

through the Interregnum and displaced the southeastern lineages in the affections of the secular political elite. While not refuting the reality of Linji dominance, however, he challenges the standard interpretation. Arguing that “scholars have usually attributed the demise of [the southeastern lineages] to the conservatism of [their] teachings” (115), he argues instead that the Song court promoted Linji for political reasons: The southeastern monks were too closely tied to their respective court patrons, while the Linji clerics owed their emergent power in the religious hierarchy to the Song. Critical to this argument, moreover, is his assertion that the relationship between Linji and the Song secular political elite replicated the relationship between courts and clerics in the recently independent South: “Rather than link themselves directly with the standard-bearers of southeastern Buddhist culture, Song courtiers instead constructed new networks of affiliation and obligation, allying themselves with monastic communities that had an established presence in northern China and had demonstrated their loyalty to the Song court” (131).

This is a very closely argued book, brimming with dense information. Perhaps one could nitpick about the myriad of clerics who populate its pages. Keeping track can be a challenge, but that myriad is the very essence of Brose’s argument: By no means were all monks in the southern kingdoms members heirs to Yicun or Shibe, but it was the relationship between those heirs and the courts that patronized them that mattered. Brose does admit, however, to an historiographical shortcoming: Referencing the three texts on which so much of his analysis rests, he admits that what we can learn has “largely been framed and filtered through the editorial choices and ideological agendas of these texts’ editors” (8). Two of the three compendia, *Zutang ji* and *Jingde chuandeng lu*, were compiled within the framework of the southeastern court-cleric alliance, while the *Song gaoseng zhuan*, although a product of the early Song, was compiled by a native of WuYue. They thus perpetuate an image of exclusive power at the expense of other possible coexistent networks that did not receive court patronage. It is perhaps for this reason that he admits, in conclusion, that his conclusions are “provisional” (140).

Such provisionality, however, should not detract from the importance of Brose’s book. As another nail in the coffin of Ouyang Xiu’s 歐陽脩 dismissive approach to the southern kingdoms of the Interregnum, as another support in the growing structure of studies that recognize the importance of those kingdoms to the definition of Song culture and so late imperial Chinese culture, this is an important study.

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If there’s one uncontested fact about the Chinese intellectual, it is the sense of being a part of a culture with a long history. Hence, to understand Chinese intellectuals, we need to understand the main themes of Chinese history that serve as reference points for Chinese intellectuals today. Ideally, the scholar of Chinese intellectual history would start in the Spring and

Autumn and Warring States periods, when debates about morality and politics set much of the agenda for subsequent thinking. Then he or she would survey debates in imperial Chinese history and assess their contemporary influence. And then the scholar would turn to modern Chinese history, showing how China's traumatic encounter with powerful western countries and Japan shaped subsequent debates about society and politics.

But this kind of project would require several lifetimes to complete, even for the most erudite scholar. Hence, it is necessary to limit the scope of one's project and perhaps the least controversial way is to survey the key themes that have preoccupied Chinese intellectuals in modern Chinese history: Timothy Cheek's method in this balanced and informative book. In clear prose, he discusses the key debates of Chinese intellectuals since the late nineteenth century and shows their enduring influence for debates today. Whatever their differences, Chinese intellectuals have been committed to the public good, defined mainly, if not exclusively, as the good of China qua political community.

The book is divided into six chapters, each covering about two decades of debates, starting from China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and ending in 2015. The whole 120-year period has been characterized by three "enduring ideas"—the people, the Chinese identity, and democracy—interpreted differently in different periods. Each twenty-year period is characterized by what might be called the "spirit of the times": reform in 1895–1915, revolution in 1915–35, reviving revolution in 1936–56, reviving reform in 1976–95, and reviving rejuvenation in 1996–2015. The concluding chapter suggests that new categories will be needed in the future because "the search for wealth and power has succeeded" (330) and China is more deeply integrated in the world. Chinese intellectuals will continue to be committed to the public good, but what counts as the public good may be more global in scope.

It is impossible to do justice to this book in a short review: in a work of this sort, the beauty lies in the details. Let me just say what I think the book does especially well, followed by some remarks about gaps. First, Cheek shows the wide diversity of debates in modern Chinese history about what it means to "serve the people" and the different ways of doing so. Westerners tend to use Chinese intellectuals "as a mirror for our own concerns, hopes, and fears. Yet by focusing on dissidents and religious activists, we miss most of what China's intellectuals are doing today and have done over the past century of dramatic change in Asia" (xii). Cheek does discuss political dissidents, but his book reminds us that radical, totalizing critique of the Chinese Communist Party is not the only way of advocating social change.

Second, Cheek highlights the role of female voices over the past century or so: the public participation of women in political debates is perhaps the most distinctive development of intellectual life in China (other than Empress Wu Zetian and the Empress Dowager Cixi, women were almost totally silenced in public life in China's past). Starting from Qiu Jin, "China's first feminist martyr" (30), who was executed for treason in July 1907, Cheek shows that female thinkers had a major impact on intellectual life in China. That said, he doesn't mention Tsinghua professor Liu Yu, author of the best-selling *The Details of Democracy*, and Columbia professor Lydia Liu (Liu He), who make important contributions to contemporary debates in China from different political perspectives.

Third, the book is more than a straightforward narrative history of China's most influential intellectuals. The discussion is enriched by comparisons with "western" thinkers such as John Milton and theories such as what it means to be an intellectual that shed

light on the views of Chinese thinkers. And the scholarly prose is punctuated by witty remarks, such as the following account of the “perilously mixed messages” sent to Chinese women today: “Be a professional, be a mother who does all the cooking and most of the child care, take care of your parents and the in-laws, accept lower pay for the same work, look good, and, oh, at the the same time, fight for your rights!” (317)

Any work of this sort will have gaps and it’s worth spelling them out. First, it’s a bit odd that Cheek ignores the contemporary debates about China’s role in the world. Scholars such as Yan Xuetong and Zhao Tingyang have put forward original and influential ideas about China’s foreign policy—ideas inspired by China’s pre-imperial past—and yet they are not even mentioned in passing, perhaps because their views don’t fit Cheek’s categorizations.

Second, while Cheek does discuss the contested debates about Chinese identity over the past century—most importantly, the shift from a cultural to a racially defined basis of identity—he implicitly adopts the “modern” ethnic basis as a selection basis for who counts as a Chinese intellectual. Why not discuss the public contributions of such intellectuals as Sidney Rittenberg, who adopted Chinese citizenship, joined the CCP, and lived in China from 1944 to 1979, contributing to its debates at the time? He spent much of that time in jail, but so did other thinkers discussed in this book. The basis of exclusion seems to be racial or ethnic. To be fair, one “foreigner” (the author of this review) is mentioned as an “unlikely advocate of New Confucianism,” but such developments may appear less unlikely with cultural ideas of identity.

Third, Cheek’s account of contemporary debates seems to be limited. Perhaps it’s due to the explosion of voices over the past couple of decades, but why not even mention such influential intellectuals as Chen Lai, Zhu Suli, Qiu Feng and Zhang Weiwei? For a more thorough account of contemporary debates, I’d recommend Emilie Frenkiel’s *Conditional Democracy: The Contemporary Debates on Political Reform in Chinese Universities* (ECPR Press, 2015). Moreover, it’s unclear why Cheek selected some intellectuals over others. Is it influence? If so, then it would be important to discuss the ideas of the political theorist Wang Huning. He is perhaps the most influential intellectual in China today given that he has the ear of Chinese leaders, and it would be worth discussing his earlier works before he became invisible to the rest of us. The hugely influential editor/journalist Hu Shuli would be another voice to be discussed; she too has the ear of some Chinese leaders. Is it originality? If so, then the Confucian thinker Jiang Qing would be given more space.

I feel a bit bad raising such limitations, but they are intended to inspire future research that builds on this book. Overall, the book is an excellent, insightful, and balanced account of political debates in modern Chinese history, to be recommended to anyone who wants to learn “how China thinks.”

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