

with the CCP that one-party dictatorship is what China needs. By seeing indigenous mechanisms for change as “un-Chinese,” he unfortunately echoes the party line that freedom is a Western construct alien to Chinese soil. China’s past is contingent, so is its future.

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The Book of Swindles: Selections from a Late Ming Collection. By Zhang Yingyu. Translated by Christopher Rea and Bruce Rusk. Translations from the Asian Classics. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017. Pp. xxxvi + 226. \$75.00 hardcover, \$25.00 paperback.

In the highly commercialized society of the late Ming people increasingly were on the road. If more scholars and merchants were travelling around the empire, there were also more crooks around who were eager to cheat them out of their money and goods. In the rapidly developing publishing industry of the day where editors and publishers were competing to secure a niche of their own, one Zhang Yingyu 張應俞 (fl. 1612–1617) therefore thought there might be a market for accounts of swindles. Stories of how other travellers had been cheated out of their money should help readers recognize the signs and be warned (but the translators note that the book “serves equally well as a manual for perpetrating swindles” [p. xiv]). The collection appeared in the final years of the Wanli period (1573–1620) as *Dingke Jianghu lilan dupian xinshu* 鼎刻江湖歷覽杜騙新書 (A new book for foiling swindlers, based on worldly experience, printed in large characters). All we know about the book’s author Zhang Yingyu is that he hailed from Jianyang 建陽 in Fujian, a well-known centre of popular publishing at the time. The earliest known printing of the text also hails from Jianyang, and “over half of the stories with identifiable locales take place in Fujian” (p. xxi).

In their introduction the translators suggest that Zhang Yingyu may have aimed his collection especially at merchants by writing his stories in simple classical Chinese: “To understand most of the stories in the *Book of Swindles*, a Ming reader would have needed only literacy in simple literary Chinese and familiarity with basic social institutions, the type of knowledge one might expect of an educated merchant” (p. xxii). But the collection would not appear to have been a runaway bestseller. Perhaps merchants were not such avid readers of stories as Zhang Yingyu

assumed, perhaps they were experienced enough not to need them, or perhaps they were scared off by the more demanding style of the commentaries (p. xxii). But the lack of commercial success may also have been a matter of bad timing—the next decade witnessed the publication of the three large collections of vernacular stories put together by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646), which became the model for later story collections. While many of the collections of vernacular stories that appeared in the wake of the success of the collections put out by Feng and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580–1644) also had a thematic focus, their individual stories were far more developed than the bare-bone accounts provided by Zhang Yingyu. This format of the stories (short and in simple classical Chinese), however, may well have contributed to the favourable reception of the collection in Edo 江戸 Japan, where vernacular Chinese literature remained for long a specialized field of study. Whereas the collection was never reprinted in late imperial China, an edition with Japanese annotation appeared in 1770 in Kyoto to be followed by further editions in the nineteenth century. The well-known Edo-period author Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (1767–1848) was an aficionado of the collection and adapted at least five of its stories in his own writings. A Japanese translation appeared in as early as 1879 (p. xxx). Since the 1990s the collection is easily available in China again in reprints and in modern editions.

The original collection contains eighty-four items (some of which contain more than one story), each followed by a commentary, and is divided into twenty-four thematic categories. The translators have selected about half of these texts, including at least one example from each of the twenty-four categories, and for each translated story they have also translated the attached commentary. Most of the selected stories are indeed quite short, running only to a few pages in translation, including the commentary and the notes. “Our sample aims,” the translators write on p. xxxi, “to illustrate the variety of Zhang’s collection; to highlight recurring themes such as silver, imposture, and Zhang Yingyu’s moral touchstone of the *Book of Changes*, and to include some notable outliers in terms of content or style.” The 1617 preface is translated in Appendix 1, while a full list of the titles in the Chinese collection is provided in Appendix 2. The translations are competently done and read very well; as such they call for little comment. In view of their quality my only regret is that the translators have not provided a complete translation of the collection. That might well have resulted in some repetitive tales, but with the ample use of white in the layout of this volume, a full translation would still have resulted in a book of limited size.

The translations are preceded by a “Translators’ Introduction” that offers an outline of late Ming society as relevant to the following stories, which is preceded by brief accounts of “the author and his voice” (pp. xx–xxii) and of the “swindle story” in international perspective (p. xviii). As the earliest example in English of

the swindle story the translators mention Richard King's *The New Cheats of London Exposed* of circa 1792, and for works that are closer in time to Zhang Yingyu's world, they refer to the Spanish picaresque novels of the early seventeenth century. Perhaps they might also have referred their readers to the rich literature from the second part of the sixteenth century from England on beggars and vagrants, rogues, cons, and cheats collected by Gāmini Salgādo in his *Cony-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets: An Anthology of Elizabethan Low Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972).

In short, *The Book of Swindles* is a very welcome addition to the body of available translations of Ming stories and should appeal to teachers of late imperial history and literature. Teachers of comparative literature also may find this collection useful. All of us who are interested in the cunning of crooks and the gullibility of their victims will find this fascinating reading.

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Sold People: Traffickers and Family Life in North China. By Johanna S. Ransmeier. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2017. Pp. ix + 395. \$49.95/£35.95.

中國人輕易賣掉自己子女這一現象，自十六、十七世紀歐洲傳教士到中國以來，一直為西方人所注目。二十世紀初法律上禁止買賣人口，但其後誘拐案件不但未有減少反而越發增加，引起國內外人士的關心。買賣人口盛行到底起因於怎樣的社會環境？Johanna Ransmeier (任思梅) 的著作《被賣的人們：華北的人口販子和家庭生活》使用大量的第一手史料(北京市檔案館所藏北京市警察檔案、中國第二歷史檔案館所藏大理院檔案、中國第一歷史檔案館所藏順天府檔案等)，詳細描繪出從晚清到民國時期華北人口販子和被賣者之間的複雜關係。

著者使用的「買賣人口」(trafficking)一詞指涉範圍頗廣，不僅指使用暴力、欺騙手段的職業性拐賣行為，還包括直接或間接參與買賣人口而獲利的多種行為，比如為買賣婚姻做媒、把佣人介紹給新主人等。著者採用寬泛的「買賣人口」概念，理由是違法的買賣人口和合法的行為(比如以財物為代價的婚姻等)本來就無法截然分開。買賣人口有時是社會互助的一個部分，在道德上被視為可以容認的行為，儘管在法律上可能是犯罪。擴大 trafficking 的定義有兩層意義，其一幫助我們了解人口買賣盛行的整個社會背景(context)，其二使我們可以在買賣人口的敘述中探求被賣