worth of both Dionysian or Apollonian activities (no easy task), one that would have us accept our human limitations even as we work to hone our distinctly human capacities to cooperate in more perfect unions. Ames asks us, finally, to rethink our current identities rooted in short-term, competitive interests, if only because first, the concept of well-defined "special interests" has not been around very long, only since the eighteenth century in Europe, and second, so far that concept has had fairly disastrous consequences on our senses of ourselves as deliberative social beings.[24] I have a friend who says "Some ideas are too bad to die." As a confirmed optimist, I prefer to place my bets on people like Roger Ames.

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Ancestral Leaves: A Family Journey through Chinese History. By Joseph W. Esherick. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011. Pp. xvi + 374. $60.00 cloth, $24.95 paper.

Ancestral Leaves takes its readers on a journey covering half a millennium of Chinese history through the experiences of a single family lineage—the decedents of Yuan dynasty literati Ye Sheng'er 葉盛二. While the book focuses primarily on the twentieth century it also provides a lively and engaging narration of the clan in imperial China through its experiences of major dynastic transitions, the Taiping 太平 and Nian 捻 rebellions, and natural disasters such as floods and famines. In its discussion of the clan's experiences of the tumultuous twentieth century readers are taken through the collapse of the Qing, the rise of the republic, the chaos of war,

[24] Mark Lilla, "The President and the Passions," *New York Times,* 19 December 2010, p. MM13, citing Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests* (1977), on leading figures of the Enlightenment—Montesquieu and David Hume, among them—who began exploring the idea of "interests" as a way to bring the person's rational faculties and passions into balance. Such thinkers believed that the drives, which they considered more essential to our nature than reason, might be channelled in less violent and more productive directions, if a third psychological force (the universal desire to improve one's own condition) were allowed to operate freely. The terms "sedimentation" and "cultural-psychological formation" appear in Li Zehou's *Huaxia meixue* 華夏美學 (The Chinese aesthetic tradition), but they are common parlance outside of the China field as well.

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and the political upheavals that followed the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The book is remarkable on a number of counts. Single person biographies are dominated by attention to prominent individuals and are frequently premised on explaining that individual's outstanding success or notoriety by contextualizing their experiences as deviations from the norm—remarkable individuals emerge as having been propelled variously by unusual good fortune, remarkable skill and talent, or even their unrestrained capacity for ruthlessness and brutality. While family histories take a broader approach than individual biographies the tendency to explain "greatness" or to understand "the exceptional" remains in both genres. This tendency leaves large holes in our knowledge of human history since the ordinary and mundane are ignored—yet, as this book shows, social change or stasis requires the participation of a full spectrum of society. Esherick provides us with a model of how to use the personal and the ordinary to elucidate broader social and political changes in Chinese history. In *Ancestral Leaves* the individual stories narrated become examples that enrich our knowledge of major trends rather than examples of exceptions that have in some way or another "overcome" these trends.

While the Ye lineage is far from humble, neither is it entirely exceptional—Esherick describes them as "an elite family of a middling sort" (p. xi). The Ye lineage had members who achieved élite status in the late Qing, others who succeed in the Republic and another generation rose to prominence in the People's Republic. But, the clan's numbers were large enough that readers also see the lives of those that only achieved the status of low-level functionaries or bureaucrats, or those that became playboy degenerates. *Ancestral Leaves* foregrounds China's remarkable transformations—particularly those of the last 150 years—and the Ye lineage members provide the avenue through which we can appreciate the personal within that very public and national level transformation.

The book provides us with details about how the major trends sweeping China were understood, managed, manipulated, and created through individuals. In this regard, it will be a very useful teaching text for the undergraduate classroom where the concrete and highly personal examples enliven the learning experience for students. All the key issues in modern China's history are explored in the volume: the declining power of the patriarchal family, rising patriotism and nationalist consciousness, expanding global consciousness, increasing participation of ordinary folk in big political movements affecting China. Within these large trends readers learn about the transformations in education, legal and business systems, the changing reaction by governments to environmental and political chaos, and the mechanisms by which individuals survive the vagaries of the communist political campaigns or forge careers in a highly competitive imperial examination system. Esherick has

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revealed the ways that very personal choices or desires (for example, romantic love) affect an individual's experience of large national or social issues.

But most importantly, the personal experiences narrated in *Ancestral Leaves* frequently deviate from the stereotyped norms commonly circulating in popular consciousness. The book reveals the capricious nature of human life through the unexpected results emerging from decisions that are made without knowledge of the grand narratives that will be written about their time in subsequent decades. For example, the fierce nationalism that inspired Ye Duzhuang 葉篤莊 to join up with troops at the frontlines in the War of Resistance against Japan could not overcome his inability to cope with life at the front lines of fighting. Duzhuang simply could not withstand the hardship of life at the front even though he was a translator and not involved directly in the fighting. His patriotic enthusiasm could not overcome this soft student's physical weaknesses. Equally, Duzhuang's Japanese language skills were developed in Japan on a Japanese government scholarship funded by the Boxer indemnity. He, along with thousands of other Chinese, went to Japan to study despite these years being marked by intense resentment among Chinese about Japanese aggression in north China. Esherick tells us that some 6,500 Chinese were studying in Japan in 1935 alone. Ye Duzhuang's experiences tell us of the complex interconnectedness of the two nations at a people-to-people level and help us to deepen our appreciation of the rich texture of individual lives—noble, resolute resistance to the unrelentingly evil enemy was not the reality of life in 1930s China. In *Ancestral Leaves* we come closer to understanding the reality of life at the time.

Similarly, the book provides us with a more subtle insight into life after 1949 than has been frequently depicted in the popular "misery memoirs" about life in communist China. *Ancestral Leaves* does not shy away from the bizarre decisions that lead to the death or suffering of millions of citizens but it also explains how individuals survived and how others became complicit in the system. For example, Communist Party member Fang Shi 方實 (Ye Ducheng) wrote a false confession in 1943 admitting that he had betrayed the party in 1935 simply in order to be able to return to work and make weekly visits to his disabled wife. The extraction of false confessions and exaggerated self-criticisms demanded within the Communist Party's internal discipline structure that Fang experienced in this early rectification campaign would continue to be part of the Ye family's experience after 1949. Families have to be fed and careers have to be sustained—so individuals make strategic choices that compound the nonsensical, brutal political and social system. But, instead of reading tales of victimhood in which the perpetrators remain faceless incarnations of evil, Esherick reveals the everyday nature of the repressive systems established in these early decades of communist rule. Despite his own experience in 1943, Fang Shi became an active persecutor of his colleagues during the Anti-Rightists Campaign

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from his position in the New China News Agency. He identified 7 percent of his colleagues as Rightists—exceeding the desired official target of 5 percent—and "was proud of this achievement, convinced that he was doing his job well, obeying the party and supporting the socialist revolution" (p. 263). His persecution of his colleagues was not simply carried out because of fear or sullen conformity with "orders from the top," rather they were actively and enthusiastically undertaken. The consequences of this enthusiastic application of Party policy resulted in the heroic, young war reporter Dai Huang spending one-and-a-half decades in work camps for "education through labor." Ordinary people were enthusiastic perpetrators of harm against friends, neighbours, and colleagues. *Ancestral Leaves* gives personal faces to individuals on both sides of these political upheavals.

The transformation in the life experiences and opportunities available for the Ye clan's women is, as one would expect, dramatic. But, the speed of the change in gender norms that occurred in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s is given new force in Esherick's descriptions of Ye Chongzhi's daughters—women of the same nominal generation but with vastly different experiences between the eldest and youngest as the impact of the New Culture Movement penetrated even the most closed of élite households. The elder daughters of this generation (those born at the start of the twentieth century) entered arranged marriages and received little or no formal education—their role was to cement ties that would be useful to their natal family. But within a few years, the youngest daughter (born in 1921) would choose her own husband and attend school and ultimately become a teacher. Likewise the younger brothers selected their own partners and did not take concubines—eschewing a centuries-long practice for élite men. The authority of parents over their children's lives diminished over the same period. With Ye Chongzhi's mother's death and ultimately his own, the Ye family's internal operations transformed such that they would have been unrecognizable to the clan's previous generations. Hierarchies of age, birth order, and sex carried far less significance in family interactions by the end of the 1930s than they had any time in the previous centuries.

The book draws on an impressive and diverse range of materials including poetry, clan genealogies, personal interviews, memoirs, letters, memorials, diaries, and official reports. Access to many of the personal papers was provided by the Ye family themselves. Esherick's wife, Ye Wa, is daughter of Ye Duzhuang—Ye Wa also conducted many of the interviews with family members. Ample black and white illustrations, maps, glossaries, timelines, and cartoons provide readers with visual clues to the Ye clan's life. For readers who are not familiar with the details of the historical events of each period, Esherick provides concise and informative descriptions that will ensure the book is meaningful to a wide reading audience.

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In sum, *Ancestral Leaves* presents us with a faithful depiction of the Ye clan's experience of Chinese history. Individuals appear unembellished, at times vulnerable and equivocating and at other times as noble, dedicated individuals struggling to preserve their family or party's status. The pages also reveal how pragmatic strategists can promote personal or clan interests across a wide range of social and political circumstances. All in all, *Ancestral Leaves* is a great read and it will appeal to specialists and non-specialists alike.

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Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy. Edited by John Makeham. Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2010. Pp. xliii + 488. €169.95/$229.00.

An ideal road companion can be counted on to offer accurate information, well considered guidance, useful pointers, a helping hand over rough spots as well as lively conversation fostering a sense of discovery and stimulating further intellectual journeys. It follows that the *Dao Companion* under review is both something more and something less than an introductory survey. It is also a group effort, a collaborate undertaking beginning with an introduction defining and marking out of the terrain by John Makeham, its distinguished editor. This is followed by nineteen chronologically arranged essays starting in the eleventh century with Tze-ki Hon on Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 and concluding in the eighteenth century with Justin Tiwald on Dai Zhen 戴震. Each essay is authored by a sure-footed scholar who knows the terrain having studied his or her subject in depth. All are excellent company for their segment of the journey.

As announced by its title and stressed by Makeham, this is a companion to Neo-Confucian *philosophy* (not to the more broadly conceived "Neo-Confucianism in History" most recently discussed by Peter Bol[1]) with Neo-Confucianism defined as "a category employed to describe a set of 'family resemblances' discerned across clusters of philosophical ideas, technical terms, arguments, and writings . . . in other words, concepts, ideas, and discourse rather than schools" (p. xii). The essays themselves vary in approach. To be sure this is primarily a "philosophical" companion to a phil-

[1] Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008).

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