

BOOK REVIEWS

The Archaeology of Ancient China. Kwang-chih Chang, 4th ed., revised and enlarged. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MEACHAM, *Hong Kong Archaeological Society*

This newly revised and enlarged edition of K. C. Chang's standard work on Chinese archaeology is, like previous editions, a welcome summation of recent discoveries and controversies in the Middle Kingdom. As the author himself notes, this edition differs from the second and third in several important respects. Perhaps the most important is that the scope of the work has been restricted to the prehistoric and very early historical periods, adopting 1000 B.C. as its terminal date. The sheer volume of material and information to be covered has necessitated selection and restriction, of course, but it is in many respects regrettable that the wealth of Bronze Age China is not described. For this reviewer, the old cutoff at the Ch'in unification was preferable and more logical in regard to the fundamental thesis Chang seeks to develop; perhaps some of the extensive inventories of sites and cultures could have been sacrificed. But then, these are also of considerable value and have made previous editions a universally acknowledged one-volume encyclopedia of Chinese archaeology.

The information explosion since the third edition, published in 1977, has brought many other problems to the task Chang attempts, even with the first millennium B.C. removed. In his conclusion Chang discusses the flood of archaeological literature with its inevitable hundred schools of thought, typologies, and taxonomies. "Unless corrected, Chinese archaeology may soon collapse of its own

weight" (p. 413). One can already see the weight beginning to show in Chang's own elaborate classification systems, although he makes a valiant effort to streamline and summarize wherever possible.

Part of the problem lies in the author's attempt to employ a number of different systems simultaneously; he retains, for example, the now largely discredited "Lungshanoid Horizon" as "a spatial integrating device cross-cutting a number of regional sequences" (p. 238) and argues vigorously that it is still a valid concept even though complete development sequences are now known in many of the regions. Peeling off the frills, all that is really left to this once imposing edifice is a few "marker" traits, but Chang still feels bound to call "Lungshanoid" any site or culture where two or three of these traits are gathered together, in addition to whatever local and regional cultural label it has. We are cautioned "not to throw away the baby with the bathwater, for the baby—the Lungshanoid horizon—is real" (p. 239). I suppose the Lungshanoid will always be, in a sense, Chang's baby; it just refuses to reach adulthood and be retired, as the much better defined Ch'ing-licn-kang culture has finally done. And in spite of not qualifying any more as an expansion, the Lungshanoid does get on the move again (southward of course) in its old river valley and coastal haunts by the close of the Neolithic (p. 294).

This was disappointing to see, since it

appeared at first that this time Chang was going to resist the ever-present urge of prehistorians to locate the first discovery and subsequent spread of. . . . Reviewing the evidence for the early dates on pottery in South China, some 2000 years earlier than to the north, he concluded that it should not yet be suggested that pottery diffused from south to north, because “in this age of discovery . . . every new find can open up new vistas on the ancient cultural-historical scene and the game of who-is-earlier or who-gives-who-received cannot be played for at least another ten years” (p. 105). There are unfortunately numerous examples all through the book of the game, mostly of the north-is-earlier variety.

These northern influences and Lungshanoid horizon are of course vintage Chang, but they play a very minor role in this edition, compared with previous ones. Chang concentrates on the regional sequences and cultural affiliations/groupings, and the greatest merit of the book continues to be its coverage of so vast a field. The principal demerits are: (a) the insistence on certain categories, such as the “Ta-p’en-k’eng cultures,” many of which are still very ill defined and not closely related to the Ta-p’en-k’eng of Taiwan; (b) the dogged belief in a “Chinese interaction sphere” extending back into the Neolithic; (c) a rather smorgasbord approach to illustrations with many not closely tied to the text; and (d) a virtual absence of discussion of the radiocarbon chronology. The latter is left to profiles, which often are simply lists of dates, with no reference to the cultural phases or problems of placing the dates in stratigraphic context.

It is also regrettable that, for all the discussion of various artifact types and cultural inventories, there is no analysis of the important evolution from P’ei-li-kang and related cultures of 6500–5000 B.C. to the full-blown Yang-shao and Ta-wen-k’ou of the next

millennium. Only one illustration sets the ceramic forms of Ta-wen-k’ou against those of its predecessor. In former editions much attention was devoted to the continuities and discontinuities between major evolutionary phases; it is a pity that the fourth edition does not continue in this line.

My main criticism of the fourth edition is that it ignores, at peril, the adjacent regions and seeks to create a “China” by 5000 B.C. There is no word about the important discoveries in Viet Nam, Korea, and Thailand, with the sole exception of a brief mention of Gorman’s work at Spirit Cave, which incidentally is *not* “in exactly the same eco-system as that of South China” (p. 103). Bringing the important neolithic and Bronze Age discoveries from those countries into the picture would have given balance to the work and helped to dispel the notion that little of importance was happening outside the “Chinese interaction sphere.” My view is that this sphere is completely imaginary, an ethnopolitical projection into prehistory. Is there any doubt that there was as much interaction between Viet Nam and Kwangtung, nay more, than between Kwangtung and Hunan/Kiangsi/Chekiang? Yet Figure 107 and the accompanying discussion certainly make no mention of other possible spheres of interaction.

In spite of Chang’s note of caution about his use of the word *Chinese*, I fear he has painted himself into an unacceptable and untenable anthropological corner. He uses the word in a “geographical-cultural sense,” with the implication that every culture found in the geographic region of modern China was “Chinese” in some mythical prenatal sense. Chang explains that “all the regional traditions must have played a part in forming the historical Chinese civilization.” Perhaps, but that fact surely does not qualify them and all their ancestors as “Chinese,” if that term is to have any anthropological meaning at all.

Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations. Jing-shen Tao. Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1988. x + 173 pp., 2 maps, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. Hardcover. \$26.95.

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In 907 the Yelu clan of the Khitan established the Liao dynasty, which became the most powerful state in East Asia during the eleventh century. The significance of the dynasty is that with it was established a pattern of "conquest dynasties" in East Asia with Sino-Khitan institutions to rule the mixed population. The Liao occupied and ruled over a large area including present-day Inner Mongolia, southeastern Manchuria, and parts of Shansi and Hopei provinces. The Sung established diplomatic relations with the Liao in 974 and twice, unsuccessfully, attempted to recover the Yan-Yun region from them. Peace was restored with the Treaty of Shanyuan in 1005, which stipulated that the Chinese send annual gifts to the Liao in the amount of 100,000 taels of silver and 200,000 bolts of silk. This ante was increased in 1042 when the Chinese were threatened by the Hsi-Hsia on their western borders and called upon the Liao for military support. By mid-century a Liao-centered world order had been formed, with the Hsi-Hsia, the Koreans, and a number of Central Asian states participating. The manner and official content of Chinese interaction with these nations, but especially with the Liao, is the subject of Tao's book.

The individual chapters of this volume first appeared in the 1970s as articles and were published in Taipei in 1984 as a collection under the title, *Sung-Liao Kuan-hsi shih yen-chiu (Studies on the History of Sung-Liao Relations)*. In 1985, that volume received the prestigious Sun Yat-sen award in Taiwan for scholarly publications. This English-language edition is based on the former, but minor changes in organization and the exclusion of many direct quotes from the original materials allow for a simpler presentation.

Aimed at an audience of specialists, these studies offer a valuable model for analysis of Chinese diplomacy and political history of any period. Tao's point is, simply, that

official policy can only be explained by examining the historical circumstances. Access to that context in a historical setting for Tao comes from study of documents, often communiques or records of state. In his review of documents Tao concludes that the Chinese dealt with their Liao neighbors often as equals, adjusting the usual notion that diplomacy was conceived of with a China-centered world order that considered outsiders as inferior barbarians. Interestingly, this study also marks a recent shift among Chinese scholars (and, to some degree, among other students of China as well) toward study of relations between the Chinese and others and, significantly, toward study of the "others" themselves.

This English edition begins with a review of foreign relations in China before the Northern Sung dynasty (960–1127) as background for the thesis. Tao emphasizes that "while China has had a long tradition of upholding world order with itself at the center and of demanding regular tributary payments from its culturally inferior neighbors, it also has had a long tradition of conducting relations with neighboring countries on a basis of equality whenever that was advisable or necessary" (p. 8). Although the theoretical foundation of China-centered world order is dominant in analyses of Chinese relations with outsiders, Tao asserts that the multistate system of Eastern Chou origin (eighth-second century B.C.) became the actual operative arrangement in Sung foreign policy. Tao claims, then, a historical precedent for the arrangements of equality he finds between the Sung and the Liao.

Tao tests that hypothesis in subsequent chapters by examining official documents, in rough chronological order, which define or refer to the relationship between the Sung and Liao during the Northern Sung period. Chapter 2 reviews the Treaty of 1005 with the Liao, significant because it shows that the

Chinese recognized the considerable power of the Khitans and chose to avoid military confrontation over control of northern Chinese territories then under Liao domination. Struggles of the Liao to justify their wars of conquest and to establish states within Chinese territory are the focus of Chapter 3. Through naming their king Emperor of Heaven, as well as modeling the organization of their state after the Chinese, the Liao created structural parallels with their more “civilized” neighbor and, thereby, formalized a balance in the relationship, according to Tao. Liao propaganda during this period, clothed in Confucian ideals, won acceptance from the Chinese. In Chapter 4, by examining the official language of Chinese communications, Tao considers the debate among statesmen over how to maintain diplomatic balance. By using kinship titles, for example, equivalency is provided for Liao leaders in these documents. A fascinating list of those titles is recorded in Appendix 3.

In Chapter 5, Tao again examines diplomatic correspondence in detail in order to describe changes in attitude and to explain shifts in policy. The test case is a study of Sung policies toward both the Liao and the Hsi-Hsia at mid-eleventh century. The Settlement of 1042 documents a change in Sung administrative structure as well as the Liao advance on the Hsi-Hsia, another pesky neighbor who encroached on the Chinese from the west. The agreement marks the stabilization of the western borders and, thereby, improved domestic conditions in China as well as increased tribute costs. A more dominant position for the Liao in the balance of power in East Asia was necessarily recognized and asserted, and to the benefit of the Chinese, so claims Tao. The policies of the famous mid-eleventh-century statesman, Wang An-shih, are treated in Chapter 6. Wang’s view that domestic, internal reform must precede all other considerations clearly rehearsed the traditional aristocratic view toward foreign policy. This left the outsiders alone and therefore in “peace,” according to Wang. In actual practice that view frequently carried, but debate was inevitable when a powerful group such as the Liao emerged. The final chapters of Tao’s study consider

further the constant realignment in international order in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Both the Chinese and the Liao, for example, competed for alliance with Korea (Chapter 7). Once the Liao threatened Chinese stability even further, the Chin were enlisted to attack the Liao (Chapter 8).

Attention to the complexity of international relations in East Asia is welcome as we begin to learn more about the “others” in association with the Chinese. Foreign policy is seen by Tao as a fluid process, one that took into account the circumstances of the day and adjusted to them. Unlike many studies of Chinese policy, Tao’s work does not assume that conventional attitudes were imposed out of allegiance to tradition. Instead he monitors the subtle change in official position back and forth, given the substance of the situation and the motivation of the weaker Sung to maintain peace. Conclusions of this sort indicate a change in attitude among historians as well, for without a less partial look at the documents, such concessions among the Chinese would not be suggested. This approach not only is evident in Tao’s study, but also is becoming apparent in the study of Chinese history of all periods. Non-Chinese groups have lived in association with the Han Chinese for centuries, and a great deal of new information of all kinds is available and sought after today. In fact, the very region the Liao occupied in later centuries has yielded fascinating material of mixed origin as early as the fifth millennium B.C. That the peoples of these areas were in contact with the Chinese is of no doubt; what is yet to be discovered is the nature of that interaction. In the case of the Liao and the Sung, this translation provides the English-speaking world with an excellent guide. As is the case with archaeologically attested examples from ancient periods, much of the interaction was probably more cooperative than confrontational. It was the point of view of traditional historians that required description of Chinese culture in a superior and dominant position.

This book is readable and presents specialized and quite useful research. The study pays careful attention to Chinese and Liao attitudes toward one another in a period

when perceived and actual power shifted often. This relatively short book is packed with information sorted from a surprisingly substantial amount of recorded documentation. That it is made up of a number of separate but related articles is evident in the lack of smooth transitions from one chapter to another. This is not a serious problem, and

the book can be recommended to all China specialists and to others in search of a balanced approach to the study of cultural interaction in a historical setting. Central Asian and Chinese relations of all periods will surely become even more of interest if relations between China and the Soviet Union continue to warm.