

Zeitschrift: Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft
Band: 74 (2020)
Heft: 3

Buchbesprechung: Rezensionen = Comptes rendus = Book reviews

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 08.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Buchbesprechungen – Comptes Rendus – Book Reviews

Book Review

Ho, Ming-sho: *Challenging Beijing's Mandate of Heaven: Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019; 269 pp. with notes, references, and index, ISBN 978-1-4399-1707-7.

Reviewed by **Simona Grano**, Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, University of Zurich, Zürichbergstrasse 4, Zürich, 8032 Switzerland. E-mail: simona.grano@aoi.uzh.ch

<https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2020-0006>

The book under review explores the emergence of two recent non-violent, student-led protests in Asia – a region that seemed long immune to such events – triggered by China's expansionistic might and growing influence over Hong Kong and Taiwan. In particular, the book focuses on the underlying dynamics that can explain *how* such protests could take place in two culturally conservative societies and *why* these movements finally ended with very different outcomes. The author, a renowned sociologist with a deep-seated expertise in the field of social movements in Asia, focuses on the complexities of the changing relationship between state and civil society in Taiwan and Hong Kong using social movements as a lens. The two case studies are based on original fieldwork and provide readers with useful information about societies where contentious politics is growing in importance.

Comprising an introduction, seven chapters and a brief conclusion, this book is divided into six main thematic areas, or puzzles, which the author tries to solve. The first centres on the changes that prompted citizens' support of illegal acts of occupation; the second examines the motivations behind the protesters' choice of taking to the streets, linking it to the understanding that something vital, namely “democratic freedom” and “individual liberties” were actually at stake; while the third sketches the profile of the student leaders which emerged as indisputable figureheads of both movements, side-lining more established politicians.

The fourth puzzle addresses the differences in the availability of resources for protesters in both places; the author shows that possessing abundant financial reserves does not automatically equate into higher rates of success. The fifth puzzle attempts to explain the ability to generate spontaneous responses among participants of the two protests while the sixth analyses the relationship and ultimate schism between the two movements and political opposition parties, in light of the different outcomes.

Underlying the book are several important questions that Professor Ho seeks to answer: what are the specific conditions which allowed the two movements to

emerge; did Chinese political culture and traditional scripts play a role in these protests; to which degree did the two movements incorporate elements from youth popular culture that made the protests unique; and how do the Sunflower and Umbrella movements fit into the narrative of peripheral threats challenging the centre and its mandate of heaven (hence, the title to the book).

At the start of his analysis, Ming-sho Ho contextualizes the issue under research by briefly analysing the origins, processes, and consequences of Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement.

The analysis in Chapter 1 starts by detailing the historical background of Taiwan and Hong Kong and their common positioning at the periphery of competing empires and forces. Ho studies the two places in light of their common experiences; undergoing colonialism for prolonged periods, followed in both cases by the resumption of Chinese rule. Chapter 2 deals with the growth of the "China Factor" and its influence over both Hong Kong and Taiwan, creating a closely-knit web of relationships between the business elites of Taiwan and Hong Kong with those in the Mainland as well as a backlash to this, prompting the surge of nativist movements advocating for a distinct "Taiwanese" or "Hongkongers" identity.

Chapter 3 deals with the contexts that generated the two protests and the interpersonal connections between youth activists, while Chapter 4 and 5 form the bulk of the book and analyse in detail the outburst and subtleties which characterize the Sunflower and Umbrella Movements underpinning a sense of urgency and fear of imminent threat as the main causes for the eruption of said protests.

In so doing, Ho eerily foreshadows the protracted deadlock with the authorities that would ensue in Hong Kong in June 2019, credited by some commentators as having altered the dynamics of Taiwan's 2020 presidential elections. In fact, Ho manages to outline the contours of a recurrent pattern of power-abuse whereby authorities deal with protesters in a non-transparent manner, eliciting a sense of urgency among the people for the protection of their rights.

Chapter 6 studies the spontaneous and voluntary contributions and decision-making processes of grassroots participants, characterised as "improvisation" and "strategic response without prior planning". The author, however, goes further in his analysis by demonstrating that, contrarily to widespread beliefs, improvisation can also be a hierarchical process, structured and conflict-prone, due to the different positions and ideological tendencies of those involved. Chapter 7 analyses the consequences and outcomes of the protests, which in both places led to new political constellations. Even though the two movements stirred youthful political participation, Hong Kong's political opposition became fractured with the entrance of political contenders while

simultaneously facing increasing repression, whereas Taiwan's activists enabled the peaceful regime-change in 2016.

In the concluding chapter the author utilizes the protests to enrich and expand social movements' theories and studies, which leads him to the formulation of three methodological suggestions. First, the subchapter *Embedding Mobilization Research in a larger Context of Social Change*, locates the origins of the movements into a larger context of societal change; one in which Mainland China's expanding influence has triggered multiple contradictions and anxieties in both Taiwan as well as Hong Kong. Subchapter *Extending the Observation to Include the Post-mobilization Period* continues the observation in regard to societal changes in the aftermath of these protests, testifying to the enduring legacy of the movements. Once again, the author has correctly prophesized that the movements were not over and that sentiments of injustice would rekindle defiant protests towards the authorities; this is precisely what happened in Hong Kong after the S.A.R. government's proposal to pass an Extradition Bill with China in June 2019, making this book a must read for anyone interested in understanding the current political situation in Greater China. *Reconnecting Protests and Institutional Politics* finally addresses why it is important to consider social movements and institutional politics as deeply intertwined and as affecting each other, breaking the tradition of focusing either on political processes and elections (as do political scientists) or on protests behaviours (as do sociologists) as two distinct and separate developments.

In the final part of the book the author reflects on China's ascendancy and impact on the rest of the world, underlying the importance of civil society's protests in Hong Kong and Taiwan in light of the many limitations to individual freedom that China has in place, hampering the growth of a spontaneous and free civil society in the Mainland proper. In this changing context the author has tried to understand and situate the emergence of the two movements in what he terms as "peripheries".

Ho's conclusive remarks tie the chapters nicely together and provide a convincing theoretical framework which is able to encompass the two cases in their diversity, making his book a strong monograph which deserves to be read and debated widely. Due to the interesting and readily accessible nature of the topic at stake, this book represents a valuable reading for both experts of social movements and protests, as well as for policymakers and a more general readership alike interested in the Greater China area.

In terms of theory, the book tends to remain within the accepted conventions of social movement studies and makes little attempt to question the discipline's underlying assumptions. While it does make an original

contribution to the debate on state-civil society relations, there is little attempt to rethink the terms of the debate.

The chapters draw widely on a range of literature within the discipline of social movement studies and civil society. This literature provides an adequate framework for the analysis. However, engaging with the literature on social change in East Asia beyond the social movement studies paradigm, particularly with history and critical theory, would have enabled the book to address an even broader audience.

This study is important because it contributes to the body of work on changing State/society relations and contentious politics, studying how citizens cope with two different political systems, and why the local populace fears that their autonomy is being eroded by China, a country that allows only limited action in regards to individual grievances of various nature.

Ho's book shows very well how grievance is not just a by-product of economic inequality (as the PRC narrative would like us to believe in the case of HK) but first and foremost perceived as political inequality and political freedom and justice. Protesters are thus found to be rational actors driven by their will to reject adverse conditions for fear of the future, if they do not stand up to power.

Book Review

Müller, Shing / Thomas O. Höllmann / Sonja Filip (eds.): *Early Medieval North China: Archaeological and Textual Evidence*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019, X + 506 pp., 256 ill., 6 maps, 10 tables. ISBN: 978-3-447-11113-3.

Reviewed by **Julia Escher**, Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, University of Zurich, Zürichbergstrasse 4, 8032 Zürich, Switzerland, E-mail: julia.escher@uzh.ch

<https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2021-0004>

The publication *Early Medieval North China: Archaeological and Textual Evidence*, edited by Shing Müller, Thomas O. Höllmann, and Sonja Filip, is a collection of papers written in English and Chinese by a wide variety of renowned scholars. The volume is based on contributions to the conference “Culture and Cultural Diversity in Early Medieval China (4–7th Century),” which took place in Munich in January 2017. The papers are divided into four larger thematic sections, namely “Early Medieval Societies: Historical and Archaeological Evidence”, “Becoming Metropolitan”, “Sogdian Diaspora”, and “Cultural Interactions”. However, certain themes and issues are revisited by several authors throughout the publication, thereby creating overarching themes, which transcend and connect the thematic divisions created by the editors. Such themes include, but are not restricted to, tombs and funerary culture, representation of self and identity, and cultural diversity and coexistence of cultural spheres.

1 Early Medieval Societies: Historical and Archaeological Evidence

The first section is opened with **Monique Nagel-Angermann**’s discussion of cultural identity and cultural diversity in “Cultural Diversity in Early Medieval Northern China from the Perspective of Chinese Historiography”. She gives a very relevant introduction to a recurring theme and offers the ideal foundation for the articles to follow. She repeatedly addresses the difficulty of researching the interactions between various northern non-Han groups, and emphasizes on the relevance of archaeology for this task (see for example p. 8f). Her statement on the limited reliability of historiographical data for research on cultural diversity in Early Medieval China clearly reflects the relevance of this publication: “[...] historiographical works alone do not allow an assessment of the cultural diversity of

this period, for they tend to idealize, to denigrate and to conceal with and without intending to create a particular picture.” (p. 17)

Annette Kieser’s contribution “Eastern Jin Society from the Perspective of the Archaeological Evidence: A Preliminary Survey” examines the archaeological finds from tombs of the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317–420) and gives a first insight into its social structure. According to Kieser, the society of Eastern Jin can be divided into three main groups: northern émigrés, local elite, and native population. In the context of the overall publication, her contribution stands out in that it is the only one to focus on a southern Chinese setting and its interaction with northern émigrés. She discusses the funerary customs which the northern émigrés probably brought to Eastern Jin, and how they might have affected the local society. These influences can be detected in differences in burials and the existence (or non-existence) of epitaphs. In this way, she sheds light on the interaction between North and South during this time period, and how the (possibly new) northern elements can be traced in archaeological evidence.

In his article “四世紀夫餘史蹟鉤沉 (Exploring the Forgotten History of the Fuyu of the fourth Century: An Archaeological and Textual Survey)”, **Tian Likun** 田立坤 combines information from textual sources and archaeological excavations in order to take a first step toward a history of the Fuyu (Buyeo) in the fourth century. Tian bases his reconstruction of the events involving the Fuyu in the fourth century around various passages from *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 as well as the *Jinshu* 晉書. According to these accounts, the Fuyu were attacked, captured, and relocated several times by the Murong. Tian aligns the events described in the texts to archaeological findings, which reveal the presence of Fuyu in the Liaoxi 遼西 region. These finds include among others a bronze-seal mentioning the Fuyu, as well as bronze masks and golden earrings.

In “大同北魏墓葬佛教圖像淺議 (On the Buddhist Imagery of a Northern Wei Tomb in Datong)”, **Zhang Zhizhong** 張志忠 gives an overview of Buddhist depictions in funerary art of the Northern Wei 北魏 (386–535) based on several tombs in Datong 大同. After dividing the Buddhist imagery into five categories – Cintāmaṇi (wish-fulfilling gem), lotus flowers, Dharmapāla (protectors of Buddhist Law), children holding lotus buds, and guardians – he focuses in further detail on the depictions visible on a stone sarcophagus, or in Shing Müller’s terminology a stone house (see p. 384–387), found in Datong. The author finds that the polychrome paintings on the sarcophagus recreate a Buddhist setting which reflects the wish to be reborn in the Buddha Land. Zhang concludes that “[a]lthough it is to date the only such find, the sarcophagus nevertheless reflects the extensive Buddhist influences on the Northern Wei culture, social values, and sepulchral customs, and illustrates that by this time Buddhism had already been a part of funerary conventions.” (p. 80).

The next paper, “反思北魏的宗教與墓葬圖像 (Rethinking the Religious and Funerary Iconography of the Northern Wei Dynasty)” by **Lin Sheng-chih** 林聖智, continues the analysis of religious imagery in Northern Wei tombs, but places the main focus on the native Tuoba beliefs on life and death. The author examines the iconography found in these tombs mainly with regard to its religious meaning and points out that the religious beliefs pertaining to burials found in tombs of this time period are often subsumed under the burial customs and practices, and the concept of life and death (p. 81). Lin further observes that “religious influences, for example from Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism and the worship of supernatural beasts conglomerate into one image group” (p. 111). Such a confluence of iconography is for example discernible in the depictions on the stone sarcophagus/stone house of Yuan Mi 元謐, which is dated to 524.

Chin-Yin Tseng’s contribution “Imagining the Self in Northern Wei: Case Studies of Shaling M7 and Yanbei Shiyuan M5” can also be placed in the funerary context of the Northern Wei. She examines the representation of the self-image and understanding of afterlife in the two Northern Wei tombs Shaling 沙嶺 M7 and Yanbei Shiyuan 雁北師院 M5 and demonstrates the fluidity of funerary repertoires and furnishings. Chin discusses elements such as an increased focus on the frontal depiction of the deceased, use of outdoor setting for mural scenes, military attire for clay figurines, and the house-shaped stone sarcophagus in the tomb of Song Shaozu 宋紹祖 and his wife (Yanbei Shiyuan M5). She observes that the tombs Shaling M7 and Yanbei Shiyuan M5 reflect the “microcosm of the Pingcheng society, where the new lifestyle and practices from the steppe land merged with aspects of existing traditions in the Chinese sphere (p. 129)”, a setting in which tomb owners were comfortable in choosing specific elements from one cultural sphere or the other in order to create a desired self-image and reflect one’s attitude toward death and the afterlife.

The paper “固原北魏漆棺畫年代的再確定 (The Painted Northern Wei Lacquer Coffin of Guyuan: Dating Revised)” by **Luo Feng** 羅豐 is also concerned with the Northern Wei funerary setting. The author presents the archaeological finds of a tomb in Guyuan 固原, which was first discovered in 1974 and excavated in 1981. The title is somewhat misleading, as the lacquer coffin (which has been destroyed and only remains in more than 100 fragments) is not the main focus of the paper. Instead, Luo offers a detailed discussion of many other aspects of the tomb as well. Based on an inscribed brick that was found in a wall during a systematic survey of the tomb in recent years, he dates the tomb to the year 489. The inscription also mentions the name of the tomb owner, Feng Shigong 馮始公. Due to use of Xianbei elements in the tomb, Luo proposes that the Feng clan originally “stemmed from the Xianbei aristocracy and not from the Han Chinese of Changle as maintained in traditional written sources” (p. 149).

In his paper “牛川古城與北魏六鎮 (The Niuchuan Fortress and the Six Garrisons of the Northern Wei Dynasty)”, **Wei Jian** 魏堅 describes the symbolic, strategic, and military relevance of the Niuchuan 牛川 fortress and the six garrisons as major military bases and their position in the military hierarchical system. In addition, he emphasizes the key role they played in defending the northern border of the Northern Wei territory against the Rouran and securing the capital, Pingcheng 平城 (present-day Datong). The exact location of the Niuchuan fortress and the six garrisons has been subject to debate among scholars. Based on previous scholarship and recent fieldwork on the six garrisons, Wei reopens this question and suggests the ancient site of Kerim (*Kelimeng* 克里孟), located in present-day Inner Mongolia, as the location of the Niuchuan fortress.

The next contribution, “忻州九原崗北朝壁畫墓軍事內容窺探 (Military Themes in the Murals of the Northern Dynasties Tomb in Xinzhou)” by **Zhang Qingjie** 張慶捷, is devoted to the depiction of military scenes in the murals of a tomb found at Jiuyuanguang 九原崗 near Xinzhou 忻州. The tomb is thought to date to either the Northern Wei or Northern Qi 北齊 (550–577) period. Many of the wall paintings show hunting scenes, army processions, and soldiers returning to camp. Based on these depictions, Zhang concludes that the hunting scenes not only reflect a continuation of the traditional nomadic lifestyle, they also show that hunting was essential to training the soldiers for battle, either mounted or on foot. He further adds that the military themes in the mural indicate the prominence of cavalry in the Northern Dynasties and their relevance to the military forces of that time.

In his paper “北朝時期的獸面紋：以鋪首銜環為例 (Animal Masks of the Northern Dynasties)” **Wang Yintian** 王銀田 explores the use of the animal mask motif in tombs of the Northern Dynasties. He divides the animal masks in two categories: those which appear as metal-cast doorknobs (*pushou* 鋪首) and those which can be found as paintings or reliefs on other objects. Wang also discusses a variety of ornaments on the forehead of the zoomorphic faces, such as honeysuckle, mountain-shaped motifs, human figures, fierce beasts, and bodhisattvas. The animal masks are mainly found in tombs located in Datong. Some of them were also excavated in Inner Mongolia, Guyuan and Luoyang 洛陽. Those with ornaments on the forehead date mostly from the fifth century, only a few can be traced to the sixth century. The author suggests that these animal masks functioned as protection from evil spirits and as safeguard for the living, as well as for ornamentation.

2 Becoming Metropolitan

The three papers in the section “Becoming Metropolitan” are dedicated to three cities respectively: Luoyang of Northern Wei, Ye 鄴 of Northern Qi, and

Chang'an 長安 of Tang 唐 times (618–907). **Qian Guoxiang** 錢國祥 in “北魏洛陽宮城的勘察研究新進展 (The Imperial City of the Northern Wei Luoyang in Light of Recent Archaeological Studies)” gives a detailed account of the latest archaeological finds from Luoyang. These include the remains of the main gate to the imperial city, as well as central buildings of the Northern Wei palace, specifically the “Halls of Supremacy” (*taiji dian* 太極殿). Qian observes that the remains of the palace buildings can be traced back to the Cao Wei 曹魏 dynasty (220–266). Their layout clearly exhibits a single main palace, a circumstance which was different from previous imperial cities and which Qian connects to the increased strive for frugality during the Three Kingdoms period. He concludes that the remains of these palace halls can be understood as the origin of this type of city layout arranged around a single main palace, which was adapted by following dynasties and can also be seen in later imperial cities such as Chang'an.

The paper “東魏北齊鄴城皇家佛寺遺跡考古發現與研究 (Buddhist Temples in the Eastern Wei/Northern Qi City of Ye: An Archaeological Study)” by **Zhu Yanshi** 朱岩石 turns its attention to the archaeology of Buddhist temples in Ye. He presents the findings of extensive excavations of the Eastern Wei/Northern Qi capital and focuses mainly on two Buddhist temple sites, namely Zhaopengcheng 趙彭城 and Hetaoyuan 核桃園. Both sites prove important in researching the layout and architecture of Buddhist temples in the late Northern Dynasties, and their role as precursors to the Sui 隋 (581–618) and Tang temples with a central main hall. In addition, Zhu also elaborates on a find of nearly 3,000 Buddhist statues in a pit at Beiwuzhuang 北吳莊, which are of great interest to the study of the developments in Buddhist art of that time. Taken together, these finds are very illuminating with regard to Buddhist art and archaeology during the late Northern Dynasties and reflect the importance of Buddhism in the city of Ye at that time.

In her contribution “Buddhist Transformation of Chang'an's Architectural and Cultural Landscape, ca. 650–720”, **Dorothy C. Wong** focuses on the Buddhist monasteries and nunneries, which were built in increasing numbers during this time, and explores their impact on the architectural, cultural, social, and economic life of Chang'an. She describes the imperial support and patronage the Buddhist monasteries received and how these monasteries were mapped onto the layout of the city, which was planned according to traditional Chinese cosmological views. Imperially sponsored monasteries were built mainly in the second half of the seventh and first half of the eighth century, and include among others the Ci'en Monastery 慈恩寺, Ximing Monastery 西明寺, and Chongfu Monastery 崇福寺. Wong further elaborates on the functions of Buddhist monasteries and the various ways in which they introduced new visual and cultural elements to the Tang

society. She emphasizes that the monasteries were being connected to the state in order to create “a social order in which religious and political power were intertwined” (p. 246).

3 Sogdian Diaspora

The three contributions to the section “Sogdian Diaspora” are interested in the role and activities of Sogdians in Qinghai 青海, Gaochang 高昌, and China respectively. The paper “青海藏醫藥文化博物館藏彩繪棺板 (Painted Wooden Coffins in the Tibetan Medical Culture Museum)”, written by **Zhang Jianlin** 張建林 and **Tshelothar** (Cai Luotai 才洛太), focuses on a collection of ten painted wooden panels, excavated in the area west of Lake Qinghai and currently stored in the Tibetan Medical Culture Museum in Xining 西寧. Although the majority of the burials in this area are believed to date to the 8 or 9th century, a C14-analysis places one of the panels in 390–430 AD, when Qinghai was ruled by the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾. Based on the depictions of a fire altar and ritual face coverings, the authors suggest that the panels reflect the presence of Sogdian activities and Zoroastrian rituals in the area. In their view, this archaeological find not only complements historical records regarding the role of the Sogdians along the Qinghai route of the Silk Roads, but also reinvigorates the long-held debate of when Zoroastrianism entered China (p. 278).

Based on four slave contracts excavated at Turfan, **Jonathan Karam Skaff's** paper “Slavery and Foreign Slaves at Turfan during the Gaochang Kingdom” examines the evidence of slavery at Turfan during the Gaochang Kingdom (442–640) period and aims to provide a corrective to the often idealized image of the Silk Roads. He suggests that the Sogdians were involved in slave trade at Gaochang and observes that Chinese “prohibition against enslaving free persons created a perverse incentive for Sogdian merchants to import foreign slaves” (p. 296). These foreign slaves of Western Asian background might have been of Sogdian origin, which would make the Sogdians not only slavers, but also slaves. This observation strengthens Skaff's underlying goal of this paper, namely, to demonstrate that not all Sogdians were wealthy merchants and that Sogdian society had a wider spectrum of social ranks than is commonly portrayed. In addition, the contracts also reflect the diversity of life in Gaochang, hinting at the existence of a Central Asian cultural sphere with its own linguistic and legal traits.

In his contribution “Consideration of Some Aspects of the Sogdian Experience in China: From *sabo* to *s'rtip'w*”, **Albert E. Dien** conducts a linguistic and philological analysis of the Chinese terms *sabo* 薩薄 / *sabao* 薩保 (later 薩寶) and Sogdian *s'rtip'w*. He furthermore explores how these two relate to each other and

finds that they both can be traced back to the Sanskrit title *Sārthavāha* (“leader of a caravan”). Dien concludes that *s’rtp’w* was derived from the Chinese *sabo* / *sabao*, which by Tang times was used as a title for certain Sogdians acting as intermediaries in the Chinese bureaucracy. He further adds that the use of *s’rtp’w* in Sogdian was therefore “limited to mercantile dealings and official office in China” (p. 320). Readers who are interested in further exploring these terms might also find great interest in the detailed appendices, which provide a compilation of occurrences of *sabo* and *sabao* in different types of sources.

4 Cultural Interactions

The last section examines cultural interactions mainly in light of archaeological finds dating to 5 and 6th century Northern Wei. In “北魏平城灰枕葬俗考 (Funerary Headrests in the Northern Wei Pingcheng Burials)”, **Ni Run’an** 倪潤安 focuses on headrests made of limestone found in Northern Wei tombs of the Pingcheng area. The author divides the headrests into three types according to their shape (crescent-shaped, rectangular, and oval) and describes their main characteristics. After some elaboration on the use of limestone in history, which according to Ni can be traced back as far as the Neolithic Yangshao 仰韶 culture, he seeks to find the immediate precursors of the custom of placing headrests in tombs. Based on archaeological finds, he also discusses the evolution of the custom throughout the centuries leading up to the Northern Wei and identifies the limestone headrests used in Southern Manchuria and Hexi as the “immediate forerunners to the Pingcheng types” (p. 362). Ni observes a hybrid usage during the Pingcheng era, which he sees as a result of increased organization and regulation of burial customs.

The analysis of grave goods found in Pingcheng tombs is continued by **Wei Zheng** 韋正 in his paper “五世紀中後期的平城: 以墓葬資料為中心的觀察 (Pingcheng in the Second Half of the Fifth Century as seen from Burial Materials)”. Based on textual evidence and burials dating to the second half of the Pingcheng era, he describes the social and cultural transformations taking place in the Northern Wei capital. These changes can be seen in the addition of new elements to the graves, such as animal sacrifices, cloister vault ceilings, house-shaped sarcophagi, stone funerary beds, and spirit objects (*mingqi* 明器). The author also observes the disappearance of older cultural elements such as depictions of processions, banquets and hunting scenes. Wei summarizes that the Xianbei gradually moved away from their traditional burials and began to adopt funerary rites influenced by customs of Han and Jin times. He further concludes that these developments reflect the new social orientation, moving away from a militarily organized society toward a civilian one.

Shing Müller's contribution "Funerary Beds and Houses of the Northern Dynasties" provides a thorough examination of the archaeological findings of funerary beds and houses made of brick or stone, dating to the Northern Dynasties. After a discussion of terminology, the author traces the development and distribution of the different types of funerary beds and houses, examines possible origins and implications of this new practice, and elaborates on the ornamentation. Her analysis reveals a development that can be categorized into three phases: the second half of the fifth century (Pingcheng period), the first half of the sixth century (Luoyang and Ye period), and the second half of the sixth century (Northern Qi and Northern Zhou periods). The shape, ornamentation and possibly also the users varied for each phase (p. 430). While the stone beds and houses first appeared mainly in tombs of non-Chinese tomb owners, and in the very beginning were used only for women, the practice was later possibly also adopted by Chinese users. As Sogdians and/or other Central Asians started including this type of funerary furniture in their tombs, the practice was likely discontinued by other groups (p. 433). In addition to her thorough analysis, Müller also provides very detailed tables listing various archaeological finds, which span over 27 pages. This wealth of collected information on funerary stone beds, houses, and coffins can prove invaluable for the interested reader and for future research on this topic.

In his contribution "北朝時期民族文化交流與融合的宏觀考察: 以北朝墓葬遺存為中心 (The Confluence of Cultures during the Northern Dynasties Period from the Aspect of Tomb Findings)", **Bai Yunxiang** 白雲翔 explores various types of archaeological evidence, such as tomb structures and decoration, funerary goods, and the shapes of coffins. He divides the material into four categories – traditional Han, Xianbei, Central Asian, and Southern Dynasties – and discusses to what extent these cultural influences can be seen in the tombs of the Northern Dynasties. Bai observes a continuation of traditional funerary styles from the Han and Jin periods, as well as influences from Xianbei and Central Asian cultures. Additionally, exchanges between Northern and Southern Dynasties are discernible. In this time of human migration and cultural interaction, various cultural elements of different ethnic groups merged to a "kaleidoscopic society with a juxtaposition of multiple cultural facets" (p. 498). Bai however points out that during the Northern Wei the Xianbei quickly "adopted the more sophisticated social organization and policies of the Han Chinese" and adds the assessment that "The Han Chinese culture displayed in this process its great vigour, attractiveness, and the ability to integrate other cultures" (p. 497, see p. 492 for a Chinese version). These types of statements betray a certain sense of cultural superiority, which I would presume goes against the very purpose of this publication, which in the words of one of the

editors, Thomas O. Höllmann, is the following: “Rather than assuming a continuous and unidirectional process of cultural assimilation, the challenge before us is to explore the profound economic, social and cultural heterogeneity of the population that was then living in the region that is now northern China. Sinicization is only part of the story” (p. VII).

The publication is completed by **Qi Dongfang**’s 齊東方 article “生與死——兩個世界的徘徊 (Life and Death – Pondering the Two Worlds)”. Starting from the Han period up to the Yuan dynasty, the author discusses the changes in beliefs connected to death and afterlife and describes how these changes manifested themselves in tombs, rites, and funerary art. Qi focuses especially on the depictions in mural paintings, as he understands the reading and analysis of wall paintings in tombs as “methodological tools to investigate the history of Chinese thought and society with all their developments and changes” (p. 505). The paper provides a wider framework to the tomb structures, grave goods and funerary art that were discussed throughout the previous papers, thereby creating a fitting conclusion to this multifaceted publication.

5 Conclusion

I’d like to conclude this review by circling back to the beginning. The following statement made by Nagel-Angermann in the opening paper exemplifies the relevance of this publication, and of further collaboration between historians and archaeologists, especially with regard to the discourse on “ethnic merging” and “Sinicization”: “[...] interactions between different ethnic groups should not be reduced to a political statement but have to be analysed carefully by historians and archaeologists. An analysis of discourses of the past combined with a review of the latest archaeological research are necessary to understand the dynamics of cultural and ethnic interaction and to avoid a simplistic explanation of assimilation” (p. 4). Moreover, the various contributions have also shown that the question of representation, identity, and ethnicity is a complicated one which deserves further exploration.

Other themes that reappear throughout the publication and connect the different areas discussed by the authors include, but are not restricted to, topics of coexistence of cultural spheres, growing Buddhist influences, depiction of identity and beliefs in funerary art, and the increasing presence of the Sogdians in Northern China. Certain findings (such as the tomb of Song Shaozu) are mentioned in several papers and often examined from different angles. It is illuminating to see how a

change in perspective or focus can yield different insights or add a new element to a point made by another author. The social standing and wealth of the Sabao for example, implied in their elaborate burials described by Shing Müller, resonate with the deliberations made by Albert E. Dien. In this way, this publication is like a mosaic: Each paper contributes its own piece to form a clearer and more defined picture of Early Medieval North China.