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Rezensionen – Comptes rendus – Reviews

Harry D. Harootunian: *Marx after Marx: History and time in the expansion of capitalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015, 312 pp., ISBN 978-0-231-17480-0.

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1 Overview of the argument

To put the conclusion first: this is not an easy book to read, and while it raises problems and questions that are very much worthwhile considering, it does not offer a consistent and well-stated argument for its cause. There are three main reasons behind this: first, the author himself appears to be of two minds about his subject. Second, while the book takes the form of an extended literature review, Harootunian does not offer a critical appraisal of the positions he wishes us to consider in the light of pertinent research. Finally, in terms of form, the book has clearly not undergone a rigorous editing process. In the following, I will shortly present the author and contextualize the book in light of his previous writings, before I summarize the book's main argument and its most important insights. I will then consider where Harootunian fails to deliver on his theoretical ambition and point to more convincing approaches and solutions. Finally, a short appendix offers a select list of the editorial lapses that make the book unnecessarily difficult to read.

2 The author

Harry Harootunian has made a name for himself as an intellectual historian of early modern to contemporary Japan, whose work is informed by strong theoretical ambition. His books on the Edo period School of National Learning, or, as he termed it, “Nativism” (*kokugaku* 国学),¹ on thinkers “overcome by modernity” in the early twentieth century,² or on postmodernism in Japan³ have all won

1 Harootunian 1988.

2 Harootunian 2000a.

3 Miyoshi / Harootunian 1989.

praise for providing fresh views on their subjects and introducing new sources to Western readers, although critics have also noted that his readings of these sources are at times forced or inaccurate.⁴ From the outset of his career, Harootunian has also consistently striven to integrate his work as an intellectual historian of Japan with larger theoretical issues and agendas, and he has been a vociferous critic of patterns in Western Japanese studies, history, and social theory that worked to parochialize the Japanese (or any other Non-Western) experience, or place it on the Procrustes' bed of a standard Western model of modernization.⁵ This agenda is also clearly visible in the book under consideration.

3 The argument in *Marx after Marx*

Marx after Marx follows a trend of recent decades to interpret the history of capitalism through the lens of the categories of formal and real subsumption.⁶ It may be best understood as an extended meditation on the following statement from the draft chapter on the results of the direct production process for *Capital*, Vol. I:

The labour process becomes the instrument of the valorization process, the process of the self-valorization of capital—the manufacture of surplus-value. The labour process is subsumed under capital (it is its own process) and the capitalist intervenes in the process as its director, manager. For him it also represents the direct exploitation of the labour of others. It is this that I refer to as the *formal subsumption of labour under capital*. It is the general form of every capitalist process of production; at the same time, however, it can be found as a *particular* form alongside the *specifically capitalist mode of production* in its developed form, because although the latter entails the former, the converse does not necessarily obtain [i. e. the formal subsumption can be found in the absence of the specifically capitalist mode of production.]⁷

To put it briefly, in the social form of capitalism, the labour process is geared towards the production of surplus value, either *formally*, when its material configuration is largely left to independent agents of production, or both *formally and materially*, when its whole configuration comes to be

4 Nakai 1989; Linhart 2001.

5 Harootunian 2000b; Harootunian 2004; Kuklick 2006.

6 For an instructive critical review, see Endnotes 2010.

7 Marx 1990: 1019.

organised by the managing agents of capital.⁸ Whether labour is subsumed in one or the other form depends not only on the development of the means of production, but also on the actual dynamics between the social forces at work in a given situation – including not only the state of class relations, but also competition between different groups of capitalists, political powers and so forth.

Harootunian works through the consequences of this idea in order to argue in favour of a non-linear conception of history, and for a dynamic understanding of capitalist accumulation as an ongoing process. His fundamental hypothesis is that formal subsumption must be understood not as a finite historical stage, but as an articulation of capitalist relations of production that exists at each phase in the history of capitalism, from its past to any of its possible futures: “The importance of the copresence of both formal subsumption and primitive accumulation in future presents alongside capitalist accumulation ... constitutes one of the principal arguments of this book.” (10) The concept, Harootunian holds, allows us to grasp diverging trajectories within capitalism’s development, in accordance with the relevant constellations of technological, social and political factors. It therefore provides, in his words, “[...] a way out of both the vulgate Marxian and modernizing bourgeois historical narratives constrained to fulfilling teleologically determined agendas of capitalism that have claimed the unfolding of a singular trajectory everywhere.” (19) What he hopes to achieve is a more apposite and empathetic understanding of the specific constellations engendered by the process of capitalist accumulation in Non-Western countries:

It is the argument of this book that the production of unevenness, like capitalism’s organization of the workday, was empowered to act as an agent disposing people into disciplined routines, creating the occasions for animating political events and action. Beyond that, it might additionally be suggested that the experience of the interaction of ‘lateness’ and necessity of living through more intensely and consciously the spectacle of unevenness early persuaded societies like Japan to recognize that they were being forced to live comparatively. (16–17)

This passage, which by the way gives a good impression of Harootunian’s style, also illuminates the particular approach he takes to realize his agenda. The perspective he offers on the subject of Capitalist subsumption and on Capitalism in general has as its vanishing point the term “unevenness.” To be sure, ‘uneven development’ has been a topic of fruitful discussion for some decades now. The debate has moved the concept far beyond its Trotskyan roots,

⁸ For a more detailed explanation of the concept, see Murray 2004.

providing important arguments against the neo-liberal ideology of convergence.⁹ Harootunian is, however, less interested in empirical or theoretical research on the mechanisms of capitalist accumulation. He takes ‘unevenness’ to mean the co-existence of forms of social organisation that were initially formed in different historical epochs and conform to different temporalities. He furthermore holds this kind of unevenness to be essential to the existence of capitalism, which, he maintains, cannot survive without reproducing it. At the same time, he takes it to be capitalism’s essential fault line, which provides the opening for various forms of resistance and alternative roads of development of and beyond capitalism:

If capitalism failed to completely control the uneven mix, the practices and institutions embodying the different historical temporalities it retained from the past to serve the pursuit of value, it was because it needed to produce unevenness as a condition of its own continuing condition. (20)

The very unevenness shared by different presents put into question the illusory claim of capitalism’s inevitable completion everywhere and its claims to sameness and supplied inducements to consider instances attesting to successful resistances to the prevailing forms of capitalism beyond Euro-America. (19)

This basic idea is developed through a re-reading of authors that are placed in opposition to Western Marxism. Chapter headings such as “Marxism’s Eastward Migration” (chapter 2) and “Opening to the Global South” (chapter 3) indicate the intention to rectify a perceived self-absorbedness of much of the tradition of Marxism in the West, which Harootunian identifies largely with the cultural critique of the Frankfurt school and accuses of political quietism. (68)¹⁰ In order for things to fall into this scheme, however, he has to ignore or misread a substantial part of the literature (from authors like Ernest Mandel and the representatives of the “Neue Marx Lektüre”,¹¹ to the extensive literature on “uneven development”), and to re-assign authors like Rosa Luxemburg and Gramsci to the global East or South. More importantly, the decision to foreground a spatial division in his appreciation of the Marxian traditions only echoes the fundamental conviction expressed in his choice to posit “unevenness” as the essential line of conflict in capitalism. Cultural identities and their

⁹ Harvey 1975; Smith 1984; Wainwright 2013.

¹⁰ This accusation is also directed at Antonio Negri, who, although he is dismissed with two cursory remarks (2, 68), seems to be very much on Harootunian’s mind, as evident from his choice of title, which obviously parodies Negri’s *Marx beyond Marx*. Negri 1979; 1991.

¹¹ Only Backhaus is mentioned once, and dismissed as a “stagist” (68).

differences are thus placed in a paramount position on the level of theory as well as on the level of social analysis.

Fortunately, however, Harootunian retains enough of Marxian theory to not fully fall for such a culturalist view. Having spent much effort on a vociferous criticism of traditional Marxist stage theory (see eg. 67–72, 215–218, 224) —which appears to me as a dead horse not in need of further flogging— he moves on, in the final chapter of this book, to a concise criticism of postmodernist/postcolonial hypostases of alterity. In the said chapter, Harootunian takes Dipesh Chakrabarty and other proponents of postcolonialism to task for juxtaposing a reified model of capitalist relations of production with an equally reified vision of purportedly non-capitalist cultures (Chakrabarty’s “history 2”¹²):

By misrecognizing the operation of formal subsumption and its appropriation of what it considered useful from the precapitalist past, each [scil. Banaji and Chakrabarty] would transmute historically derived practices into ahistorical components of an irreducible cultural essence that defied both history’s and time’s erosions and asymmetries. (226)

This is certainly a valid and important point to make. Unfortunately, Harootunian stops here instead of digging deeper into the framework that supports the said misrecognition. Most significantly, he fails to take note of a seminal conceptual mistake in Chakrabarty’s analysis of labour and labour relations, that is, his conflation of abstract labour with the homogenised labour of the modern factory.

4 Abstract and concrete labour

In Marx’s view, the value of each commodity is qualitatively determined as “abstract labour” and quantitatively measured by the labour time socially necessary for its production that is validated in the process of exchange. Marx develops this concept of “abstract labour” in opposition to the idea of “concrete labour”, i. e. the labour that was actually exerted when the commodity was produced; he uses it to explain that the value of a commodity originates in a specific social relation, and not (as the classical labour theory of value had it) from the fact that so much human effort was used to generate the product.¹³ Chakrabarty, however, identifies abstract labour with a *concrete labour process*, namely that of the modern factory, which is the result of real subsumption. In

¹² Chakrabarty 2000: 62–71.

¹³ For a useful discussion of the intricacies of the concept of ‘abstract’ vs. ‘concrete’ labour in Marx, see Murray 2000.

his theory, abstract labour becomes a *mode* of concrete labour, which means that the conceptual difference between the two has collapsed.¹⁴ Conversely, he believes that there exists, in capitalism, spheres of purely concrete labour, in which pre-capitalist formations of the metabolism of human beings with their environment remain intact. In other words, he succumbs to an essentialism of the concrete that is also the hallmark of the fetishism of use value—meaning the identification of the production of use values as the ultimate goal of capitalist production and the concomitant glorification of concrete labour and its products over and against abstract labour and money.¹⁵ This is no minor mistake, because it is precisely the elation of use value that consistently supports reactionary anti-capitalism.¹⁶

5 Formal and real subsumption

I have digressed here on Chakrabarty because, as indicated, for the major part of his book Harootunian falls prey to a similar misconception. He treats formal subsumption as a particular form that would leave pre-extant social formations and ideas substantially intact. Following the received, underconsumptionist reading of Luxemburg, he contends that capitalism will never achieve full-fledged “real subsumption,” because it needs buyers not fully integrated into its system in order to realise surplus value (95–96).¹⁷ Formal subsumption as a separate social configuration would then be necessary to stabilise spheres of non-capitalist socio-cultural forms.

This vision is supported by a sympathy Harootunian shares with a large part of his sources for the “traditional communism” of pre-capitalist societies, such as the Incas (see eg. 139–140, here referring to Mariátegui). Several times he returns to Marx’s draft letters to Vera Zasulich to argue that the existence, by virtue of formal subsumption, of older strata of communal cooperative values and forms of organisation in capitalist societies offers the chance of a historical

¹⁴ Murray 2000: 51–57. Chakrabarty is certainly not the only one to commit this “tempting conceptual mistake,” as Chris Arthur has called it. See Arthur 2000: 9, and his subsequent elucidation, Arthur 2000: 9–10.

¹⁵ Chakrabarty explicitly makes the link to “use value” and goes on to connect that concept to Heideggerian considerations of “ontic belonging”, see Chakrabarty 2000: 67–71.

¹⁶ Postone 1980: 110–111.

¹⁷ The references are to: Luxemburg 2003: 309–327, 332. Harootunian’s reading of Luxemburg may be overly simplified, see Bellofiore 2004.

trajectory sidestepping hallmarks of classical individualistic capitalism and its political forms (53, 76, 101–102, 221). There remains, in his words

the intimation of a time external to and dissimilar from capitalism, a world where use-value and the nondifferentiation of subject and object still supposedly prevailed, bringing with it possibilities for different forms of political community (55).

This quote clearly demonstrates that Harootunian shares in that inadequate criticism of capitalism and exchange value which directly connects to the fetishisation of use-value. As a consequence, when defining the main goal of his intervention, Harootunian shifts the emphasis from the contradiction/conflict inherent to the value form (that between capital and labour) to the differences between various instances of formal subsumption and their constellations of purely capitalist and earlier relations of production (and social domination):

[...] it seems to me that this was a crucial problem in all those earlier Marxist tactical controversies that sought to align peasants, living under semifeudal conditions belonging more to medieval agricultural life than modernity, to industrial workers, without considering the different temporal regimes characterizing and separating each. It was even truer of the encounter of industrial capitalism and the victims of colonial seizure. (26–27)

In terms of “tactical controversies,” Harootunian has a valid point. Attention to different temporalities in the organisation of daily lives, and concomitant value orientations, will indeed be important when attempting to integrate peasants and industrial workers into one political movement. But framing this as the co-existence of different *historical* temporalities reifies the respective forms of temporal organization into isolated and static entities. It also overlooks how capitalism transforms, in the course of its making, those older forms it encounters and, at first, formally subsumes.

6 Theory and empiry in the study of historical trajectories: Uno Kōzō and the agricultural question in Japan

This movement of reification is directly related to another problematic feature of the book. Throughout his discussion, Harootunian substitutes theory for engagement with historical sources and literature. His treatment of Uno Kōzō’s assessment concerning the development of capitalism in Japan is a case in

point. Harootunian marshals the thought of Uno as a witness for theorising unevenness, because of Uno's understanding that the development of capitalism may differ between societies and economies depending on the historical point in time in which it occurs. He realises that, for Uno, such difference in development does not lead to ossified forms of different capitalisms (189–190¹⁸). Specifically, Uno demonstrated how in Japan, capitalist industrialization did not require the forced separation of large numbers of the workforce from the land. Furthermore, like other latecomers to capitalism, Japan achieved the necessary pooling of large amounts of capital through a bank-based joint-stock system.¹⁹ This aspect was recently elaborated by Lapavitsas in his comparative analysis of finance capital.²⁰ Research into the transformation of local lenders into urban financial agents in the late Edo period has furthermore shed light on the historical basis of this developmental trajectory.²¹ In contrast, agriculture in Japan continued to be dominated by the small-scale, subsistence-based farm, with the concomitant continuation of patriarchal forms of social organization and life in the village, because under capitalist conditions these farms and villages provided for a large surplus labour force even without eviction of small-scale proprietors from their land.²² As Harootunian duly notes, Uno insisted, against traditional Marxist readings, that this did not mean the coexistence of 'old' (feudal) and 'new' (capitalist) social forms, because rural life had already been transformed by the demands of capitalist production: The commodification of land and of raw materials had subjected production to the monetarised economy, and complementary small-scale, subsistence based artisanship had been crowded out by urban industrial production (190–191²³). However, in a paradoxical move Harootunian announces all this to mean that "... bypassing the grosser effects of primitive accumulation permitted maintaining the prior medieval village intact in a society like Japan ..." (186). This is in contrast not only to Uno, but also contradicts, without any adduction of evidence, a host of research in recent decades which has demonstrated how commodification of Japanese agriculture had changed the realities of rural life to a large extent long before the forced restructuring of the country in the late nineteenth century.²⁴

18 Referring to Uno 1973: 37–38.

19 Uno 1973: 48–55.

20 Lapavitsas 2013.

21 Toby 1991.

22 Uno 1973: 54–55.

23 Referring to Uno 1973: 54–55.

24 Saitō 1986; Toby 1991; Brandt 1993; Francks 2005; Marcon 2014. Most pertinent to Harootunian's focus on "uneven" temporal regimes and time consciousnesses is Smith 1986,

7 Authoritarianism, capitalist violence, and the rural village

By hypostatizing an unchanging “medieval village” as a source of resistance to capitalism, Harootunian loses sight of two real problems that he might otherwise have raised for the profit of his readers: First, why is it that the ‘modernised’ rural sector lends itself so well to mobilisation for authoritarian and nationalist projects? With regard to this question, he could have gone back to an observation by Marx in his “British Rule of India”:

[...] we must not forget that these idyllic village-communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. [...] We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man the sovereign of circumstances [...].²⁵

The a-historical notion of “Oriental despotism” and illusions of human sovereignty aside, convictions that Marx parted with in *Capital*,²⁶ this is an observation all those still sympathising with archaic communism should take to heart. It is, incidentally, followed up by Uno in his analysis of the causal links between the social structure of rural Japan up to the time of his writing (1946, probably before the land reform of the same year, which is not part of his analysis) and the way this structure fostered authoritarian rule. As Uno explains in the pages immediately following those quoted by Harootunian, commodification of Japanese agriculture in the 19th and first half of the twentieth century did not lead to the expropriation of small-scale landholders. To the contrary, the numerically dominant group were petty agriculturalists who in addition to their small properties competed for leasehold in order to increase yield and income. This cohort, which in 1946 still amounted to 40–50 % of the Japanese workforce, depended mostly on family labour for production. Ruthless self-exploitation enabled them to accede to the payment of inordinately high rents. Because they neither entered into wage-

which provides forceful evidence that the monetarized economy of the Edo period already changed temporal regimes and time consciousness in rural villages towards a view of time as a quantitative resource concomitant with capitalism.

²⁵ Marx 2005 [1853].

²⁶ Tomba 2013.

labour themselves, nor contracted wage-labourers on a larger scale, they retained patrimonial relations within their production unit, and, more importantly in terms of their political outlook and impact, with the landlords from whom they obtained leaseholds. That is, until the land reform of 1946 many tenure contracts remained informal and unwritten, rent was often natural instead of monetary, and the tenants requested and regularly obtained cancellation of rent in case of severe crop failure.²⁷

Uno observes that in such a situation of informal patriarchal dependence, formally free elections and parliamentary government cannot function to properly represent the diverging forces in society. There is a pressure from below to retain patriarchal relations that translates into authoritarian politics.²⁸ One can only wonder why Harootunian ignored this point, instead of elaborating on it.

Writing in the 1940s, Uno was already far from ascribing this structure to some stable element of Japanese psychology. He envisioned substantial changes in the rural structure, concomitant with a large-scale shift in the composition of the workforce and a higher degree of integration of Japanese agriculture into a global competitive market.²⁹ Needless to say, this is largely what happened in the postwar period, starting with the land reform in 1946.

Second, and very important in a comparative perspective, by attributing the alleged persistence of intact pre-capitalist social forms under formal subsumption to a fundamental *incapacity* of capitalism to fully take control and establish real subsumption, Harootunian overlooks the violent ways in which the agents dominant in formal subsumption *prevent* development (both technological and social) if it is not in their immediate capitalist interest. To exemplify, let me quote from S. Banarjee's insightful article on the management of capitalism through the systematic infliction of violence:

The colonial expansionist practices of the British empire in the 1800s involved both capital appropriation and permanent destruction of manufacturing capacities in the colonies – the 'technological superiority' of the British textile industry, for example, was established as much by invention as by a systematic destruction of India's indigenous industry, including some innovative competitive strategies that involved cutting off the thumbs of master weavers in Bengal, the forced cultivation of indigo by Bihar's peasants as well as the slave trade from Africa that supplied cotton plantations in the US with free labor.³⁰

²⁷ Uno 1973: 59. See also Uno 1973: 45–49.

²⁸ Uno 1973: 60.

²⁹ Uno 1973: 62.

³⁰ Banarjee 2008: 1542, referring to Dutt 1970; Shiva 2001: 34.

8 The theory of capitalist subsumption

In terms of theory, this indicates that Harootunian's dichotomical juxtaposition of formal and real subsumption in itself is deeply problematic. To elaborate, as Murray argues in his lucid exploration of these notions in Marx, the terms are correlated to the creation of absolute and relative surplus value:

[...] the changes to the production process that Marx identifies with increasing absolute surplus-value involve simply formal subsumption, while those transformations required for relative surplus-value involve real subsumption. Between them, formal subsumption and real subsumption under capital bring about a continual hubbub of social and material revolution, yet in the same stroke, they enforce social stasis because they strengthen and expand the hold of the law of value and capital's web of value-forms.³¹

What follows from this is that,

[a]bsolute and relative surplus-value are 'flow' concepts; they discriminate, at any level of the development of productive power, whether an increase in surplus-value is due to extending the working day (absolute surplus-value) or increasing the productivity of labour (relative surplus-value).³²

Murray relates the increase of relative surplus-value mostly to technological strategies in the improvement of productivity. Technically speaking, however, relative surplus-value can also be increased by diminishing the value of labour-power through other means, such as forcing the labourers to accept a lower standard of living. This is simply the application of the same principle under different circumstances — relative surplus-value now is increased by coercively lowering the value of labor. More appropriately, one may say that technical innovation and degradation of the standards of living are two sides of the same coin: productivity is increased in agriculture to lower the costs of reproduction of labour, with the ensuing degradation of the quality of food and of the environment.³³ Real subsumption thus may as well take the form of controlled technological stagnation and social devolution. Needless to say, authoritarian regimes, which weaken the negotiating power of labour and assist in its coercive treatment, are most helpful in this regard, as are religious ideologies fostering

³¹ Murray 2004: 246.

³² Murray 2004: 248. On the dynamic interrelation of formal and real subsumption, see also Marx 1990: 646–647, and London 1997: 275–278. London's article also provides an insightful complement to Harootunian's abstract treatment of capitalism's development in Latin America.

³³ I am indebted to Dr. Elena Lange for this theoretical clarification. See Marx 1990: 429–438. Bellofiore's (2004: 285–291) reading of Luxemburg is equally instructive in this regard. See also Luxemburg 1972: 156–167.

complacency and the idolatry of work. Both historically and systematically speaking, capitalism does not necessarily work in favour of liberal democracy.

Marx himself, in the text on the “Results of the Immediate Process of Production” which contains the passage that forms the starting point of Harootunian’s deliberations, describes another aspect of the dynamic interrelation of formal and real subsumption:

If the production of absolute surplus value was the material expression of the formal subsumption of labour under capital, then the production of relative surplus value may be viewed as its real subsumption.

At any rate, if we consider the two forms of surplus value, absolute and relative, separately, we shall see that absolute surplus-value always precedes relative. To these two forms of surplus value there correspond two separate forms of the subsumption of labour under capital, or two distinct forms of capitalist production. And here too one form always precedes the other, although the second form, the more highly developed one, can provide the foundations for the introduction of the first in new branches of industry.³⁴

In other words, far from envisioning the coexistence of formal and real subsumption as a sign of capitalism’s need to reproduce its own outside, as Harootunian would have it, Marx perceives formal subsumption as one element within the dynamics of capitalist development that serves to make inroads into new areas to be subjugated to capitalist production, paving the way for the re-structuring of additional sectors of social activity in accordance with capital’s need to valorize itself through the appropriation of surplus-value.

But even on a note closer to Harootunian’s agenda, in analysing the historical experiences of the ‘global South’, and the various states of unevenness, it will certainly be more helpful to resort to a dynamic understanding of formal and real subsumption in their mutual interaction. This will not only serve to better explain the realities of coercive capitalism, including its implication with political authoritarianism and massive violence. It would arguably also be more apposite in regard to current developments, both in the hubs of advanced technological development and in the peripheries churning out the mass of material commodities by which we live. The problems we face can hardly be explained by capitalism’s incapacity to ever fully come into its own; rather, they are problems of its relentless colonisation of all aspects of human life — that is, they are problems of real subsumption.

34 Marx 1990: 1025.

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Appendix

Select editorial lacunae

Misspellings, omissions, redundancies:

“in the capitalist mode of mode of production itself” (40); “it is formerly speaking voluntary” (56); “Be that has it may” (74); “With Chakrabarty, as shall see,” (229); “In Asia, only Japan managed to successfully to escape the direct consequences of imperial colonization ...” (153).

Convoluting, ungrammatical sentences

“This is in part the ‘secret of the commodity form itself,’ and the reason that ‘work assumed the form of value of a commodity’ is thus committed to ‘affirm [ing] its social character only in the commodity form of its product’” (58).

“Lenin ... acknowledged that an ‘infinitely diverse combinations of elements of this or that type of capitalist evolution are possible.’” (84)

“The changeover to rotation conformed to procedures belonging to industrial capitalism that was completed with the reorganization inserting the wretched cottage system into the production process.” (181)

“The purpose of the book was to show that when Marx assigned to the working class the role of history’s agent, he also implied that since the worker, as one of the personifications of capitalism (but not quite like the capitalist, actually the personification of labor in the capital-labor dyad, according to Marx), belonged to a class situated within bourgeois social relationships.” (227)

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Rezensionen – Comptes rendus – Reviews

Eva Lüdi Kong, Übersetzung und Kommentar: *Die Reise in den Westen = [Xi You Ji]* 西遊記: Ein klassischer chinesischer Roman. Mit 100 Holzschnitten nach alten Ausgaben. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2016, 1320 pp., ISBN 978-3-15-010879-6.

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Die mit Reiseberichten in Zusammenhang stehenden Metaphern wie „Jede Reise ist eine Reise zu einem selbst“ oder das unvermeidliche „Der Weg ist das Ziel“ sind schon oft strapaziert worden, aber in diesem Fall, wo es um die Besprechung eines der einflussreichsten Bücher der chinesischen Literaturgeschichte geht, scheint es unvermeidlich, erneut in dieser Kiste mit sprachlichen Bildern zu wühlen, um eines zu finden, das hier passen könnte. Denn in der Tat ist die hier beschriebene Reise nicht eine, die man tut, um anzukommen, um Johann Wolfgang Goethe zu paraphrasieren. Die Reise selbst verändert die Reisenden, und indem wir als Leserinnen und Leser des Textes mitreisen, sind auch wir dergestalt Mitreisenden nicht bloss Zaungäste, sondern finden uns am Ende dieser Reise selbst verändert wieder.

Mit der durch die Schweizer Sinologin und Germanistin Eva Lüdi Kong vorgelegten Neuübersetzung des Romans *Xi You Ji* wird diese Erzählung nun erstmals in seiner Gesamtheit auf Deutsch präsentiert. Die Übersetzung umfasst 100 Kapitel (S. 15–1262), hinzu kommen ein kurzer, äusserst hilfreicher Anhang mit einem „Verzeichnis der Gottheiten“ (S. 1267–1283) und einem „Nachwort“ (S. 1284–1319), in welchem die Sinologin Lüdi Kong in vorbildlicher Art und Weise in den Text und die kulturellen Hintergründe einführt. Bislang gab es an deutschsprachigen Fassungen dieses Textes eine aus dem Englischen übertragene Teilfassung, die unter dem Titel *Monkeys Pilgerfahrt: eine chinesische Legende* 1947 im Artemis Verlag in Zürich erstmals erschienen war. Der Übersetzer dieser 464 Seiten umfassenden Ausgabe war Arthur Waley, und die Ausgabe erfuhr zahlreiche Neuauflagen. Weniger bekannt ist eine ebenfalls gekürzte Übersetzung von Johanna Herzfeldt, 1962 in Rodolstadt, DDR, durch den Greifenverlag unter dem Titel *Die Pilgerfahrt nach dem Westen* veröffentlicht, mit einem Umfang von 501 Seiten. Diese Fassung wurde 2010 als zweisprachige Ausgabe in der Reihe *Bibliothek der Chinesischen Klassiker* (bzw. Han De duizhao 汉德对照) durch Yuelu shushe 岳麓书社 neu aufgelegt.

Eva Lüdi Kong hat 15 Jahre an diesem Text gearbeitet, und sie übersetzt den gesamten Text, alle 100 Kapitel, und darin jedes Gedicht, jeden Untertitel, und die Ausgabe ihrer Übersetzung umfasst 1262 Seiten, was eine Ahnung der früheren Textkürzungen vermitteln mag. Dazu kommen 100 historische chinesische xylographische Abbildungen zum Text aus der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts, von denen die Hälfte für die vorliegende Ausgabe übernommen wurde, jeweils im ganzseitigen Format und mit Übersetzung der Bildlegende. Der Reclam Verlag hat mit diesem gewichtigen Band ein wirklich schönes Buch vorgelegt, in dem auch so gut wie keine Fehler zu finden waren. Alle Fehler, die bei der Lektüre auffielen, waren interessanterweise im 14. Kapitel zu finden: „Sticknadelgröße“ statt „Stecknadelgröße“ (S. 204) und ein vergessenes „er“ im Satz „Keine paar Sätze habe ich ihn gerügt, warum ist gleich auf und davon?“ (S. 208)

Als Grundlage ihrer Übersetzung nahm Frau Lüdi Kong – wie im Nachwort ausgeführt (S. 1317) – die Ausgabe *Xiyou Zhengdaoshu* 西遊證道書 aus Hangzhou 1663. Diese geht zurück auf die qingzeitliche Textfassung, die durch Huang Zhouxing 黃周星 (1611–1680) und Wang Xiangxu 汪象旭 (1644–1728) redigiert und kommentiert worden war. Im Vergleich zur mingzeitlichen Ausgabe von 1592 (von der Übersetzerin „Shidetang“-Ausgabe genannt) zeichne sich die gestraffte Fassung durch folgende Veränderungen aus: „Stilistische Überarbeitung des Erzähltexts und der Gedichte, Streichung weitschweifiger Wiederholungen und beschreibender Gedichte, Redigieren von Nachlässigkeiten und unlogischen Stellen, Streichung einzelner als unsittlich erachteter Aussagen“ sowie das „Einfügen der Lebensgeschichte Xuanzangs als 9. Kapitel und neue Aufteilung der ursprünglichen Inhalte von Kapitel 9–11 in die Kapitel 10 und 11.“ (S. 1317).

Es übersteigt meine Kenntnisse als Rezensent, die Wahl der Ausgabe zu beurteilen, aber der hier präsentierte Text weist sehr wenige Redundanzen oder „weitschweifige Wiederholungen“ auf, und was die unlogischen Stellen angeht, so beschränken sich diese weitgehend auf die Erzählung selbst, hier werden Leserinnen und Leser dafür mitunter stark gefordert, aber genau das macht ja auch den Charme und die Faszination des Textes aus. Denn das Werk *Xi You Ji* erzählt auf seine eigene Weise eine Geschichte, die europäischen Lesegewohnheiten nicht entgegenkommt.

Im Gegensatz zu anderen der grossen sogenannten „Romane“ der chinesischen Literaturtradition ist dies nicht eine Liebesgeschichte wie das *Honglouloumeng* 紅樓夢 oder eine Abenteuergeschichte wie das *Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳. Das *Xixouji* ist letztlich die Erzählung eines unglaublichen Superhelden, eine Fantasy-Story mit haarsträubenden Gefahren und den unglaublichsten Wendungen und mit einer Variante des ewigen Kampfes gut gegen böse, die in ihren Phantastereien immer wieder überraschen und die Aufmerksamkeit fesseln.

Die Erzählung ist ursprünglich für ein anderes Publikum konzipiert, nämlich als mündliche Schilderung. Was denn auch bei der Lektüre sofort ins Auge fällt, sind die zahlreichen oralen Spuren im Text. Wendungen wie „... doch davon sei hier nicht weiter die Rede. Lasst uns stattdessen von dem Unhold erzählen.“ (S. 584) oder „Berichten wir weiter, wie die drei Schüler in die Halle traten, wo Tripitaka sie zur Rede stellte.“ (S. 328) sowie das immer wiederkehrende „Seht! ...“ sind klare Zeichen. Die Geschichte wurde als Substrat verschiedener früherer und ehemals vielleicht separater Erzähltraditionen zu einem einheitlichen Text gemacht, und deshalb ist die Suche nach einer „Urfassung“ bloss von bibliographischem Interesse.

Die 100 Kapitel drehen sich um den Werdegang des Affenkönigs vom Blumen-Früchte-Berg. Dieses Wesen ist kein Affe, sondern ein durch die Interaktion der kosmischen Kräfte von Himmel und Erde aus einem Stein hervorgegangenes Wesen, das nicht „geboren“ wurde und das daher den Gesetzen des irdischen Lebens auch nicht unterworfen ist. Der Affenkönig ist beispielsweise so gut wie unverwundbar. Diese Hauptfigur des Romans ist ein Held, der es an Macht und Trickreichtum mit jedem modernen Superhelden der Populärkultur aufnehmen kann. Der für den grössten Teil des Buches „Pilger“ genannte Affenkönig erstreitet für sich selbst den Titel „Himmelsebenbürtiger Grosser Heiliger“ und sein Mönchsname Sun Wukong wird ihm erst im Laufe der Erzählung verliehen. Dieses Wesen besitzt die Fähigkeit, sich beliebig in praktisch jede Form zu verwandeln, die er will, was nicht nur tierische Erscheinungen wie kleine Insekten oder Greifvögel beinhaltet, sondern auch nicht-beseelte Verwandlungen wie in einen Lufthauch oder Wind. In den ersten Kapiteln ist von seinem Werdegang und seiner Ausbildung die Rede, mit der er seine fantastischen Anlagen vervollkommnet. Dazu ist er unermesslich stark, verfügt über einen speziellen „Goldblick“, mit dem er böse Absichten erkennen kann, sogar über hunderte von Kilometern weit, und er kann sich mittels „Wolkenüberschlag“ in Windeseile an jede Stelle im Kosmos bewegen. Sun Wukong ist bereits kurz nach seiner Entstehung bewaffnet mit dem sogenannten „Goldreifstab“, einer Stange ohne Klinge, die er nach seinen Vorstellungen beliebig lang, dick und schwer werden lassen kann. Wenn er seine Waffe nicht braucht, versteckt er sie in seinem Ohr, so klein – stecknadelgross – wird sie auf seinen Wunsch hin. Als Affe ist der Grosse Heilige natürlich behaart, und jedes seiner 84'000 Fellhaare kann er ebenfalls beliebig verwandeln (und es danach wieder in sein Fell eingliedern). All diese Fähigkeiten in Kombination gesetzt kann der Affenkönig also beispielsweise eines seiner Haare in eine Kopie seiner selbst verwandeln, sich dann mittels Wolkenüberschlag in den Himmel begeben, und schon einen Augenblick später wieder zurück sein.

Sehr bald realisiert man als Leserin oder Leser, dass diese Reise in den Westen und der dadurch bezweckte Transport buddhistischer Sutrentexte nach China von Sun Wukong in einem Tag vollendet werden könnte. Das Schicksal auferlegt ihm aber eine Reise mit nominell vier, tatsächlich aber bloss zwei Gefährten: Tripitaka ist der Name, der Xuanzang aus dem Geschlecht Chen gegeben wird, eine Anspielung auf die drei Körbe von Schriften, die er holen soll. Tripitaka tritt als Anführer der Delegation auf und als religiöser Gewährsmann, der durch den chinesischen Kaiser gesandt wird. Seine Aufgabe ist es, seine Papiere in jedem durchreisten Reich abstempeln zu lassen, nur eines von zahlreichen Hinweisen auf die Bedeutung der bürokratischen Verwaltung für die Aufrechterhaltung der Ordnung in allen Sphären dieser Welt. Zhu Bajie (Mönchsname Zhu Wuneng), in anderen Texten als „Schweinsmönch“ bezeichnet, hier aber „Eber Bajie“ genannt, ist der klassische Sidekick, dessen verfressene Tölpelhaftigkeit und beschränkte Fähigkeiten im Kampf die Macht und den Scharfsinn Sun Wukongs umso gewaltiger erscheinen zu lassen. Die zwei weiteren Reisegefährten sind Sha Wujing, ein Flusssämon, der bis auf einzelne wenige Gefechte hauptsächlich Trägerdienste verrichtet und ein Drachenpferd, das Tripitaka als Reittier dient auf dieser Reise, die 5048 Tage dauert oder exakt acht Tage länger als 14 Jahre (das Jahr mit 360 Tagen).

Die Dynamik der Erzählung entwickelt sich aus dem Zusammenspiel der unterschiedlichen Charaktere angesichts immer neuer Gefahren. Tripitaka, der sich seit neun Inkarnationen auf diese Aufgabe vorbereitet hat, ist zwar ein Mensch, aber von solcher Verfeinerung und bestehend aus reiner *Yang*-Energie, dass der Verzehr seines Fleisches ein langes Leben nahe an der Unsterblichkeit verleiht, eine Information über den Mönch, welche sämtliche Dämonen unterwegs bereits vor seiner Ankunft erfahren haben. Entsprechend ist eine von Tripitakas Rollen jene der „Jungfrau“, die etwas naiv in eine gefährliche Situation an der anderen stolpert, und die dann vom omnipotenten Helden Sun Wukong gerettet werden muss. Eber Bajie steht dabei für mangelnde Durchhaltekraft und die leiblichen Versuchungen, die vom Rechten Weg der Erleuchtung ablenken. Als Leserin oder Leser ist die Identifikation mit Sun Wukong selbstverständlich, und so bildet die lange Reise der Lektüre für die Lesenden eine Parallele zur Reise des Romanhelden. Es ergibt für den Affenkönig ebenso wenig Sinn, per Wolkenüberschlag die Schriften zu holen wie für das Publikum, nach fünfundzwanzig Kapitel den Schluss zu lesen. Die Lektüre ist ein Weg, und wie der Affenkönig sich auf seiner Wanderung wandelt, ist die Lektüre eine Entschleunigung der Lesegewohnheiten, um ein Modewort zu verwenden.

Dies also der narrative Rote Faden: Nach den ersten zehn Kapiteln, in welchen die Vorgeschichte aller Beteiligten erzählt wird, macht sich die

Gemeinschaft auf den Weg und trifft auf diesem allerlei Gefahren, denen sie jeweils um Haaresbreite und oftmals auch unter Inanspruchnahme fremder Hilfe entkommen. Was also hält diese Geschichte fesselnd und packend, was hält die Leserinnen und Leser auf ihrem Weg? Da ist zum einen die Tatsache, dass Monster und Dämonen nicht grundsätzlich böse sind, sondern oft verwirrte Kreaturen, die man lediglich auf den Rechten Weg zurückführen muss. Andere Dämonen sind besessene Wildtiere wie Wölfe, Löwen, aber auch Fische oder ein Distelfink. Die Monster und Dämonen müssen also nicht mit militärischer Macht besiegt werden, sondern entlarvt und damit befreit. Es sind auch nicht immer Kämpfe um Leben und Tod, und Tripitaka wird als buddhistischer Abt äusserst ungehalten, wenn Sun Wukong Leben auslöscht. Die Kämpfe mit den Gegnern werden zumeist durch Scharfsinn und List gewonnen, weniger durch Gewalt und Kraft.

Eine weitere wiederkehrende Eigenart der Geschichte, die für Leserinnen und Leser fesselnd sein kann, ist die angesprochene Existenz bürokratischer Strukturen in jedem Entscheidungsprozess. Vom Jade-Kaiser im daoistischen Himmel bis zum Drachenkönig im Ostmeer, sämtliche Instanzen sind eine Kopie der kaiserzeitlichen chinesischen Zivil- und Militärverwaltung, mit Beamtenrängen und schriftlich formulierten Anträgen für jeden Vorgang. Dieses Detail des Textes ist zunächst eine drollige Eigenheit, aber darüber hinaus schimmert zum einen die mingzeitliche Welt durch, in der die Erzählung ihre heutige Form annahm, zum anderen ist man ja auch als moderner Leser im Westen irgendwie mit der Verwaltung und ihren spezifischen Abläufen konfrontiert, und so wandelt sich die Andersartigkeit dieser Vorgänge im Himmel oder bei den Geistern in eine Vertrautheit.

Letzten Endes ist es aber natürlich der deutsche Text, der fesselt. Die Übersetzerin stellt für diesen deutschen Text im besten Sinn eine „zweite Autorin“ dar, und somit liegt der Hauptgrund für Lesbarkeit des Buches, die Unterhaltsamkeit und die dadurch vermittelte Kurzweil auf Leserseite im deutschen Text, den Eva Lüdi Kong hier geschaffen hat, über Tausende von Einzelentscheidungen und wohl abgewogen gewählte Begriffe. Bis zur letzten Zeile meint man als Lesender die Achtung der Übersetzerin für diesen Text zu erkennen. Die Begeisterung für diese Erzählung muss es auch sein, welche sie 15 Lebensjahre in dieses Projekt investieren liessen. Die Übersetzerin steht zudem in schöner Tradition der deutschen Wiedergaben chinesische Romane: Sie knüpft an die bekannten Romanübersetzungen Franz Kuhns des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts an, indem sie sprechende Namen übersetzt. Auch bei Kuhn wurden Ortsnamen wie Bergketten oder Personen besonders aussagekräftigen Eigennamen eingedeutscht wiedergegeben und die Mischung aus umgeschriebenen und übersetzten Eigennamen in der vorliegenden Ausgabe erinnert stark an Kuhns Vorbild.

Das Einfühlungsvermögen und die Sprachbeherrschung Eva Lüdi Kongs lässt sich an einem Beispiel demonstrieren: Als Sun Wukong im 34. Kapitel zwei als Wächter dienende Ungeheuer übertölpelt (mit denen er zuvor bereits zu tun gehabt hatte), lautet sein Befehl an sie im Deutschen wie folgt: „Los geht rein und meldet eurem Zankteufel, dass Sunger Pil da ist!“. Im selben Wortlaut meldeten die Ungeheuer ihren Königen die Botschaft. „Eben haben wir Pilger Sun festgenommen, wieso kommt jetzt ein Sunger Pil?“ fragte Goldhorn erschrocken.“ (S. 434). Im Original tauschte Pilger Sun *Sun xing zhe* 孫行者 seinen Namen in *zhe xing Sun* 者行孫. Eva Lüdi Kong hätte für den umgedrehten Namen von Pilger Sun anstelle von „Sunger Pil“ auch „Reglip Nus“ oder „Silger Pun“ wählen können, aber bloss „Sunger Pil“ wird vom deutschsprachigen Leser ohne Nachzudenken sofort als Wortspiel erkannt. Die häufig vorkommende Beschimpfung „Zankteufel“ ist im Original *pogui* 潑魔 vgl. hierzu auch die häufiger anzutreffende Beschimpfung *poguitou* 潑鬼頭.

Solche Beispiele gibt es auf praktisch jeder Seite. Die Übersetzerin steuert sowohl Quell- wie auch Zieltext mit hoher Sprachkompetenz durch die schwierigen Passagen. Gelegentliche Anmerkungen in Form von Fussnoten erschliessen auch dem nicht sinologisch geschulten Publikum den Zugang den sonst unverständlichen Passagen des Textes. Diese konzentrieren sich auf paratextliche Verbindungen (beispielsweise zum *Sutra des 6. Patriarchen* aus dem 8. Jh., S. 367) und auf Erklärungen zur immer wiederkehrenden Thematik der Trigramme und Hexagramme des *Yi Jing*, die mit kosmischen und anatomischen Abläufen korreliert wurden (z.B. „(Vollendung (既濟 *jìjì*): das 63. Hexagramm „Nach der Vollendung“, das aus dem Feuer-Trigramm Li (unten) und dem Wasser-Trigramm Kan (oben) besteht, so dass alle Linien im harmonischen Wechsel von Yin und Yang stehen und sich miteinander verbinden. In der Inneren Alchemie steht der Begriff „Wasser und Feuer in Vollendung“ für die Erlangung vollendeter Harmonie zwischen Körper und Geist.“, S. 747). Für eine differenziertere Diskussion und ein vertieftes Interesse seitens der Lesenden verweist Lüdi Kong wiederholt aufs Nachwort.

Was die oben angeführte „Logik“ der Erzählung angeht, so kann man sich selbst den Lesespass vergällen, indem man allzu kritisch nachfragt. Die Geschichte hat den Charakter eines Märchens und entsprechend werden logische Brüche in Kauf genommen, wenn es der Erzählung dient. Nur in den wenigsten Fällen gibt es seitens des Textes eine Erklärung für solche logischen Brüche, wenn es nach einer Szene, in welcher Sun sich in eine Fliege verwandelt und im Vergleich weitaus grössere und schwerere Gefässe aus einer Höhle entführt, etwa heisst: „Ihr fragt euch, wo er die Zaubergefässe hatte, da er doch eine Fliege war? Mit den Zaubergefässen verhielt es sich eben genau gleich wie mit dem Goldreifstab. Sie hiessen nämlich „Wunscherfüllende Buddhaschätze“ und

konnten sich mit der Körpergröße verändern. Deshalb fanden sie selbst auf einer Fliege Platz.“ (S. 428).

Eingangs dieser Rezension wurden Metaphern zur Reise zitiert. Dies ist die Reisebeschreibung der Reise in den Westen, aber zugleich ist es eine Reise durch Abenteuer und Gefahren, also eine Fahrt ins Ungewisse, und für Sun wie für die Leserinnen und Leser ist es eine entschleunigende Reise zu sich selbst, bei der man seiner eigenen Ungeduld begegnet und mit dieser ringt. Am Schluss der Reise hat Sun seine aufbrausende Natur besiegt, seinen Zorn und seine oft ungestüme Art. Das historische Vorbild für Tripitaka, der tangzeitliche Indienreisende Xuanzang hat durch seine Reise, sein Zurückbringen und Übertragen der umfangreichen Sutrentexte dazu beigetragen, dass der Buddhismus in China eine bessere Resonanz finden konnte. Durch die Lektüre der *Reise in den Westen* wird man als westlicher Leser wohl nicht zum Buddhisten, aber es setzt sich klar die Erkenntnis fest, dass der Buddhismus ein unveräusserlicher Teil der chinesischen Kultur ist, trotz konstanter und anderslautender Kritik durch konfuzianische Gelehrte. Dies ist die eingangs angesprochene Veränderung auf der Seite der Lesenden, welche nicht nur eine amüsante Geschichte lesen, sondern denen zugleich die Buddhalehre in ihrer chinesischen Rezeption als eine ideale Religionsform dargestellt wird.

Rezensionen – Comptes rendus – Reviews

Rawski, Evelyn S.: *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 349 pp., Maps, Tables, Bibliography, Index, ISBN 978-1-1070-9308-9.

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The fifteen years after the antipodal statements of Evelyn S. Rawski (1996) and Ping-ti Ho (1998) have witnessed a growing influence of the “New Qing History”, which examines the history of China’s Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1911) in the larger context of Inner Asian history and believes that a comparative approach based on non-Chinese-language sources can open new horizons for appreciating the Manchu people and the Qing. In this current book, Rawski moves a step forward to develop the concept of “De-Centering China” that aims at rethinking Chinese history “from the perspective of the periphery, and not the core” (p. 1). Challenging the conventional notion that treats China’s history as a linear narrative centered on the Central Plain and the Han Chinese, Rawski forcefully argues in this revisionist history that the historical routes of China since the sixteenth century can be better understood by viewing it in the larger regional framework of northeast Asia, i. e. Korea, Japan, Jurchen/Manchu, and Mongol.

The nucleus of this meticulously studied and eloquently written book progresses through five chapters, which are grouped into two parts, bracketed by a penetrating introduction and an extensive epilogue. Recounting the history of China’s northeast frontier, in particular the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago prior to the European traders in the late sixteenth century, Chapter 1 situates northeast Asia with respect to China’s core region in the Central Plain and argues that the creation of Korean and Japanese states were “through intense interaction with other entities on the steppe and the Central Plain” (p. 21). Specifically, Rawski divides this long history into three phases. The first phase, which lasted until the rise of the Tang (618–907) in the early seventh century, saw the first formation of autochthonous states on China’s northeast frontier. Although built on knowledge disseminated by the Central Plain, these states interacted more intensively with other polities at the periphery than with China’s core region. Following the decline of the Tang, power shifted to northeast Asian states (i. e. Khitan Liao 907–1125, Jurchen Jin 1115–1234, Mongol Yuan 1206–1368) that used their military advantage to defeat regimes based in the

Central Plain and ruled large empires that encompassed both nomadic and agrarian subjects. The third phase began in the sixteenth century when maritime trade across northeast Asia expanded and Korea and Japan began to behave as confident players, not subordinates, and eventually challenged the traditional Sino-centric world order.

Constructing a country's narrative against the background of regional events usually treated within national histories, Rawski explores in Chapter 2 the transformative new practices that were adopted by China and Japan through cross-border commercial activities and multi-state competition between 1550 and 1650. After a survey of the invasion of Korea by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) in 1592 and the rise of the Jurchen/Manchu in the first half of the seventeenth century, the focus of this chapter is then laid on the consequences of the increasing trading exchanges initiated with European traders, colonizers, and missionaries. The enormous political, economic, and cultural transformations in China, Japan, and Korea, as Rawski cogently argues, “make the 1550–1650 period ‘early modern’” (p. 62) and “Qing and Japan adopted the perspectives of early modern European states” (p. 101). It is such perspectives that stimulated the Tokugawa shogunate and the Qing court to carry out large exploration and mapping projects, which later provided them necessary knowledge in negotiating with Russia, the new power in northeast Asia.

As the territorial awareness grew, the cultural boundaries delineating national self-images also rose and intellectuals in China, Korea, and Japan became increasingly prone to articulating their distinctive national identities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as demonstrated in the three chapters in Part 2. Chapter 3 is devoted to state rituals, which aim at “legitimat[ing] political systems and creat[ing] symbolic communities” and thus “reflect interstate tensions as well as each state's desire to assert its identity” (pp. 105–106). Keenly examining various state rituals in China, Korea, and Japan, respectively, Rawski notes that state rituals practiced by the Qing were an eclectic mixture of Central Plain cultural heritage of emperorship interspersed with heavy shamanic rites originated from northeast Asian traditions and Tibetan Buddhism. In a same manner, Japan's state ritual system was merged with elements of indigenous cults and continental influences, characterized by Buddhist-Shinto doctrines, while in Korea with the political transition from the Ming (1368–1644) to the Qing in China the established Confucian order shifted to an idealized new order in which Korean played the central role.

Similar tensions between indigenous traditions and Chinese (Confucian) norms can also be observed in royal successions and kinship structures, as treated in Chapter 4. Their northeast Asian origins of the Manchu led to their initial reliance on collegial rule but they soon adopted the Chinese patrilineal

kinship system and eventually the Chinese principle of father-son succession was institutionalized. The Korean and Japanese responses to the introduction of Confucian norms concerning inheritance and succession took different paths. Japan's kinship practices were marked with both certain indigenous traditions and some accommodations to the patrilineality of Chinese style. Korea, on the other hand, developed an extreme form of patrilineage among the new *yangban* elite, while the throne was overwhelmingly manipulated by the natal kinsmen of the royal senior women. Chapter 5 analyzes the discourse of *hua* (civilized) and *yi* (barbarian) propounded by Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. The Qing rulers asserted that "Heaven chose a ruling house on the basis of virtue, not ethnicity" (p. 222). Koreans and Japanese, in contrast, cited the *yi* origins of the Manchu to reject the political legitimacy of the Qing and thus asserted their own versions of the Asian world order.

Broad in scope and conscientious in detail, this book represents Prof. Rawski's culmination of a labor of devotion and love in advocating studying the history of China through a new perspective beyond national histories. This perspective is two-folded. First, it calls for contemplating events in which the Chinese heartland was encompassed in historical movements of regional or global dimensions. Here, China's interrelations with Korea and Japan were casted into a broader northeast Asian context. Rawski persuasively argues that geographical contiguity and intense political, economic, and cultural interactions between China, the Korean peninsula, and the Japanese archipelago justify considering them together in a regional and global context. This enlarged historical version extends beyond northeast Asia since arrival of European traders and missionaries further intensified cultural contacts and stimulated dynamic political and economic changes. On the other hand, it moves away from the Central Plain and direct the focus on the periphery, emphasizing that it is the interaction between borderlands and the Central Plain that functioned "as the dynamic engine behind the long-term development of China's imperial formation" (p. 225). Without a proper appreciation of the origins of the Manchu and their close connections to Inner Asian peoples such as the Mongol, there is no doubt that our understanding of the Qing state rituals and royal succession would be incomplete.

Another precious strength of Rawski's book lies in her source base which goes far beyond Chinese material – she has made use of a staggering array of sources, including Manchu-language archives, the Veritable Records of the Korean Choson dynasty (1392–1910), and Japanese primary sources on Hideyoshi's invasions of Korea. Reading and comparing multiple sources, as Rawski cogently points out, "provide[s] valuable information that was censored or edited out of Chinese texts, and reveal[s] other views that are absent from the

diplomatic correspondence between states” (p. 14). Rawski also consults abundant secondary literature in Asian and Western languages, which present non-Chinese perspectives and offer divergent interpretations – a glimpse at the extensive 61-page bibliography will enhance readers’ marvel at Rawski’s erudition.

Although few would read through the bibliography, the copy-editing and proof-reading could have been more careful, as one may expect from a Cambridge University Press publication – numerous mistakes in Chinese titles pepper the text, along with obvious and not-so-obvious printers’ devils: for example on p. 275, p. 277, p. 285, p. 297, p. 312, several unnecessary spaces appear in the titles Chinese literature; the Chinese name of the Jurchen is rendered differently on p. 275 and p. 283; in the title of an article by Pu Wencheng on p. 305, three Chinese characters were erroneously printed, to name only a few.

Certainly, these minor quibbles should by no means detract the distinguished accomplishment Rawski has made in her ground-breaking study of why and how was the northeast Asian region, in particular Korea and Japan, of irreplaceable importance not only as frontier for the Chinese Central Plain states but also as vital players in the shared geopolitical arena. Discarding the conventional view that Korea and Japan were subordinate actors within a China-dominated world, Rawski has vigorously shown that they were in fact interrelated and one’s actions often stimulated direct responses from the others. This perspective is immensely valuable and is bound to inspire more future studies on the dynamic region of northeast Asia. For readers with more profound interest on the topic, another recent publication by David C. Kang (2010) is warmly recommended to be read in combination.

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