chapters, but not for the main parts, explanatory titles follow after the colon. The three first chapters are each principally concerned with a literary form—philosophical dialogue, prose-poetry, and historiography—while the latter two are focused on the discursive practices surrounding kinship and money, respectively. Thanks to manifold cross-references between chapters, complemented by helpful comprehensive discussion in the introduction and the “Coda,” the attentive reader will soon understand why it makes sense to consider these disparate topics in conjunction. Indeed, Chin’s skill in weaving the various strands of her investigation into a coherent fabric elicits considerable admiration.

Chapter 1, “Abstraction: *Qingzhong* Economics, Literary Fiction, and Masters Dialogue” is concerned with a body of Warring States to early Western Han economic writings, now preserved in several chapters of the *Guanzi* 管子 miscellany and also echoed in Sima Qian’s 司馬遷 (c. 145–86 B.C.) *Shi ji* 史記. The revolutionary achievement of the now-unknown writers of the *Guanzi* chapters consisted in replacing the moral discourse that dominates earlier and contemporaneous philosophical writings with hardnosed economic reasoning, for which the term *qingzhong* 輕重 (literally, “light and heavy”) served as a catchword. According to Chin, *qingzhong* economics constitute “the world’s earliest articulation of a (recognizably ‘modern’) quantity theory of money” (p. 32).

The *qingzhong* theorists recognized the relative nature of the value of money and the importance of timing in its use. They were aware of its fictional, fiduciary nature, and they considered it as a potential means of dominating areas beyond the cultural

confines of the Chinese state. These ideas are linked, in the *Guanzi*, to a political theory aiming to maximize the power of the state apparatus through the domination and manipulation of market exchange. Key to achieving this goal was the compilation, by the administration, of objective economic data.

Classicist scholars, by contrast, aimed above all to achieve social morality, and they strove for a stable, unchanging society based in the male-female division of labour into farming and weaving.² They advocated a return to the “fundamentals”—agriculture, the Confucian classics, and the simple values enshrined therein. In this “economics of archaism” (p. 54), the flow of goods occurred in a concentric tributary system, through which the marginal subjects of the empire delivered their products to the imperial centre for redistribution. This patently idealizing system, laid out in the “Yugong” 禹貢 chapter of the *Shang shu* 尚書 and mirroring the equally fictional “well-field system” within the empire, implies a closed-in view of the empire, contrasting with the far more expansive world view of Sima Qian. To the Classicists, money-driven market exchange was an obstacle to a return to the “nonmarket conditions of a Golden Age antiquity” (p. 55). For them, money was mainly a symbolic expression of the cosmic order. Hence they were particularly concerned with the inscription (*wen* 文) on the coins. According to Chin, “[t]he savagery of market exchange is, for the Classicists, a break from *wen*: from the fundamental patterns of the cultural order encoded in the Zhou texts that they, as scholars of *wen* . . . must defend” (p. 21).

Chin believes that “the *Guanzi* was championed by Han Emperor Wu’s state planners during China’s earliest large-scale expansion of imperial frontiers and monetized markets” (p. 32). For a short period, quantitative calculations based on hard economic data trumped moral considerations in political economy, shaping an open-minded official attitude vis-à-vis foreign contacts and creating innovative literary forms. But after Emperor Wu’s demise, stale moralizing took over; familiar objections to merchants and markets as morally corrupting factors were raised again; the comingling of Chinese and foreigners was viewed with suspicion; and long-distance exchange across Eurasia came to be seen in a negative light. Such prejudices, which have shaped much of later Sinological writings on the ancient Chinese economy, already colour Huan Kuan’s 桓寬 (first century B.C.) *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論, a rendering

² Kakinuma Yōhei 柿沼陽平, *Chūgoku kodai kahei keizai shi kenkyū* 中国古代貨幣經濟史研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2011), pp. 295–300 and passim, shows how the Qin and Han state instrumentalized money to bring about such a society. See also my review of Kakinuma in Zhejiang daxue yishu yu kaogu yanjiu zhongxin 浙江大學藝術與考古研究中心, ed., *Zhejiang daxue yishu kaogu yanjiu* 浙江大學藝術考古研究, vol. 1 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2014), pp. 278–91.

of the “Salt and Iron Debates” held at the imperial court in 81 B.C.³ But Chin credits the *Yantie lun* with having updated the moral discourse transmitted from Zhou times through its explicit and rhetorically sophisticated engagement with the dangerous market-economy ideas of the *qingzhong* theorists, thus enabling the propagation of Classicist economic ideas in a largely monetized market economy.

Chin scrupulously presents both sides of a debate that might have turned out either way. She sensitively analyses the modes of discourse through which arguments were made. She introduces the notoriously difficult terminology of *qingzhong* economic theory and explores parallels in early mathematical texts. While *qingzhong* economists had no qualms about citing canonical texts as to induce the compliance of the uneducated, they de-emphasized references to past authorities in expounding their core teachings. Chin shows how they subverted the “Masters discourse” of traditional philosophical debates by adopting a variant form of the well-established in which the famous thinkers and cultural heroes of the past were replaced with fictional embodiments of economic ideals. Such rhetorical experiments, which have their closest parallel in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, constituted an important literary innovation.

The *qingzhong* terminology was too specialized and too obscure to be usable in political debate. Hence the *Yantie lun* contains virtually no citations of the *Guanzi*. Instead, the Modernist minister Sang Hongyang 桑弘羊 (152–80 B.C.) is made to “defend or ventriloquize *qingzhong*-style economics (e.g., state monopolies) through this classical moral idiom” (p. 55). But Sang’s attempts to beat the classicists on their own turf fall flat—Huan Kuan, sympathetic to the opposite point of view, easily unmasks them as “mere rhetorical wordplay” (p. 57), no match to the Classicists’ hard-hitting critique of Sang’s amoral profit-seeking.

Chapter 2, “Quantification: Poetic Expenditure in the Epideictic *Fu*,” is the longest in the book. It focuses on the Han-dynasty poetic genre of *fu* 賦 (rhapsodies), a highly elaborate form of rhymed prose composed for oral performance at court. *Fu* poetry entertained and at the same time amazed its élite audience by exuberant descriptions of luxurious élite living, using an outlandish vocabulary. Chin interprets the *fu* poets’ obsession with exotica as a reflection of a widening worldview in the context of imperial expansion.

Chin criticizes the traditional reading of the *fu* as dialectically advocating classical restraint through the ad nauseam display of its contrary. In her view, this interpretation may apply to late Western Han and Eastern Han-period instances of the

³ Unfortunately, Chin did not avail herself of what is without question the best study and translation of the *Yantie lun*: Iuriĭ L’vovič Krol’, *Huan Kuan, Spor o soli i železe (Ian te lun’)* (2 v., Sankt-Peterburg: Institut Vostokovedeniia Rossiskiiĭ A. N., 1997; Moskva: Izdatel’skaia firma “Vostočnaia Literatura” RAN, 2001).

fu genre (in particular, those of Yang Xiong 揚雄 [53 B.C.–A.D. 18], who in the end renounced the *fu* genre on account of its excessiveness)—but it does not do justice to the work of the earliest and arguably greatest *fu* poet, Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179–117 B.C.).⁴ Here, she argues, the situation is more complicated. As she puts it, “the excessive length and euphonic ornament of their boasts that are crucial to the aesthetic playfulness of the genre pattern the quantitative logic of lavish expenditure (the more, the better). Their ornate speeches thus turn their condemnation of ostentation into potential hypocrisy or satire” (p. 76). At the end of an extensive analysis, she finds that Sima Xiangru simultaneously used “ideologically conflicting classical and non-classical styles” (p. 96), thus opening up his work to divergent interpretations. One may note that in Western aesthetics, such ambivalence is often seen as a defining characteristic of truly great art—an art that is both autonomous and timeless.

According to Chin, the lists of exotic things in Sima Xiangru’s *fu* make these poems a verbal microcosm of the Han empire. She finds them compatible with both the expansive vision of empire promulgated by the *qingzhong* economists and with the more circumscribed concentric tributary vision of the Classicists. The latter view prevails in *fu* composed by later authors. By contrast, Chin believes Sima Xiangru to have been influenced by economic theories in the *Guanzi* that emphasized the stimulating economic effects of luxury consumption. In this connection, she extensively discusses the “Chimi” 侈靡, a relatively early *Guanzi* chapter, which she regards as “perhaps the most sustained economic justification for state-sponsored spending to have survived from the premodern world” (p. 109). Such a view was later criticized even from within the *Guanzi* tradition, with the *qingzhong* economists pointing out that unregulated spending could be economically detrimental to flourishing markets and state power. But Chin emphasizes that neither of the two *Guanzi* approaches considered lavish expenditure as a moral wrong, and she ventures that Sima Xiangru thought likewise. Adopting a philological perspective, she builds parallels between the rhetorical practices of the *Guanzi* and Sima Xiangru: the latter’s excessiveness in his use of language may be read as a putting-into-practice of the economic principles extolled in the “Chimi.” One relevant parallel is that, in spite of all their extravagance, both express a fear of exceeding an elusive “point of no return.”

As in the preceding chapter, Chin bases her argument on a close analysis of the *fu* poets’ modes of expression. She shows how their vocabulary expresses

⁴ In connection with Chin’s treatment of Sima Xiangru’s biography, a small correction may be in order: the place where Sima Xiangru and his beloved Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 worked as wine-sellers was not “the bustling marketplace of Chengdu (Sichuan)” (p. 124), but the smaller town of Qionglai 邛崃 in the hills to the west of the Chengdu Plain, where “Wenjun’s Well” (Wenjun jing 文君井) is still shown to visitors today.

extravagance deictically through sheer accumulation of verbiage and by onomatopoeia, but also through the use of metaphors. In this connection, she gives particular attention to the use of unusual binomes (pp. 80–88). A potential point in favour of her argument, which Chin does not explore, is that such binomes often originated from dimidiated “spellings” of originally non-Chinese words, intimating connections to far-flung realms beyond the confines of the Han empire.⁵ At the level of genre, Chin interestingly suggests connections to early word-lists, synonymica, and dictionaries, such as the *Cang Jie pian* 蒼頡篇 (long lost but once again partly known from excavated manuscripts), the *Erya* 爾雅, and Sima Xiangru’s own (lost) *Fanjiang pian* 凡將篇. She is certainly right in highlighting the importance of such works both not only as a basis for literary practice, but also as embodiments of an encompassing, expansive politico-economic vision—one linked to the search of economic data and an understanding of the natural world rather than, as later in Xu Shen’s 許慎 (58–147) *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, to the quest for the true meaning of early texts.

A short art historical interlude, based on previous work by Wu Hung, Martin Powers, and others, and modestly characterized by the author herself as “reductive” (p. 97, n. 73), relates the literary extravagance of the *fu* to the luxurious display of material-culture items from Western Han high-élite tombs. Chin believes that these “visual media” were cultivated by promoters of expanding markets, and she suggests that they served as potential resources for the literary extravagance of the *fu*. She thereby turns on their head some earlier attempts to take the *fu* as literal descriptions of the splendours of Han material culture (e.g., of the imperial palaces)—an approach that has elicited some well-justified criticism.⁶ Chin’s line of argument exemplifies a more sophisticated, and quite promising, approach to the potential relationship between material and literary evidence.

From an archaeological perspective, one is tempted to add the following comment. Data from excavated tombs may be adduced to confirm that the *Guanzi* economic chapters and the early Han *fu* reflect—and possibly justify—predominant Warring States and Han economic *practices*. From the middle of the first millennium B.C. onward, there are overwhelming indications of a generalized rise in the standard of living that went hand in hand with a culture of unprecedented luxurious display; this may have been linked—although the details are less clear—to the increased

⁵ On dimidiation, see Peter A. Boodberg, “Some Proleptic Remarks on the Evolution of Archaic Chinese,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 2, no. 3/4 (December 1937), pp. 329–72; Paul L-M. Serruys, “Five Word Studies on *Fang Yen* (First Part),” *Monumenta Serica* 19 (1960), pp. 114–209.

⁶ Michael Nylan, review of *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*, by Wu Hung, *Artibus Asiae* 57, no. 1/2 (1997), pp. 157–66.

importation of foreign goods. But it is less easy to take recourse to archaeological materials as evidence of economic *ideas*, especially of the Classicist ideal of virtuous restraint, for the absences implied hereby are naturally difficult to capture archaeologically. Some Eastern Han-period stone carvings do convey reflections of a moral discourse antithetical to excess—but they are considerably later in date than the time of the compilation of the *Yantie lun* and the lifetime of Yang Xiong; moreover, such an ideological thrust is limited to a small portion of extant Eastern Han stone carvings, the vast majority of which unambiguously attest that conspicuous consumption continued unabated simultaneously, even in the same region, as Martin Powers has compellingly shown.⁷ For earlier epochs, as well, archaeological evidence of deliberate parsimony is, at best, occasional and tenuous.⁸ If anything, archaeological finds—from Han China as well as from elsewhere in the world—may suggest that the desire to boast one's wealth to the extent that one's economic means allow may well be a human universal. Sima Qian appears to have sensed this, as Chin brings out in the following chapter.

In chapter 3, “Competition: Historiography, Ethnography, and Narrative Regulation,” Chin compares the attitudes vis-à-vis commerce, the expansion of the empire, and communication with outsiders evinced by the *Shi ji* and Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Han shu* 漢書. She cautions that she has no intention to generalize about these texts, but merely wishes “to reconstruct the role of historiography as a generic medium for ideological contestation about Han markets and frontiers” (p. 150).

She finds that Sima Qian advocates unregulated markets and is open-minded vis-à-vis cross-border contact; whereas Ban Gu, while appropriating much of his text verbatim from Sima Qian, edits out the passages related to market-driven exchange and reconfigures the relationship within a classicist tribute-economy worldview. Ban Gu's reframing has informed much of the subsequent historiography on the economy of the Han empire. But Chin finds in Sima Qian's original text indications of a very different stance, one that is far more *laissez-faire* in its approach to the economy than the emphasis on central planning seen in the *Han shu*.

Departing from the usual narrative habits of historians, Sima Qian in the “Huozhi liezhuan” 貨殖列傳 chapter of the *Shi ji* presents China's economic geography from the perspective of the market. Chin notes that the chapter's coverage of local products does not emphasize their tributary flow to the centre. In describing

⁷ Martin J. Powers, *Art and Political Expression in Early China* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1991).

⁸ Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000–250 BC): The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, University of California, 2006), pp. 148–49.

regional customs, Sima Qian acknowledges, realistically, that the desire for wealth is a universal human trait, cross-cutting all ranks and occupations. Through astute philological analysis, Chin shows how this perspective creates new metaphors and competing narrative perspectives. Within China, to Sima Qian, “the businessperson (the ‘commodity producer’ *huozhi* 貨殖) replaces the state as the moral center of the market” (p. 144), and his unabashed search for profit is accepted without prejudice; virtue, in this market-centred view of human relations, equals wealth distribution by entrepreneurs, and prosperous local families become an untitled aristocracy.

As Han relations with the outside are concerned, Sima Qian’s “Xiongnu liezhuan” 匈奴列傳, according to Chin, similarly undoes the Zhou ideal of the concentric tributary order by describing differences between foreigners and Han inhabitants without presupposing an ethical paradigm. As has often been pointed out, this account of the Xiongnu is at the origin of China’s tradition of ethnographic writing; but Chin, sensitized by postmodern anthropological theory, further observes that “there are overlooked ways in which the chapter brings its own ethnographic authority into question” (p. 145) by sympathetically incorporating Xiongnu perspectives. Sima Qian’s interviews with Han advisors at the Xiongnu court reveal the economic interest motivating Xiongnu political behaviour, thus bringing the Xiongnu to the same level as the commodity-producing inhabitants of the Han realm. Sima Qian’s self-reflective attitude is unique in the standard dynastic histories. Quite radically, moreover—and very much at variance with Ban Gu and his followers—Sima Qian acknowledges that “foreigners” make up by far the majority of the inhabitants of the world.

Chapter 4, “Alienation: Kinship in the World Economy” consists of two parts. The first focuses on women as participants in economic activities; the second treats the inter-marriage between the Han and Xiongnu imperial families under the *heqin* 和親 policy during the early Western Han. Whereas these two case studies are thematically quite unconnected, both document significant economic and historical agency assigned to women in Emperor Wu’s time, contrasting with the reduction of women to a subordinate role in male-dominated households under the Classicist paradigm during the later part of the Han period.

In Han economic theory, the status of “women’s work”—i.e., for the most part, textile production—was ambiguous; it could be viewed either as part of the foundation (alongside with agriculture), or as part of the inessential “branches” (i.e., the market economy). Chin points out that a corresponding separate category of “men’s work” did not exist, suggesting that “women’s work” as a category was not viewed as a “natural” part of the world order and, by implication, regarded as inferior. Even so, early Han texts—e.g., not surprisingly, the *Shi ji*—speak positively of the active participation of women in the market economy, which enabled women to have an

independent existence even if they remained unmarried; whereas later on, especially during Eastern Han, women were confined to the household, and unattached women were seen as immoral and punitively taxed.

Scrutinizing textual references to women in a wide range of texts—including mathematical manuals—Chin finds, very interestingly, that their productivity in making textiles for the market was subjected to quantification, contrasting with a lack of a similar attention to the agricultural efforts of males. The motif for this was profit maximization, especially on the part of the employers of unattached women. Women's work, seen from this angle, lent itself more directly to *qingzhong* theoretical concerns than the work performed by males. Driven by a Classicist agenda, the *Yantie lun* decries this female activity as detrimental to the social order and advocates economically self-sufficient nuclear households. It criticizes overproduction of silk as promoting extravagance, as a departure from virtuous poverty, and as moral excess. There is an art-historical side to this set of attitudes that Chin touches on when she mentions the Classicist scholars' scepticism vis-à-vis exuberant ornament (pp. 202–3).⁹

Chin follows up this discussion with a highly original treatment of the contrast between female workplaces as conceived under the *qingzhong* and Classicist paradigms. While *qingzhong* economists devised the working environment in such a way as to increase women's output, Classicist-inspired texts such as the Mao 毛 prefaces to the *Shi jing* 詩經, the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳, and Ban Zhao's 班昭 (45–116) *Nüjie* 女誡 depict it principally as a space for socializing. Written after the political victory of the Classicists, these texts propagate their "moralization of textile manufacture"¹⁰ as if it were part of a natural order of things, whereas in fact it may have been a quite radical departure from earlier Han conceptions and, perhaps, practices. Under the Classicist paradigm, household work was equalized with wifely virtue, and women practised weaving in order to contribute to the livelihood of the household, not as a professional skill. "The expansionist *qingzhong* fantasy of women's work thus offered an explicit or implicit foil against which classicists elaborated kinship ideals" (p. 213).

Chin sees an analogy between the clashes in attitudes vis-à-vis kinship revealed in these texts to the controversy over the *heqin* policy vis-à-vis the Xiongnu during the early years of the Western Han period. She emphasizes the linkage between the intermarriage between the Han and Xiongnu ruling houses and the opening of border markets for trade. Classicist thinkers reacted to this by voicing anxieties about

⁹ Cf. Powers, *Art and Political Expression*, pp. 334–70.

¹⁰ Chin (p. 207) borrows this term from Bret Hinsch, *Women in Early Imperial China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 71.

miscegenation and transgressive consumption. The exchange of brides contradicted the Classicists' tributary ideology, with the *heqin* policy "substituting the symbolic transaction of the lord-subject hierarchy (tribute) with that of a more egalitarian interpretation of marriage" (p. 216). This, in Chin's view, mirrors the greater leeway enjoyed by women under the *qingzhong* paradigm, whereas it was bound to upset the upholders of Classicist ideals of family hierarchy.

By contrast, Classicist thinkers criticized the equality between the Han and Xiongnu ruling houses accepted under the *heqin* policy as antithetical to Confucian conceptions of filiality. The *Han shu*, for instance, argues that the *heqin* policy had made the Xiongnu ruler the son-in-law of the Han emperor, thus owing the latter obedience. Moreover, the fact that Han "dowry" gifts to the Xiongnu were not reciprocated constituted a grave impropriety under the Classicists' tributary ideology.

The Classicist criticism of the *heqin* policy fostered a "phobic ethnographic discourse" centred on the repudiation of the "barbarians"—quite antithetical to Sima Qian's above-mentioned more accepting attitude. In a footnote, Chin discusses the role earlier intermarriage customs as practised under the Zhou dynasty might have played as an ideological precedent for the Han-Xiongnu intermarriage and (p. 216, n. 68). In this connection, a supplementary note is in order. As is well-known, the Zhou practised clan (*xing* 姓) exogamy.¹¹ Zhou clans were large but weak units of kinship reckoning superordinate to the lineages (*shi* 氏) that constituted the main units of kin-based socio-political organization. While clans were conceptually intermediate between lineages and ethnic groups, it is significant that a clan could span different ethnic groups. The Zhou system of clan intermarriage had the effect of greatly diminishing what originally had probably been considerable cultural (and possibly linguistic) differences between clans, and it may well have been deliberately designed for this purpose. By early imperial times, the meaning of *xing* had morphed into "surname" (with the exogamy between surnames maintained to this day) within a new social order based on the nuclear family rather than on traditional lineages. That the Classicists opposed Han-Xiongnu imperial intermarriage, rather than embracing it as a continuation of Zhou inter-clan intermarriage customs, highlights an increased emphasis on ethnic differences; the underlying conviction that different ethnic groups were socially incompatible with one another, far from being part of the classical Zhou tradition, had gradually emerged during the Warring States period. The late Western

¹¹ The author unwittingly perpetuates an incorrect (though very widespread) use of kinship terminology when mentioning the "Lü clan" (p. 221) and "Liu clan" (p. 225). "Clan" is here used in the sense of "family" or "surname"; for the anthropologically correct usage of "clan," see George Peter Murdock, *Social Structure* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 46.

Han Classicists seem to have been less conscious than we are today of the pedigree of their ideas on such matters.

Chapter 5, “Commensuration: Counter-Practices of Money” offers several perspectives on the Han monetary system that depart from, and may complement, its conventional treatment by economic historians. Intent on revealing the highly diverse “meanings and pragmatics of Han dynasty money—that is, of the conceptions, workings, and effects of monetary practices” (p. 229), Chin examines, not the everyday usage of coins, but four counter-practices that “either embedded money within cosmological and ethical calculations, or sought to divorce money from such calculations” (p. 229). In these respects, as well, Chin notes fundamental differences between the expansive attitudes that prevailed during the reign of Emperor Wu, and the later part of the Han period, when Classicism reigned supreme. Chin notes that in East Asia, coins first circulated in border areas. In highlighting the abiding tension between the transregional conception of the economy under Emperor Wu and the China-centred economy propagated by the Classicists, she puts into question the current consensus of works on the monetary history of early Imperial China, which continues to be based in Classicist ideology.

Chin’s first counter-history is concerned with the burying of money in tombs. This involved not just coins, but also gold bullion and cloth currency (*niebi* 聶幣), often in the form of *mingqi* 明器 imitations. Meant for transactions along the journey into the world of the beyond,¹² in an environment where one could not be sure about its exchange value, these funds resembled “foreign exchange,” thus linking them to the expansive economic views typical for Emperor Wu’s reign. The uncertainty surrounding their foreign future may perhaps account for the extreme diversity in the amounts interred and in the proportions of real currency and imitations; as well as for the pervasive discrepancies between the actual amounts and those inscribed in excavated tomb inventories and tags (though of course it is also possible that the exaggerated inscribed numbers were merely a way of boasting wealth). All in all, the variety of “spirit money,” contrasted saliently with the relative uniformity of the money circulating in the Han empire, a result of the unification of coinage under the Qin. Chin’s important observation that tombs manifest “a tendency towards personalizing money” (p. 237) stands as a potential inspiration to archaeologists.

Chin notes that some of the coins found in tombs carry special talismanic inscriptions and probably were not meant for use in everyday transactions, and she

¹² The most up-to-date treatment of the religious underpinning of these practices may be found in Guolong Lai, *Excavating the Afterlife: The Archaeology of Early Chinese Religion* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2015).

mentions symbolically charged depictions of money on such artefacts as the “money-shaking trees” found in the south-western region of China. But such items, rather than being purely funerary in nature, may also have been used among the living. In general, the coin motif occurs pervasively as an ornament in non-mortuary contexts; it forms part of an iconography of auspiciousness that underlies the visual practices during much of the Han period. Chin seems inclined to date the cosmological meanings associated with coins in such ornamental usages to the time after the reign of Emperor Wu. The rise of Classicist ideology, according to her, brought about a resacralization of numbers through their integration into correlative cosmology and their linkage to discussions of the tributary system. This is a promising idea, but it still needs to be verified through a systematic examination of the dating of the archaeological contexts where the money motif occurs. In any case, Chin is undoubtedly correct in stating that the two modes of economic reckoning associated with coins—market-based and cosmological—are mixed in spirit money.

Chin’s reflections are far more sophisticated than what is usually seen when non-archaeologists try to make use of archaeological data. But her arguments would be even more convincing if they were based, not in a small and rather arbitrary sample, but in a statistically representative dataset. If so, one would be able to tease out correlations between the observed diversity and such factors as regional differences, patterns over time, as well as customs and practices associated with different social ranks. Moreover, one would ideally hope to correlate patterns of money usage in tombs with the development of the Han funerary system as a whole. Here lies a challenge to future archaeological research.

The second counter-history of coinage presented in this chapter concerns what Chin calls “experimental minting.” Here she presents a complex analysis of the so-called “Sino-Kharoṣṭhī” coins cast by the Khotanese king Gurgamoya (r. c. 30–60), contemporary with the Eastern Han period—coins of West Asian type with inscriptions in Kharoṣṭhī letters surrounding the image of a horse on the obverse, and an inscription giving the weight of the coin in Chinese characters and in the Han system of weights and measurements on the reverse. The double inscriptions unmistakably denote the exchangeability of Khotanese and Han coins, situating them in an economic environment where border-crossing transactions were taking place routinely. Chin does not discuss the central motif on the Chinese side of these coins, which resembles the archaic form of the character *bei* 貝 ([cowrie-]shell), possibly harking back to a more archaic form of currency that remained—and still remains today—fundamental to Chinese conceptions of money and treasure. In Central Asia, such cowrie use can be traced back to the early Bronze Age, and it involved the long-distance transport of cowries from the shores of the Indian Ocean, but whether this was remembered in Khotan during Gurgamoya’s reign is impossible to know today;

the presence of the *bei* motif may be, rather, a nod to perceived “Chinese” traditions. The exceptional and apparently short-lived nature of the “Sino-Kharoṣṭhī” coins suggests that this bilingual currency was not a success.

Also falling under the category of Han “experimental coinage” are lead ingots with dragon designs surrounded by mangled legends in Greek letters that have been found in several places in China. Though stylistically identifiable as Chinese-made, they are evidently inspired by foreign coins. Relegating the archaeological details to an appendix, Chin follows speculations by Chinese numismatists that these were *mingqi* imitations related to Emperor Wu’s experimental silver coinage, which would have been “China’s earliest attempt to coin a precious metal” (p. 249). Chin believes that it was the inscriptions, illegible though they are, that imparted a monetary character onto these strange objects; iconographic decoration without characters would have been considered valueless. But the silver currency never caught on, and there are no surviving non-*mingqi* specimens.

The third section of the chapter elaborates on the place of money in classical ethics and historiography. According to Chin, “[C]lassicists represented money as a transgressive form of *wen* that generally failed to adequately represent the shared values that governed classical *wen*” (p. 25). They took umbrage at the legal stipulation, in force at least since Qin times, that it was the legibility of the inscription (*wen*), not the weight, that determined validity of a coin. “Numismatic *wen* was thus a quantitative proposition . . . and the truth of this quantitative proposal would be established by the words written into the state’s law, not by the market scales” (p. 253). This situation contradicted Confucius’s ideal that there should be a correspondence between words and things. The Classicist thinkers therefore sympathized with popular concern over the material value of coins,¹³ having little use for the *qingzhong* economists’ notions of money as a fiduciary token.

Under the Classicist mind-set, coins were also cast in commemoration of auspicious events, enhancing the emperor’s claim of Heaven’s mandate. Han historians were aware of Western coins and described their differences vis-à-vis the Chinese ones. Historians, including Sima Qian, took the absence of *wen* as signifying their foreignness. But the *Guanzi* chapters allow for the exchangeability of coinage between different monetary systems through mutual agreement.

The fourth section deals with what Chin calls the “etiologies of money.” Here she discusses various accounts—all fictitious in the light of what we know today thanks to archaeological discoveries—about the origins of money and the alleged reasons for its invention. Whereas for Sima Qian and the *qingzhong* economists, money originated in the market, as a means to measure the value of commodities, the

¹³ Kakinuma, *Chūgoku kodai kahei keizai shi kenkyū*, pp. 157–62.

Classicists claimed that it emanated from the benevolence of the ruler. (Incidentally, archaeological discoveries have shown fairly conclusively that the earliest Chinese coins, dating to the sixth century B.C., were cast, not by rulers, but by autonomous merchant communities.¹⁴) Classicist thinkers realized that their much-idealized Zhou tributary system had functioned without money, but they found ways to incorporate money in their discourse as a way of shoring up the governmental order in an agricultural state. Chin discusses reflections of monetary indebtedness in literary records as well as a moral debate surrounding moneylending, which offers itself for comparison to similar discussions in early Christianity and Islam.

In Chin's understanding, *qingzhong* economics "disenchanted" money, placing it outside the realm of correlative cosmology. The *Guanzi* chapters advocate the cynical exploitation of uneducated people's belief in the correlations between money and goods that are promulgated by the state; they recognize that none of the materials commonly used for money have any intrinsic value. Yet universal quantitative laws govern foreign exchange, and any kind of material can be used as money depending on local economic conditions and needs.¹⁵ These ideas are, according to Chin, "the best (and hitherto overlooked) account for understanding the calculations behind Emperor Wu's failed numismatic experiment" (p. 291) with silver currency.

As in other realms explored in the preceding chapters, it was the ideological machinations of the Classicists that created the chasm between "China" and the rest of the world. According to the author, "classical discourses grounded money in classical Chinese values. With the political rise of classicism after Emperor Wu's reign, these non-*qingzhong* texts helped to keep real or imaginary commerce with foreign worlds out of Chinese monetary history" (p. 294).

The book's "Coda: Counterhistory, Connected Histories, and Comparative Literature" interprets the rise of Confucian Classicism during the later part of Western Han as an expression of ambivalence and opposition vis-à-vis Han imperialism. The classical texts played an important role in restoring literary decorum and setting the stage for a presentation of Chinese culture that proved enduring. The author states: "I hope this work will help to open up a space for early interculturality in approaches to comparative literature and, conversely, that it will suggest avenues for approaching

¹⁴ Emura Haruki 江村治樹, *Shunjū Sengoku jidai seidō kahei no seisei to tenkai* 春秋戦国時代青銅貨幣の生成と展開 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2011).

¹⁵ A slight correction is needed when the author writes: "Guanzi, with flagrant anachronism, stages his Warring States dialogue on foreign exchange within the geopolitical horizons and ambitions of the Han-dynasty era of Emperor Wu" (p. 293). Actually, the anachronism is even more flagrant: for the *Guanzi*'s historical counterpart, Duke Huan 桓公 (r. 685–643 B.C.), lived not during the Warring States but during the even earlier Spring and Autumn period.

contact historiography from a literary perspective” (p. 295). In this connection, she highlights—correctly—the importance of new archaeological discoveries. Drawing an implicit distinction between archaeology as a purveyor of new data and archaeology as an interpretive strategy, she asks: “Can material archaeology help one to rethink ‘critical’ archaeology?” (p. 300). Her answer is that it can: by historicizing Chinese literature “in ways that do not privilege an anachronistically restrictive notion either of China or of aesthetic practice,” and by encouraging the inclusion of unfamiliar texts (some of them recently excavated) and of visual materials alongside with the canonical classical writings.

In Chin’s words, “The Han-dynasty rise of the classicist as encoder of an enduring Chinese aesthetic ideology might thus be appreciated not only in terms of correlative thinking and the structures of imperial bureaucracy. . . , but also as an outcome of a battle between the economist and the classicist (or the money-counting globalist and the text-citing sinocentrist)” (p. 301). This is an important insight that will no doubt flow into future general treatments of Han intellectual and political history. As a more general point of method, Chin stresses the need to investigate “subjunctive perspectives [that] signify the unrealized, dead-end hypotheses with no immediate progeny that challenge teleological narratives of economic thought” (pp. 302–3). The point is not to “anticipate or allegorize modern China” (p. 306), but to try to imagine the lived reality of the participants in Han civilization. Chin’s novel approach to historiography shares such an agenda with modern archaeology, which similarly questions and supplements long-accepted narratives based on new and independently analysed bodies of data. *Savage Exchange* compellingly demonstrates that such rethinking—influenced perhaps in part by archaeological approaches—can also be applied to well-known transmitted texts.

Although she never states this explicitly, Chin’s exploration of paths not taken, and her effectively drawn contrasts of these half-forgotten byways with the trends that ended up being dominant, may leave the reader with a sense that Chinese history at some point during the Western Han dynasty took a wrong turn. The promising intellectual and economic foundations laid during the Warring States were abandoned; trends that might have led to what one may simplistically refer to as a scientific outlook, a free-market economy, and equality in society, were stifled. A tragic view of history thus pervades this book. But the author also implies that the regret over missed opportunities in the past may have a liberating effect in the present.

This book is obviously written for an insider audience possessing in-depth knowledge of Han socio-political and intellectual history. Information crucial to the understanding of the author’s arguments is often given either in passing or not at all. For instance, the reader is informed only near the end of the book (in an *obiter dictum*) that males and females had to pay the poll tax in coins—a requirement

that was very probably decisive in bringing about the relatively high degree of monetization of the economy of Early Imperial China;¹⁶ and the discussion of the Sino-Kharoṣṭhī coins never mentions their date. As is evident even from the passages cited throughout this review, the writing is sometimes rambling and inelegant; as a result the author's arguments, for all their intellectual brilliance, are not always optimally clear. Moreover, the book's Sinological core readership is bound to be irritated by a pervasive indiscipline with respect to the niceties of formatting: Chinese terms occurring in the text are given inconsistently (often only the characters are provided without transliteration); the parsing of binoms and polynoms is likewise inconsistent (especially in the bibliography); and translated passages are sometimes accompanied with the original Chinese text and sometimes not.¹⁷

But such technical flaws are more than made up for by the consistently high quality of thought and by the stimulating originality of Chin's interpretation of the Han world. One hopes that the author herself will produce a more accessible version of the book that can be assigned in university-level teaching; otherwise, there is a distinct chance that her important ideas will gain the currency they deserve mainly through citations in the works of less imaginative scholars.

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Moral Cultivation and Confucian Character: Engaging Joel J. Kupperman. Edited by Chenyang Li and Peimin Ni. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014. Pp. xii + 282. \$85.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

This is a very welcome volume. Joel Kupperman recognized the philosophical value of the Confucian tradition and made use of that tradition in formulating his own original ideas about ethical theory and practice during the extended recent period

¹⁶ “During the far more monetized Qin-Han period, when the universal poll tax on adult men and women required cash payments, *bi* became the common term for money” (p. 264); on this see Kakinuma, *Chūgoku kodai kahei keizai shi kenkyū*.

¹⁷ Non-trivial romanization mistakes are few. The name of Lu'an [*sic!*] 六安 county in Anhui is mistranscribed as “Liu An” (p. 247); “emperor Gu” (for 嚳) should read “emperor Ku” (pp. 268, 275); and the book perpetuates the ubiquitous mistranscription of 單于 (recte *chanyu*) as *shanyu*. “Laoshung shanyu” (p. 220) should read “Laoshang chanyu” 老上單于.