

The Way of the Barbarians: Redrawing Ethnic Boundaries in Tang and Song China. By Shao-yun Yang. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2019. Pp. xii + 229. \$95.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.

With this deeply researched and carefully argued book, Shao-yun Yang (Denison University) adds to the recent body of work in English that addresses the evolution in Chinese ethnic or cultural identity across the Tang and Song dynasties. This is hardly a simple issue. How to define ethnicity, the concept that lies at the heart of this discourse, is complex and open to its own debate, as is exemplified in work on later periods by scholars such as Frank Dikötter and Prasenjit Duara,¹ but also in the extensive work on the topic by scholars addressing the history of ethnicity in Europe and the Americas. Yang, however, focuses on “culture” as the defining variable, although he forthrightly acknowledges there is no precise term in the classical discourse that captures the meaning of the English word (pp. 11–15). Equally problematic is the meaning of “barbarian,” an English term derived from Greek that may initially have been a morally neutral reference to those outside the Greek cultural *ecumene* but that over time gained powerful moral connotations. Yang is aware of the problems that lie behind the word but defends it as an appropriate translation of classical terms that revolve around the word *yi* 夷 (pp. 8–9).

Yang positions his book as a challenge to two “grand narratives” of Chinese history. The first is the postulate of a “ninth-century shift from a spirit of ‘cosmopolitanism’ . . . to one of ‘xenophobia’” (p. 3), which rests on the oft-presumed post-An Lushan 安祿山 reaction against an ill-defined foreign, the *wai* 外 versus the *nei* 內. The second is “an eleventh-century or twelfth-century shift from a traditional notion of ‘culturalism’ or ‘cultural universalism’ to a new ethnic ‘nationalism’” that derived from a growing awareness of rival empires with the rise of the Khitan Liao in the tenth century (p. 3). Yang argues instead that the key features were “the rise of a new, exclusively ‘Confucian’ or Classicist (*Ru* 儒) conception of ideological and intellectual orthodoxy” expressed through the *guwen* 古文 movement and reinforced by the appeal in the eleventh and twelfth centuries of *Daoxue* 道學 (p. 4, italics and Chinese added).

In place of “culturalism” or “nationalism,” Yang argues for two new concepts: “ethnicized orthodoxy,” which he defines as “an ideology-centered interpretation of Chineseness,” and “ethnocentric moralism,” defined as “a morality-centered interpretation of the same” (pp. 4–5). The former he traces to Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824),

¹ Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015); and Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

who, Yang argues, was “primarily concerned with . . . the boundary between orthodox Classicism . . . and all alternative philosophies or value systems.” Han, he continues, “*ethnicized* what he believed to be the boundaries of Classicist orthodoxy by claiming their maintenance to be integral to Chinese ethnocultural identity” (p. 15, original italics). By extension, Yang suggests, Han believed “there was fundamentally no such thing as a Chinese Buddhist or even a Chinese Daoist; Classicist (Ru) identity and Chinese identity were one and the same thing” (p. 16). Ethnocentric moralism, which displaced ethnicized orthodoxy as Tang transitioned into Song, “conflated Chineseness with certain moral values (especially ‘ritual propriety and moral duty’) and represented deviation from these values as a descent into barbarism” (p. 21). The difference between the two, Yang explains:

. . . tended to be one of emphasis and rhetorical intent: ethnicized orthodoxy was used as a rhetorical weapon against the kind of ideological pluralism that saw Classicism, Buddhism, and Daoism as compatible and complementary, whereas ethnocentric moralism was used to condemn immoral behavior, usually without reference to the offending party’s ideological affiliations. (pp. 21–22)

Yang builds his argument across six chapters, moving from Han Yu’s devotion to Classicist absolutism to the total exclusion of any other world view (Chapter 1) and his argument with Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819) over the moral value of Buddhism and whether there was any merit to the concept of Chinese Buddhism (Chapter 2), to a deeply informed discussion of two late Tang essays, “Chinese at Heart” (*Hua xin* 華心) by Chen An 陳安 (c. 805–871) and “A Call to Arms against the Inner Barbarian” (*Neiyi xi* 內夷檄) by Cheng Yan 程晏 (fl. 895–904) (Chapter 3). Following this, Yang turns to the disagreements between “*Guwen* radicals,” including Liu Kai 柳開 (947–1000), Shi Jie 石介 (1005–1045), and Sun Fu 孫復 (992–1057), who fully embraced Han Yu’s absolutism, and more moderate voices, especially Ouyang Xiu 歐陽脩 (1007–1072), who were more accommodating to Buddhist and Daoist moral values (Chapter 4); and tenth and eleventh century debates over the meaning of “barbarian” in the *Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), particularly whether individuals or even cultures from outside the empire could become civilized and conversely whether persons born within the realm of civilization could be “barbarianized” (Chapter 5). He concludes his narrative analysis with the early *Daoxue* debates over the meaning of *bu ru* 不如 in *Analects* 3:5 and the relationship between Chineseness and barbarization (Chapter 6).

This is a highly abbreviated, perhaps even unfair, summary of Yang’s very complex, deeply researched, and powerfully argued thesis. However, Yang summarizes his point in the opening of his conclusion:

This book began by analyzing the ninth-century origins of two new interpretations of Chinese identity and its presumed opposite, barbarism: “ethnicized orthodoxy” and “ethnocentric moralism.” These discourses arose in specific rhetorical or polemical contexts previously obscured by historians’ tendency to classify some Tang discourses as “cosmopolitan” or “universalistic” and others as “xenophobic.” Ethnicized orthodoxy (often mischaracterized as xenophobia or proto-nationalism) reached a peak in the Northern Song Guwen revival and then faded away as the more radical side of that revival lost influence, whereas ethnocentric moralism (often mischaracterized as “culturalism”) gained strength during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, in part due to its use by the emerging Daoxue philosophical tradition. (p. 141)

What exactly does Yang mean by this, and how does it fit within the recent body of work in English that addresses the evolution in Chinese ethno-cultural identity across the Tang and Song dynasties? Yang is arguing that historians have long misunderstood what drove the Chinese discourse on the relationship between the core, the region embraced by the term *zhongguo* 中國, which Yang translates as “Central Lands,” and those regions that lay outside. He specifically places his argument against a range of modern historians, both Chinese and Western, notably including John King Fairbank and Joseph Levenson whose work on the late imperial period has influenced so many scholars and who, Yang argues, have miscast how historians have understood the relationship between “Chineseness” and barbarism since. I will focus, however, on how Yang’s argument complements and contrasts two recent books: Marc S. Abramson’s *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*,² and *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order* by Nicholas Tackett.³ Both are cited in Yang’s bibliography, though neither features prominently in his text. I think both give his argument relevant context.

Taken together, these three books present analyses of Chinese identity across the Tang and Song dynasties when none would deny China was experiencing a profound change in its relationship to the outside world. However, the three authors see the topic through distinct lenses. Abramson focuses on how ethnicity itself was understood in the Tang. As he writes, “The Tang . . . was perhaps *the* crucial period in the formation of an ethnically Han (as opposed to a culturally Chinese) identity” (p. xi, original italics). Like Yang, Abramson seeks to define what it meant to be Chinese (he uses “Han” whereas Yang uses “Chinese”) in contrast to non-Chinese. However, in contrast to Yang, whose focus is almost entirely on the portrayal of the non-Chinese by Chinese scholars, he grants the non-Chinese their own legitimacy and

² Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

³ Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

perspective. Abramson's Tang world was multi-ethnic with multiple players acting on a level playing field. If Yang's Tang was also multi-ethnic, there was a hierarchy between the Chinese and non-Chinese that placed the latter in an inferior position.

Although Tackett, like Yang, ranges extensively across time, drawing not just on the literature of the Song but delving deep into the classical corpus, his focus is on how the Song defined itself in a multi-state world. If Yang challenges the idea of "nationalism" even in such a multi-state world, this is Tackett's very thesis. Confronted as it was by rival empires whose rulers called themselves *di* 帝, or "emperor," and refused to acknowledge a hierarchical relationship between themselves and the Song emperor, the Song ruling order, Tackett asserts, had to find a new vision of itself: "During the Tang, imperial authority was thought to be universal, extending to the frontier tribal zone and beyond. By the Song times, political universalism of this sort no longer seemed tenable" (p. 6). This led, in turn, to a new understanding of the term *zhongguo*, as the "civilized center" that stood in contrast to what lay beyond: "[I]t was culture rather than ethnicity that defined the proper boundaries of the polity" (p. 6).

There are other works that could be included here: Naomi Standen's *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossing in Liao China*,⁴ my own *The Sinitic Encounter in Southeast China through the First Millennium CE*,⁵ as well as a wealth of work by historians in China and Japan, especially that by Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光 on the meaning of *zhongguo*, but I suggest these three books are in a special discourse with each other. Abramson's focus on ethnicity and Tackett's on the conceptualization of the empire in a multi-state world provide a balance to Yang's focus on the perception of the non-Chinese barbarian held by the Chinese scholarly elite from the latter half of the Tang through the twelfth century. Abramson reminds us that the Tang truly was a multi-ethnic world, whatever its scholar-elite may have thought of it, and Tackett that the Song existed in a multi-state world that challenged inherited conceptualizations of the empire. Yang's focus is internal: what the scholars of the empire thought of those who lay beyond its boundaries, essentially without reference to how they behaved when they encountered barbarians in person, nor how they regarded the challenge to the imperial mandate represented by self-asserted coequal rulers on the empire's frontiers.

Each author, thus, has approached a common topic through a particular lens. Each lens provides a valid and important perspective. Taken together, they remind us that one interpretation or one approach in isolation, no matter how well informed, is not a complete picture. But they also provide new perspectives through which to understand the stresses and intellectual adjustments that Chinese culture underwent

⁴ Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007.

⁵ Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016.

against the profound challenges of the Tang and Song dynasties. Shao-yun Yang's contribution to this discourse is provocative and will have a lasting impact. It is not a book that should be read in isolation, but it is certainly a book that makes an important contribution to an evolving discourse on a critical era in both Chinese history specifically and East Asian history more broadly.

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The White Lotus War: Rebellion & Suppression in Late Imperial China. By Yingcong Dai. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2019. Pp. xxi + 642. \$60.00.

本書作者戴瑩琮，美國西雅圖華盛頓大學博士，現為 William Peterson 大學歷史系教授，本書是作者的第二部學術著作，也是她十多年來孜孜鑽研的成果。嘉慶元年（1796）初，湖北西南部爆發白蓮教起事，接著蔓延到湖北中部及西北部。以後歲月中，叛軍穿梭於橫跨湖北、四川東北部及陝西南部等地的山區，此起彼伏。除幾次組成曇花一現的聯盟外，白蓮教眾大多獨立行事，甚少協調配合。與統治菁英預期相反，戰事拖延到嘉慶十年（1805）才告終結，前後歷時近十年。白蓮教起事標示了清朝盛世的結束，致命地削弱了王朝體制；從地方開始的叛亂，發展為嚴重的政治危機，全因中央政府已無法如常有效地運作軍事機器。

作者表示這一公認具有重大歷史意義的事件，直到現在還沒有引起學界相稱的注意，無論中外文都未見有專門窮究這一事變的具分量論著刊行。作者指出，早前對戰事最為詳盡的論述，厥為成書於道光二十二年（1842）的魏源《聖武記》。此書站在為皇朝武功與將士用命的榮光偉業的頌揚及辯解立場，對大清在國內外展開的征戰不加批判。此書如對白蓮教起事的敘述有點新意的話，那就在於魏源注意到清政府利用地方鄉勇及落實堅壁清野政策。魏源意料未及的是，逾百年間他的闡釋尚引起共鳴。1914年日人稻葉岩吉（君山）的《清朝全史》問世，翌年即由但燾譯為中文，在上海中華書局出版。明確與《聖武記》未能認真判別質疑的態度相反，《清朝全史》討論白蓮教戰爭時，聚焦於清朝因制度缺失、貪腐及軍力衰敗而無力與叛軍戰鬥；雖然，稻葉仍將魏源所強調的兩種策略，明確具體化為戰役成敗的關鍵所在。戴瑩琮力言這簡單卻具吸引力的解釋，直接或間接影響了好幾代的學者，沒有人質疑其起源及是否真確，即為通論清代及中國近代歷史的作者採用，當作一些具影響力論著的事實基礎。雖然愈來愈多的歷史學者，對這一重大事件的貧乏學術業績不以為然，卻因別無其他解釋可以替代，無奈採用這一陳腔濫調。