

Review

Author(s): Leo K. Shin

Review by: Leo K. Shin

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Book Reviews

This treatment shows how Confucian engineers juggled an astonishing array of ecological, technical and fiscal-bureaucratic problems, and they bear out the author's main contention that complex interrelated issues shaped river management.

Dodgen's rich and imaginative study demolishes the simplistic interpretive clichés that link crisis and dysfunction in Qing river management with dynastic decline and corruption. His work serves as an important reminder to late imperial China experts that careful detailed archival and documentary research are essential to understanding the realities and complexities of discrete aspects of Qing administration. Moreover, the author's careful presentation of the technical and bureaucratic features of river management not only provides a framework for understanding the water conservancy projects in late imperial China but also those undertaken in the Huai River basin in the People's Republic since the 1950s. Excellent maps and diagrams (pp. 2, 20, 70, 76, 118) enhance the narrative. The work unfolds with clarity and drama and is accessible to student, specialist and general reader alike.

The University of Akron, Ohio, U.S.A.

JANE KATE LEONARD

BLOOD AND HISTORY IN CHINA: The Donglin Faction and its Repression. *By John W. Dardess. Honolulu: University of Hawaii's Press. 2002. vii, 207 pp. (Maps.) US\$24.95, paper. ISBN 0-8248-2516-0.*

Between 1625 and 1627, scholar-officials associated with an intellectual-cum-political group known as Donglin ("Eastern Grove") were subjects of a gruesome persecution. Twelve of its leading members were arrested, tortured and eventually found dead in prison. Another leader, Gao Panlong, was more fortunate; upon learning of his impending arrest, Gao chose to commit suicide by drowning himself in a pond.

To John Dardess, a historian of China at the University of Kansas, a clue to understanding the cause of this confrontation can be found in the Tiananmen protests of 1989. As in 1989, intellectuals who spoke out against those in power in the late Ming, in Dardess's view, were motivated less by an agenda of reforms than by a conviction of their own moral purity. Calling attention to the idea of *zheng qi* in Chinese political rhetoric, Dardess argues that the leaders of both movements seemed to share the belief that "[t]o fight to restore upright *qi* is to love good and hate evil, to uphold the whole and not the part, and to sacrifice absolutely everything to the cause" (p. 168). For these intellectuals, in other words, there could be no middle ground.

Though Dardess's book has many strengths—not least, its extensive account of the philosophical and policy debates at and beyond the court as

well as its detailed descriptions of the persecution of the Donglin martyrs—it also has several weaknesses. First, as Dardess acknowledges, the story of Donglin has been told before. It would have been helpful for the reader to have a clearer idea of how his interpretations resemble or differ from those of other historians such as Heinrich Busch, Xie Guozhen and Ono Kazuko.

The second weakness concerns the presentation of data. Since the strength of the book rests in large part on the range and depth of the sources—“[p]robably no earlier event in China’s long history has available for modern retelling anything like the archive available for the Donglin affair” (p. 5)—it would have been valuable if Dardess had offered a fuller discussion of the nature and limitations of the letters, diaries, eyewitness accounts and official records used. Such an exercise is particularly important given the politically-charged atmosphere in which many of these records were composed.

Third, despite the fascinating (and grisly) details Dardess presents, it remains a challenge for the reader to come to understand the motives of some of the principal figures. At one point, Dardess asserts that to the end of his life, the Tianqi emperor (1605-27) had “clung to” his wet nurse Madame Ke and eunuch Wei Zhongxian; “they indulged his needs and desires, and extended a parent-like protection to him” (p. 36). This might have been so, but the claim would have been more persuasive with the backing of more evidence.

Finally, even though the book is written primarily for specialists, at least two frequently-used terms require clarification. The first is “Palace” (as in “the Palace scolded. . .” [p. 47], “the Palace replied. . .” [p. 60], “[t]he Palace ordered. . .” [p.70], etc.). Since how decisions were made at the palace is an important part of the story, the dynamics of late-Ming politics would have been clearer if Dardess had deciphered more frequently for the reader *who* precisely was making decisions inside the palace. The second—and more important—term is “Donglin.” Since the membership of Donglin was never clearly defined even in the Ming, it remains Dardess’ task to explain more explicitly how he applies this label.

This is not a book for the general reader; specialists and students of China’s “political culture,” however, will find many insightful nuggets.

University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

LEO K. SHIN

FOUNDATIONS OF CONFUCIAN THOUGHT: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722-453 B.C.E. By *Yuri Pines*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 2002. x, 387 pp. (Tables.) US\$55.00, cloth. ISBN 0-8248-2136-6.

Yuri Pines's important book, *Foundations of Confucian Thought*, provides a thorough and insightful survey of Chinese thought before Confucius,