Maxwell, together with Wu Lien-teh 伍連德, sent to a government that was desperate to be seen as a modern one, remained unheard.

The final chapter five is on leprosy in the PRC. Leung emphasizes regional and local variability in a narrative that otherwise shares many known features about the Great Leap Forward, during which leper villages were instituted with new fervor; the Cultural Revolution, on which there are reports like the one from an Anhui hospital, where apparently 200 patients had turned into "revolutionaries" and expelled all medical personnel, termed "capitalists"; the Economic Reform period, which resulted in abandonment of integrated Chinese and Western medical treatment for lepers, and in the full embrace of multidrug therapies, which are credited for having brought about the almost entire elimination of leprosy throughout most regions of the PRC; and the current era, where the disease's return is portrayed as an uncertain possibility.

Angela Leung writes in factual prose for a general audience and for the social historian. She draws on an impressively wide spectrum of genres, ranging from early legal and medical manuscript texts to late Imperial novels and plays. She explores how *li/lai* relate to *chong* 蟲 (worms) and *gu* 蠱 poison in the Tang and Song, on the one hand, and sieves through administrative records of the PRC, on the other. Admittedly, the specialist may note omissions of certain authors and debates, particularly those pertaining to politics and science, or may regret that the text does not have Chinese characters and that the glossary is not meant to be comprehensive. The medical historian and anthropologist may also find that she does not critically engage with the peculiar biology of this latent disease with its typically delayed onset, and of related conditions, which gave rise to such fanciful imagination and stigma. And yet it would appear that the biology engendering the social drama she reports on implicitly organizes much of her historical narrative. This aside, the reader will relish the subtlety of her scholarship as she recounts innumerous stories surrounding the diseased, and perceptively embeds them in China's changing social landscapes over a period of two thousand years.

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The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China. By Joanna Handlin Smith. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009. Pp. xiii + 405. $34.95.

Joanna Handlin Smith has written an interesting and provocative book about an interesting and difficult topic, the practice of charity in the late Ming. Focusing on a small group of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century scholar-officials—Yang Dongming 楊東明, Gao Panlong 高攀龍, Chen Longzheng 陳龍正, Lu Shiyi 陸世儀, and especially Qi Biaojia 祁彪佳—she draws on a variety of exceptionally detailed sources to describe and

explain the emergence in this period of "benevolent societies" that these men formed and managed as voluntary charities. Smith begins her study with a discussion of late Ming societies for liberating animals, that differed from their Tang and Song predecessors in their small size, the frequency of their meetings, and their view of animals as analogous to the weaker members of the human community. Not surprisingly, these societies spurred interest among some literati in aiding weak and impoverished humans. In 1590 the ex-official Yang Dongming, dissatisfied with the self-absorbed literati societies he had encountered upon retirement to his native county in Henan 河南, set up a benevolent society there consisting of men, essentially degree-holding gentry, who wished to donate their money and time to aid the local poor and weak.

This concept and model of a "benevolent society" were soon transferred to the lower Yangzi delta, where in the last three or four decades of the Ming it acquired support from other gentry, urban as well as rural. The high-minded Donglin 東林 leader Gao Panlong set up his benevolent society in Wuxi 無錫 county to provide both material and moral aid to the needy. As he also wished to reform local society and its decadent customs from the bottom up, he insisted on linking the material aid to public lectures on moral enlightenment and the performance of countless acts of self-sacrifice by committed individuals. Gao's moral passion stimulated Chen Longzheng, who despite his commoner status succeeded in winning local government support for his setting up and running a separate benevolent society in his native city of Jiashan 嘉善. Chen's writings, both the prescriptive and the descriptive, are far more informative than Gao's on the actual administration of poor relief—e.g., one-third of the funds was for coffins and two-thirds for food—during the series of deadly famines that struck the Yangzi delta during the last decade of Ming rule. His inadequate funds forced him and other leaders of the association to focus on those most worthy and needy. They thus investigated the actual living conditions of potential recipients and distinguished the worthy from the unworthy poor on the basis of a household's reputation for moral or immoral behaviour.

Although recourse to such discrimination could have easily blinded Chen to the depth of poverty in his midst, he in practice proved inconsistent in the application of such a distinction. His widening understanding of the extent of people's starvation in these subsistence crises intensified his anger over the injustice of poverty. As a result, he not only sought further funds by opening his society's membership to rich merchants and other wealthy men. He also sought to widen the original focus of his aid beyond widows and orphans to encompass a socially far larger and more varied group of the hungry and needy. He learned the need for this expanded vision not from books but from his experiences in administering aid during a succession of poor harvests that struck Jiashan between 1636 and 1644, the very time when the Ming dynasty was struggling for its own survival from incursions by Manchus along its northern border. Chen soon found himself managing soup kitchens that offered rice gruel to a seemingly endless stream of famished peasants and townsmen, who initially had not played an important part in the moral vision of Gao as well as his own.

In her often fascinating account of these efforts Smith is capable of showing how Chen Longzheng morally grew—that is, how his scope of compassion widened—during this extended late Ming crisis. His moral idealism was not reduced but fired by his encounter with others' misfortune. By the end of his reflections on famine aid, Chen demonstrated a far greater awareness than his hero Gao of his need to shape the message of his moral exhortations to the actual living circumstances of the different economic strata in his locality.

Further insight into how food relief was administered to the needy comes from a study of the diary of Lu Shiyi, a marginal figure in the gentry society of nearby Taicang 太倉. Lu's diary recounts his activities in forming a benevolent society with several friends and in then being consigned by the local prefect to performing mainly paper work for the town's relief programme during the severe famine in 1641. Pushed to the sidelines, Lu Shiyi nonetheless recorded in his dairy information on six persons whom he recommended to the society as qualified for its charity. Relatives or friends of his, these men were probably not representative of the great number of this society's local beneficiaries. But their inclusion among the recipients of its charity suggests how extensive and devastating these famines were for the delta's residents. It was not just the poor who suffered from these famines, and Lu's account of the society's dispensation of aid shows that it had come to play a vital, if still far from comprehensive, role in the lives of many ordinary families in the delta. It was hard to deny that its services were desperately needed by a sizeable portion of the county's residents.

In the last third of the book Smith concentrates on the moral and administrative dilemmas faced by the retired scholar-official Qi Biaojia in leading relief efforts in his native prefecture of Shaoxing 紹興. Best known to modern scholars for his book collection and his gardens, Qi kept a diary that Smith mines to great effect to draw a compelling account of both this prefecture's response to a series of crises and Qi's personal growth as an active moral agent increasingly committed to rescuing the people in need around him. Prompted to lead the local relief efforts by the death of his mother in 1640, Qi oversaw the activities of a host of volunteers in thirty-nine urban wards and in soup kitchens erected in the surrounding rural districts. Five years earlier he had also overseen the establishment of a medical infirmary for locals in need of medical support, involving local doctors and local government representatives in its management. Aided by the existence of what Smith calls "a shared rhetoric" about the importance of doing good, about the just distribution of resources, and about the urgency of saving lives, Qi dedicated the final years of his life to the administration of these benevolent associations whose significance as a moral activity he esteemed as equal to that of their material support. Smith in fact argues that Qi's moral vision was shaped as much by the reward-merits message of contemporary morality books (*shanshu* 善書) as by the teachings of the great neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming 王陽明, himself a native of Shaoxing. By contrast, Buddhist practices and the newly introduced tenets of Catholicism had relatively little impact on Qi's degree of commitment.

Smith's exposition of these men's proposals and actions shows her command of the art of historical exposition. Weaving together a great amount of information, she tells a complex story with force and clarity. She deftly portrays the social background of these men, their public careers, and their social position, making sure that each of them becomes a distinct personality with his own voice and ideas. Her handling of the political jockeying by men as different as Lu Shiyi and Qi Biaojia in negotiating and implementing a local consensus on their benevolent societies is masterful. The rich detail rarely slows the pace. In the end, we are given not a string of broad generalizations but a series of concrete dilemmas and decisions that represent difficult choices between practices with potentially different moral commitments. Since she succeeds in demonstrating how each of these men acquired such moral complexity out of their struggles for their benevolent society, her account of their negotiations with other members of the local élite and with representatives of the local government has, I believe, few if any equals in the scholarly studies of the actual workings of local politics in late imperial China.

This is not to say that her findings will hold for other parts of China in the late Ming, and in fact it is the context in which she places these men and their moral dilemmas that I have some questions about. Smith is very careful not to make too broad claims for the validity of her analysis for other parts of the empire, even describing the relative cohesion of Shaoxing's élite as exceptional (compared, for example, to that of Suzhou 蘇州). Yet, the underlying assumption of much of her analysis is that one can look through neo-Confucian lenses and understand the social dynamics of late Ming China. Thus, on the question of charity, we learn of alternative religious sects' teachings on such aid, but far less about their experience in both providing aid to their members (and even all of their community) and receiving charity from their members. She perceptively links the origins of Yang Dongming's benevolent association to the humble "common associations" (*suhui* 俗會) but in my view unfortunately does not build on this insight to see how important non-Confucian organizations were to the practice of charity up to the late Ming.

Buddhism is mentioned, and she rightly notes its institutional weakness in the sixteenth century, but does not point out that the retreat of Buddhist temples from the practice of charitable work was in large part the consequence of repeated government and neo-Confucian-inspired attacks on their wealth and autonomy, especially in the first two centuries of Ming rule. In other words, Chinese, if not their neo-Confucians, have had a richer tradition of charity than one might surmise from this account. Buddhist monasteries, themselves the recipients of much charity from lay devotees, in earlier times provided interest-free loans, education, and public granaries. Indeed, much of the institutional innovation attributed to committed neo-Confucian thinkers of the Song and later dynasties was learned, if not blatantly copied (usually without attribution), from Buddhist practices developed in the first millennium of the empire—the private academy (the monastery), the community pact (the rules for the sangha community), the charitable landed trust (the Inexhaustible Treasury of a temple's endowment), and, dare I say, the charitable association that is known to have functioned in Dunhuang as religious groups (*yishe* 邑社).

In his recent study of how Song dynasty Confucian scholars viewed and sometimes admired Buddhist institutions, Mark Halperin has shown how under Buddhist influence "charity became an essential feature of humanity and a virtue expected of Sung [dynasty] subjects." The devout donors included the humble as well as the rich, and neo-Confucians like Li Gou 李覯 had to admit "how a Buddhist presence could aid a community."[1] When seen from this broader perspective of the long history of religious organizations' reception and dispersal of donations, then the late Ming benevolent societies introduced in this book acquire a significance slightly different from that attributed to them here, and not just because in a lower Yangzi delta population of several million, their small membership and funds would have restricted their practical impact to a distinct minority of the local population (Chen acknowledges that his relatively large association served only ten per cent of those in need).

When these associations are put in a non-Confucian historical perspective, the pertinent question surely becomes not simply why did these neo-Confucian scholars take up this type of society, but also why were they so late in taking it up together even on such a limited scale. In her brief discussion of the vulgar roots of the neo-Confucian "benevolent society" Smith does reach an interesting conclusion that suggests she is thinking along such lines: "What was new to the late Ming, then, was neither the concept of a voluntary association nor communal methods of managing risk, but that Yang, a member of the gentry, should have appropriated something he explicitly identified with the common people and resituated it in his own, elite milieu" (pp. 49–50). With her concentration on the neo-Confucian practice of charity, however, Smith prefers to purse the former question about the distinctiveness of late Ming charity as practised by these men.

Her answer, as I read it, is two-fold. Firstly, she argues that an expansion in the ranks of examination candidates produced a large number of literate men at the margins of élite local society, whose charitable actions were enabled by a shared Confucian rhetoric and a shared moral understanding. Shaoxing could muster considerable support for this type of social organization, since it had a high concentration of officials, wealth, and residents with administrative experience, and above all a concentration of literate men. This point is certainly valid, but it fails to note that many of these literate men—estimated to be half or more than half of their Shaoxing cohort—had in the late Ming emigrated and found a job elsewhere, most notably as clerks in government offices in Beijing.[2] According to James Cole, Shaoxing men held positions as sub-officials elsewhere during the late Ming, principally as county jail wardens, the position for which they soon

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1 Mark Halperin, *Out of the Cloister: Literati Perspectives on Buddhism in Sung China, 960–1279* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), pp. 177–78.

2 Wang Shixing 王士性, *Wang Shixing dili shu san zhong* 王士性地理書三種 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1993), *Guangzhi yi* 廣志繹, pp. 323, 327.

acquired a notorious reputation during the Qing.[3] In other words, literacy prepared Shaoxing men for more than doing good, and doing good and even administering good were surely not the preserve of literate men.

More persuasive is a second factor and its broader implications, though it still neglects the similar role of religious activities in the late Ming: "the growing salience, outside the lineage, of a social connectivity running vertically between the high and the lower reaches of local society" (p. 280). She explicitly denies any formal conception of social hierarchy (including, I presume, patron-client relations) to this connectivity and focuses on a considerable expansion of active relationships (as in benevolent associations) between different social strata. These late Ming signs of a "public mindedness," however, did not signal the birth of civil society in China. Smith observes that this increased social activity between different sectors of society coincided with a strengthening of vertical ties between local society and the imperial bureaucracy, that facilitated initiatives from below and official interventions from above. In place then of the "dynastic cycle paradigm" that she claims other historians have resorted to for describing a purported collapse of local society in the late Ming, she identifies an active local officialdom collaborating successfully with members of the local élite in Shaoxing to save the lives of nearly 50,000 persons threatened with starvation.

This point is interesting, and though the ability of the Shaoxing élite to coalesce was also shaped, I suspect, by long-standing marriage alliances and other ties between different strata of its local élite, it is the ability of men there to cross previous social and geographical boundaries within their prefecture and to forge closer, if impermanent, ties on behalf of their wider community that makes this book and its story important for the student of seventeenth century China. It lays out for us a range of alternative futures that mid-seventeenth century Shaoxing and many other parts of south China faced and could have built on. In a provocative concluding page that I wish had been longer, she writes how during the Qing dynasty the gentry's role in local charity retreated in the face of greater merchant and state involvement. Even so, her account of the Shaoxing élite's ability in the fading years of the Ming to organize and invigorate local charity for the aid of local people remains a welcome and instructive reminder of the resilience of some local élites in traditional China to hold together the world they lived in and were deeply attached to.

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[3] James H. Cole, *Shaohsing: Competition and Cooperation in Nineteenth-Century China* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1986), pp. 102–3, 200–201, n. 4.