

attainable. He eventually compiled what he found, not as an aid to those deeply involved in practicing the arts of immortality, but to convince aspirants like himself that those arts could be effective. It is therefore wise not to take his interpretations at face value.

There are astonishing gaps in his knowledge. After all, in his fourth-century book there is not a hint of awareness that the Celestial Masters movement existed. That is why I once had occasion to refer to him as “the Alan Watts of his time.”<sup>12</sup> That was, I fear, too naughty for most sinologists, who tend to think highly of the people whose writings they read. Trust in Ge’s interpretations remains the rule. It is time, I suggest, for a fresh look at the origins of Daoist movements in Jiangnan, and no doubt a more critical look at Ge’s book will contribute to it.

These questions come to mind because Pregadio has given us a vastly improved picture of early alchemy, one that will certainly inspire a new generation to jump the barriers of scholarly habit. His deep textual study and willingness to ask new questions show that it is not too late to revivify the study of alchemy and its religious connections.

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*Portrait of a Community: Society, Culture, and the Structures of Kinship in the Mulan River Valley (Fujian) from the Late Tang through the Song.* By Hugh R. Clark. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 473. \$55.00.

Why is local history a productive approach to the study of China? How can local perspectives shed light on the history of a country of such vast size and with such a long tradition of shared culture and centralized administration? There are a number of possible ways to answer this question, some historical and others historiographical. For one thing, until recent times the local was the key frame of experience for the vast majority of the population. Though they were certainly conscious to some degree or another of their position within the larger Chinese whole, for most people it was the local structures of family and community that mattered to daily life. The local was how ordinary people saw the world. For another, from the Song onwards localism emerged as a conscious ideology and organizing principle for the élite, a way of understanding their position in national culture. The local was thus also a way by which élites made sense of their world. Hugh

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<sup>12</sup> “On the Word Taoism as a Source of Perplexity. With Special Reference to the Relations of Science and Religion in Traditional China,” *History of Religions* 17 (1978), pp. 303–30, at p. 326, reprinted in Sivin, *Medicine, Philosophy and Religion in Ancient China*, chapter 6, same pagination. My brief acquaintance with Watts suggested that he was a much better persuader than a practitioner.

Clark's new study is founded on a third compelling justification for local history, that studying the germination of change at the local level can give new insight into broader national changes. Local history allows us to see things about the big picture that we might not otherwise see.

Clark's earlier work on the Tang-Song commercial revolution focused on the Quanzhou area of southern Fujian (Minnan). He now moves slightly to the north, to the Mulan river valley in Xinghua prefecture, giving a "portrait" of the region from the late Tang to the Song. Clark's contention that the Mulan valley can be understood as a locality, a region sharing common features, is persuasive. Its coastal plains, largely isolated by mountain ranges on their landward sides, formed a coherent physiographic region that was generally administered as a single political unit. Several chapters demonstrate that geography and politics gave rise to high levels of economic integration and dense social interaction within the region (I am less convinced that the region had an identity, that its residents consciously articulated an awareness of themselves as a distinctive community; this is something to be demonstrated rather than simply asserted). Clark's social history of the Mulan valley provides a description in unprecedented detail of local social and cultural life during a period of momentous change, both locally and nationally.

The first half of the book is a discussion of the élite kinship groups of the region. Using local genealogies, collected in his own travels in the region, Clark outlines these groups' tales of migration from the north. A substantial percentage of genealogies of Fujian lineages (Xu Xiaowang estimates it at 80%) claim to originate in a single county in north China.<sup>1</sup> This claim is a way of linking their members to an epic story of the late Tang, when a Henan strongman led his band of followers south to Fujian, seized control, and established the Min kingdom, one of several regional polities of the Tang-Song interregnum in the late ninth and early tenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Over time some of the settlers and their descendants organized themselves on the basis of kinship. The lineages that resulted then often segmented internally into multiple branches, a process for which Clark offers two explanations. The more intriguing, though not fully worked out, is that segmentation allowed for diversification of economic strategy, with literati groups more willing to sanction and even invest in their relatives' commercial efforts if they could clearly mark a distinction between themselves and their merchant cousins. The second explanation is that segmentation was "defined" (p. 120) by the fact that some lines of descent were more successful than others at the civil service examinations. Before we can explain a link between examinations and segmentation, we need to have some understanding of the social significance of segmentation. Maurice Freedman offered such an explanation in his classic books on the Chinese lineage, arguing that segmentation was the product of economic differentiation, with segments being the result of certain families having

<sup>1</sup> Xu Xiaowang 徐曉望, *Min guo shi* 閩國史 (Taipei: Wunan tushu chuban gongsi, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Curiously, Clark cites neither of the monographs on the Min kingdom, Edward H. Schafer's *The Empire of Min: A South China Kingdom of the Tenth Century* (Rutland, VT: Charles Tuttle, 1954) and Xu Xiaowang's *Min guo shi*.

sufficient surplus to allow them to establish corporate trusts, the proceeds of which were limited to their direct descendants.<sup>3</sup> Without directly engaging Freedman on this point, Clark seems to be making a different argument, that social advancement typically precedes rather than follows economic advancement and therefore best explains segmentation. The apparent difference may be the outcome of the authors' different sources. In the twentieth-century lineages that Freedman studied, the economics of segmentary trusts were plainly obvious. But the compilers of the Mulan genealogies may not have wanted to sully their work with material concerns, preferring to celebrate the examination successes that both arose out of and contributed to economic differentiation and segmentation. In the next, painstakingly researched chapter on marriage connections between elite groups, Clark shows that almost all marriage connections were made locally, that locally prominent people married other prominent people, and that only the very high elite made marriages with distant families. These findings, while perhaps not surprising, are nonetheless important. They provide empirical support for a qualification to Robert Hymes's arguments that long-distance marriage strategies declined over the course of the Song. The Mulan genealogies show that this argument was only ever relevant to the national elite.<sup>4</sup>

In the second half of the book, Clark considers three dimensions of local culture: religious culture, literati culture, and the culture of kinship. In the religious sphere, "innovations at the level of popular practice" meant that there were multiple ways of dealing with the forces of the cosmos. While some members of the elite worried about orthodoxy and institutional integrity, many more were content to integrate and blur the distinctions. This is a chapter rich with information about the complex local specificities of religious and ritual life. Clark next outlines the engagement of the elite with the examination system and their successes at entering the bureaucracy. His main point is that the local engagement with literati culture was not the product of an external intellectual stimulus, the growing philosophical movement of neo-Confucian *daoxue*, but rather of efforts to build and maintain family social status. Clark is no doubt right that social mobility and reproduction was an important part of literati culture, but to read it as the whole is to risk neglecting the broad philosophical bases of the neo-Confucian revival, and I would be interested to learn whether a specialist in Song intellectual history might come to different conclusions than Clark, a social and economic historian.

Kinship thought and practice is the strand that ties together the whole volume. The period of this study is precisely that when the Mulan valley became integrated into the Chinese polity, transforming from a place that was marginal in national life to one that was central, and groups constituted on the basis of claims to common descent were key to

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* (London: Athlone, 1958); *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (London: Athlone, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-chou, Chiang-shi, in Northern and Southern Sung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Clark's refinements can be seen as the local version of Beverly J. Bossler's critique concerning elites living in the capital region. *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, & the State in Sung China (960–1279)* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1998).

this process. For Clark, this transformation is fundamentally the story of immigration from the north. There is though an alternative to this account of “frontier expansion,” told first by Wolfram Eberhard and more recently elaborated by scholars such as Helen Siu and Liu Zhiwei, who interpret the process instead as one of long-term mutual interaction between the migrants who moved in and the indigenous peoples who were already there (The relationship between the two models of change, one seeing expansion into land that was basically empty and the other stressing the forgotten indigenes, parallels in some interesting ways that between the Turner thesis and its critics in American frontier history).<sup>5</sup> This is a story of ongoing historical flux, with some groups adopting certain markers of identity and others declining or being denied those same markers. The long-term character of the interaction is evident from the fact that even today almost two millennia after the first Chinese settlement there remain in the surrounding area groups who self-identify as the descendants of those early indigenes. (That one of these groups, the She, is more visible than others, such as the boat-dwelling Dan, reflects not a more stable identity historically but the post-1949 policy of classifying certain groups into a fixed number of “national minorities.”) There are many tantalizing glimpses of this process in the sources from Fujian, from texts that say the indigenous inhabitants came to the aid of the warlords *cum* rulers of the Min kingdom to the persistence, up to the present, of cults to demonic pythons that appear to predate the Chinese entry into the region.

This is an issue of some consequence. The genealogies that are Clark’s main source are mostly of Qing and Republican vintage, though they often contain reproductions of earlier texts. Clark’s treatment of these documents is a model of rigorous and critical scholarship. His analysis of the sources enables him to make many convincing evaluations of the reliability of specific texts, and show that many of their claims are spurious. I think this analysis could go further. Clark holds that even while some, perhaps most, of the genealogies do not convey the facts of migration accurately, the migration itself was real. As Freedman explained long ago, the Chinese genealogy is not simply a record of biological descent. It is also “a set of claims to origin and relationships, a charter, a map of dispersion, a framework for wide-ranging social organization, a blueprint for action. It is a political statement.”<sup>6</sup> We must therefore consider how genealogies are embedded in a social and political context. We must ask both whether a given story of migration is true or false and also why it became important to so many groups of the region to assert a history of migration. Recent work by Chinese scholars on other regions can guide us in this task. In his study of widespread legends of emigration from Shanxi’s Hongdong county, Zhao Shiyu speculates that in the Ming, in the face of considerable ethnic mixing

<sup>5</sup> Wolfram Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968); Helen F. Siu and Liu Zhiwei, “Lineage, Market, Pirate, and Dan: Ethnicity in the Pearl River Delta of South China,” in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, ed. Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 285–310.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Freedman, *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung*, p. 31.

in north China, it became advantageous to claim to have migrated in order to prove that one was not descended from northern nomadic groups. Liu Zhiwei's research on the Pearl River delta, where many lineages claim to originate in the town of Zhujixiang in northern Guangdong, explains such legends in terms of people's efforts to legitimize status when they were registered in the early Ming household registration system. In my own work on the Fuzhou region immediately to the north of Mulan, I argued that claims to immigration from north China were often part of a process of differentiation, of inclusion and exclusion, driven by the interaction of Chinese immigrants, indigenous peoples, and the state.<sup>7</sup> I wonder if similar forces were not at work in the Mulan valley in this period. This is not to say that all of the prominent families of the region are biological descendants of autochthonous peoples, but rather that, especially as the state presence in the region expanded, it became a matter of considerable importance to which group one claimed to belong, and genealogy became an accepted way to make that claim. Many of the genealogies used by Clark are clearly retrospective constructions. There was a widespread recognition even at the time (pp. 260–61) that over the course of the Tang-Song transition, the compiling of genealogies was mostly suspended. But hundreds of years later, genealogists were able to recover multi-generational histories down to precise details. How were they able to do this? The Song encyclopedist Zheng Qiao wrote in 1130, for example, that his ancestors were from the provincial capital of Fuzhou, but he did not know when they had moved to Mulan. It is only some seven hundred years later that “[t] his omission is corrected” (p. 38). Two lineages of the Fang surname had lived in the region for hundreds of years before they “discovered” that their respective founding ancestors were in fact half brothers (pp. 62–66). Then there is the mid-fourteenth century case of Zheng Min from an inland prefecture of Fujian. A chance encounter with a Mulan man led to the realization that they were actually distant cousins whose ancestors had lost touch two hundred years earlier, and it appears that this was then the justification for the merger of the two sets of genealogical records (pp. 264–66).<sup>8</sup> All of these are *topoi* found widely in the genealogical literature, and so we need to ask whether these are claims that have been made retrospectively, and if so why and when such claims became important and useful.

<sup>7</sup> Zhao Shiyu 趙世瑜, “Zuxian jiyi, jiayuan xiangzheng yu zuqun lishi: Shanxi Hongdong Dahuai shu chuanshuo jixi” 祖先記憶、家園象徵與族群歷史：山西洪洞大槐樹傳說解析, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, 2006, no. 1, pp. 49–64; Liu Zhiwei 劉志偉, “Fuhui, chuanshuo yu lishi zhenshi: Zhujiang sanjiaozhou zupu zhong zongzu lishi de xushi jiegou ji qi yiyi” 附會、傳說與歷史真實——珠江三角洲族譜中宗族歷史的敘事結構及其意義, in *Zhongguo pudie yanjiu: quanguo pudie kaifa yu liyong xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 中國譜牒研究：全國譜牒開發與利用學術研討會論文集, ed. Wang Heming 王鶴鳴, Ma Yuanliang 馬遠良, and Wang Shiwei 王世偉 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999); Michael Szonyi, *Practicing Kinship: Lineage and Descent in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Accounts of migration square chronologically with the gazetteer statistics on population growth, but it is impossible to distinguish actual from statistical growth.

Besides compiling genealogies the élites of Mulan wrote treatises on lineage ritual and mourning garb, and besides writing texts they built and worshipped in magnificent ancestral halls. Clark's last chapter, the most theoretically important of the book, traces the development of these institutions in the region. His key argument is that the codification of the orthodoxy of kinship by Fan Zhongyan and especially by Zhu Xi should be seen not as "points of departure" but rather "as resolutions, the reification of diverse practice into a standard body of orthodox kinship practice" (p. 261). In other words, the seminal texts of Fan and Zhu must be understood as having a pre-history of "practical experimentation and innovation" (ibid.) by local élites in the preceding centuries. Out of these local initiatives precipitated an orthodoxy of kinship theory and practice that governed the institution thereafter. This is demonstrated convincingly, and represents one of the major insights of the book.

Perhaps it is only natural that historians tend to emphasize the importance of their own period of specialization. But Clark's assertion that by the end of the Song, the important questions about kinship had "largely been answered" and that it is therefore meaningful to talk about the "mature institutions of kinship" in the post-Song (p. 5) is challenged by recent work of scholars such as Chang Jianhua and Zheng Zhenman on the development of the lineage in the Ming. There is not necessarily a contradiction between these two approaches (or three if we include also the important intellectual history of Patricia Ebrey). With Clark's Tang-Song social history, we can perhaps start to see the outlines of a comprehensive history of kinship thought and practice that might resolve the apparent tensions. The late middle-period innovation and experimentation in response to the larger changes of the age (described by Clark) was followed by a phase of formalization and ideologization of that innovation in the Song that had the effect of creating a common language of kinship (Ebrey). In the late imperial phase, this common language became a resource for continued experimentation in support of further innovation of local strategies (Chang and Zheng).<sup>9</sup> The revival of lineage organization in the contemporary People's Republic shows that the ever-changing discourse of kinship remains relevant to social life even today.

My comments on both these questions, the meaning of migration legends and the overall trajectory of kinship thought and practice, ultimately boil down to one issue, the relationship of kinship to culture. One can interpret kinship as a self-evident and transcendent phenomenon that may take different institutional forms in different contexts, in other words as something that exists outside of culture. In Clark's reading, kinship thought and practice are intended to find the appropriate roles for kinship. Thus his discussion of the composition, internal structure, and marriage relations of kin groups

<sup>9</sup> Chang Jianhua 常建華, *Mingdai zongzu yanjiu* 明代宗族研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2005); Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿, *Ming-Qing Fujian jiazu zuzhi yu shehui bianqian* 明清福建家族組織與社會變遷 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992); Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China: A Social History of Writing about Rites* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991) (as well as many other works).

precedes his discussion of the culture of kinship. But one can also see kinship as discursively created, produced by the very texts and practices that Clark uses to describe it.<sup>10</sup> On this reading, kinship thought and practice are about constructing strategies that can be harnessed to social and intellectual agendas. One can see this approach in two other recent bodies of work, one close in time to Song Mulan, and the other close in space. Like Mulan, Wuzhou (contemporary Jinhua) in Zhejiang was a previously peripheral place that became a major centre of literati culture in the Song. Whereas Clark sees family solidarity in Mulan primarily as a basis for social advancement, Peter Bol argues that Jinhua intellectuals saw its function as a vehicle for promoting their ideas about transforming society. But throughout the Song their practical focus was less on lineages than on institutions such as academies that served the narrower literati community. Only in the late Yuan, centuries after their colleagues in Mulan, did they turn their attention to ancestral halls and genealogy.<sup>11</sup> Thus different institutional strategies arise depending on how kinship is conceptualized by local élites. A second point of comparison is with David Faure's study of the Pearl River delta, where the crucial moment of lineage development was later still, in the Ming. Faure interprets this as a shift from communities focused on territorial cults to communities focused on ancestral rituals in an officially sanctioned style, and therefore relates the rise of the lineage to the changing relationship between the local community and the state.<sup>12</sup> These examples show, as Clark would probably anticipate, that understandings of kinship could follow very different trajectories depending on the precise configuration of local factors. They invite speculation about whether the apparent similarity across regions can conceal very different historical processes. One could also go further and ask whether the outcomes of these processes are simply different versions of the same institution, or whether kinship is actually constructed differently in different local contexts.

We do not yet fully understand how kinship thought and practice came to be so important and pervasive that by the close of the imperial era kinship was part of the natural order, a phenomenon that seemed to stand outside history and culture. It had not always been so. We need to know much more about how from Song to Ming élites and

<sup>10</sup> Within anthropology, there is a third even more critical position, first articulated by Rodney Needham and subsequently developed by David Schneider, that holds that kinship does not exist in the abstract but only in its concrete instantiation in specific cultures, and therefore the term is unhelpful. As Needham put it most dramatically, "there is no such thing as kinship." Rodney Needham, "Remarks on the Analysis of Kinship and Marriage," in Rodney Needham, *Rethinking Kinship and Marriage* (London: Tavistock, 1971), p. 5; David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1984). An insightful recent survey of the anthropology of Chinese kinship is Gonçalo Duro Dos Santos, "The Anthropology of Chinese Kinship: A Critical Overview," *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 5.2 (2006).

<sup>11</sup> Peter Bol, "Local History and Family in Past and Present," in *The New and the Multiple: Sung Senses of the Past*, ed. Thomas H. C. Lee (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

commoners in different places constructed kinship in pursuit of their strategies and then mystified or obscured that very construction. Only with many more local studies will the overall picture emerge. Only then will we be able to fully assess Clark's assertion that the institutions of kinship had reached maturity in the Song. In the meantime, this is an important work. It both provides much detail about local culture and community in one Song locality and testifies to the importance of the local perspective in understanding the broader sweep of Chinese history.

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*A Social History of the Chinese Book: Books and Literati Culture in Late Imperial China.*  
By Joseph P. McDermott. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006. Pp. xiv + 294.  
\$57.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

This book is a collection of essays on printing, book-lending, and book collections in the Yangzi delta in late imperial China from 1400 through 1800. Three chapters 2, 4, and 5 were originally lectures and portions of the first four chapters have been published. Chapters 1, 3, 6 are new additions.

The author offers two theses: first, imprint in China did not triumph over manuscript until the sixteenth century; second, despite the ascendancy of imprint, books continued to be restricted in their circulation; even literati, officials, and collectors had problem acquiring books and gaining access to books down to the eighteenth century. The problems stemmed from the insufficient commercialization of book production, the reluctance of private collectors to share their books, and the absence of "public libraries" whose access did not depend on personal relationship or special ties such as kinship and native place. Consequently, the problem of access to books prevented the literati from forming a community of learning until the eighteenth century when state created large libraries, making books more accessible to scholars. However, even the emergence of a community of learning and greater access to imprints did not contribute to the formation of a public, a national identity, and the promotion and spread of mass literacy. The first thesis confirms current scholarship on the burgeoning of commercial publications since the late Ming. The second thesis substantially qualifies the first one, disputing that expansion of commercial publishing in the late Ming had any significant "liberating" impact on literati culture until the nineteenth century. Except the audacious claim in the second part of the thesis, the book is primarily a synthesis of current scholarship in Chinese, Japanese, and English on the history of book printing, book collection, and lending practices.

Chapter 1 provides a detailed description of the process of preparing woodblocks, carving, transcribing, printing, and binding in the production of the traditional Chinese