

the unfulfilled virgin of so many earlier stories. Instead, the play—in this reading—becomes a narrative of one character's self-redemption through loneliness, her contemplation of her own actions, and her recognition of the double nature of the self. It seems that the entire study simply builds toward Zeitlin's interpretation of this play; the depth of her insights could not be fully appreciated without having read her survey of the character type that Hong Sheng so successfully appropriated to his own artistic purposes.

The volume has nearly 50 pages of endnotes, a glossary of the *hanzi* for Chinese names and terms that appear in the text in Romanized form, an extensive bibliography, and a very helpful index. The only complaint that one might raise is about the book's format: it has extremely narrow margins, especially at the top of the page, making the pages look crowded. The typeface is also a bit small, which only exaggerates this appearance. Clearly the Press was maximizing the number of words per page in order to cut production costs. This is an unfortunate reminder of the financial pressures on university presses today, but these physical matters do not seriously detract from this splendid contribution to understanding the artistic richness of late imperial Chinese literature.

In sum, this is an accomplishment of the first rank. Not every reader will be fully convinced by every part of her intricate analysis; Zeitlin by necessity writes with broad strokes in covering such a major segment of Chinese literature over nearly two millennia. One might say that she seems too willing to see parallels between her findings here and ideas posited by a variety of Western critics: Sigmund Freud, Paul Ricoeur, Rey Chow, Richard Schnecher, among others. Likewise, there can be a variety of different interpretations of the complex plays she considers that do not focus on their phantom heroines; she mentions few if any in her notes. But one cannot fail to be impressed by the ease with which Zeitlin ranges across a large number of texts, pointing out commonalities well beyond what we knew from previous studies. And for each text, her new insights will have to be taken into consideration by any serious reader. *The Phantom Heroine* is a major contribution to the study of Chinese literature.

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*Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*. Edited by Charlotte Furth, Judith T. Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 331. \$55.00.

The usual programme leading to an edited volume of scholarly essays is to select a theme or problem and invite a diverse group of scholars to write about that from their different perspectives. For this book the editors have undertaken a rather different project, with wonderfully productive results. They work with a common theme—the formulation and use of specialist knowledge as these develop through the interplay of canon and practice

in late-imperial China—but what holds the enterprise together is the common genre from which all their contributors work: the case (*an* 案). The result is a novel work of fine scholarship.

*An* first acquired the meaning of “case” in the context of law, but by the Ming dynasty was being used across a wide range of fields. Its etymology points back to the wooden table (*an*) on which a judicial magistrate placed the documents he chose to consider in the course of formulating a decision about a legal problem. According to Charlotte Furth in her excellent introductory chapter, in the Tang the term was used to refer to any document under official consideration. In its wake there also emerged the term *gong'an* or “public case,” which highlights the public character of the document and the official nature of the deliberation based on it. In the context of law, a *gong'an* signified a judicial judgment. The term migrated subsequently to literature for the category of *gong'an xiaoshuo*, the term for detective fiction. More famously, in the context of Chan Buddhism, *gong'an* came to name a set text used for training monks in doctrinal reasoning (the *kōan* of Japanese Zen). In the Ming dynasty, the practice of compiling cases, usually for the purpose of instruction, then proliferated outside law and religion, producing casebooks in forensics, medicine (*yi'an*), and Confucian education (*xue'an*).

Prior to this project, the case had not been treated as a late-imperial text genre that could be studied apart from the specific field in which cases were used to produce specialist knowledge. The editors have discovered that such an approach is not only possible but productive of marvellous insights about text, knowledge, and practice extending across several subfields of late-imperial history. By looking carefully at the development of the genre in the Ming and Qing, the editors and their collaborators are able to analyze moments in the production of specialist knowledge that point to, if not an epistemological shift, then at least an epistemological enlargement. Specialist knowledge was not readily amenable to being recorded within classical genres, as these strove to enunciate universal principles and rules of action to the happy neglect of the contingencies that intervene when knowledge is applied. Putting knowledge in practice, on the other hand, requires taking the contingencies of circumstance into consideration; it must also show practitioners how to align the particularities that circumstances generate with goals and values, which remain fairly consistent within a culture.

For example, a pharmacology supplies prescriptions appropriate to identifiable illnesses, but it is not necessarily going to guide a doctor through the difficult steps of determining which signs are symptomatic and which are not, what caused the illness, and which of the competing treatments is best suited to treating it. Casebooks filled this need. Similarly in law, while the Code specifies what acts are criminal and what penalty applies to the perpetrator of such-and-such a criminal act, it does not provide a system of reasoning to help the magistrate find his way through the welter of conflicting testimony and ambiguous evidence that law cases invariably produce in order to come up with a judgment and sentence suitable to the crime. The neophyte magistrate had to learn what was in the Code, naturally enough, but he turned to legal casebooks to learn how to apply the Code to real situations.

The conundrum that casebooks struggle with—how to relate general knowledge to particular instances in which it is put to use—has encouraged the contributors to fashion

their arguments around some of the leading antinomies that run through late-imperial culture. This is because cases work at the point of interaction between norms and practices, general truths and particular instances, exemplary conduct and situational ethics, collective knowledge and individual intuition. They strive to align the one with the other in the course of formulating results that will be consistent with the culture in which these results are achieved, though in practice the results themselves are more important. For historians, cases can thus reveal the gaps, which exist in all cultures and not just China's, between what should be done and what needs to get done.

The concern with results makes cases additionally interesting for those who might not work in the subfields addressed in this volume but who take an interest in the history of Chinese epistemologies. Cases do not seek to derive universal principles from universal principles, as exercises in more purely philosophical casuistry might. These principles may be enunciated for rhetorical purposes and serve as touchstones of argument, but their articulation is not usually the purpose for which a case writes them in. Casebook authors were aware of the burden of the classics and the law codes, and recognized that they were in conversation with them, but they were driven to write out their cases to address the burden of reality, not the burden of the written tradition. Accordingly, cases required an experimental rather than deductive mode of reasoning. They could not avoid working with traditions and standards that were not formally amenable to revision—they would not have chosen to neglect them in any case—but they also revised them in practice. Cases provided occasions for arguing and exemplifying how to make the great traditions work.

The first three chapters of the book address this adjustment between canonical knowledge and empirical practice in law. Jiang Yonglin and Wu Yanhong's study of judicial reasoning in casebooks shows how cases served to compensate for matters not addressed in the Ming Code in a way that respected the Code while taking sentiment and circumstance (both encompassed by the term *qing* 情) into account. Despite the great effort some magistrates made to think through the tasks of adjudication and sentencing, not one dared cite the judgment of a colleague to explain his own. Cases on their own had no authority in the sense that case law as understood in the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition does; more modestly, they provided instructional examples of how to put the Code into practice in areas that the Code neglected to cover. To underscore this point, Jiang and Wu contrast the casebook on which they focus their investigations, Mao Yilu's *Yuanjian yanlüe* (Court opinions from Songjiang), with the three compendia of case judgments that Zhu Yuanzhang, the Hongwu emperor, compiled in the 1380s under the general title of *Dagao* (Grand pronouncements). Unlike Mao Yilu, who as a mere prefectural judge had no authority to establish legal precedents, Zhu had all the authority he needed not just to set precedents but to override his own Code in those cases in which he regarded the published sentences as too lenient for the crime committed. Jiang and Wu are careful to distinguish Zhu's judgments from case law, since the former carried the status of imperial proclamations and were, as Zhu himself declared without embarrassment, "beyond the law" (*fawai* 法外). And yet, within the context of imperial law, the cases that Zhu Yuanzhang wrote up and circulated could function in this way, for some of the judgments Zhu handed down were in fact incorporated into the dynasty rulebook, as we know from the

work of legal historian Huang Zhangjian. Importantly, though, it was only some and not all. Not every case generates new law, in either the Chinese or the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

Jiang and Wu are careful as well not to assume that the writing up of such judgments explains how statutes (*li* 例, which they prefer to translate as “regulations”) came to be formulated, either the judgments of an emperor, or the judgments of a magistrate who petitioned the Ministry of Justice for clarification on a difficult judicial matter or, as Mao Yilu often did, for permission to impose a sentence heavier than the penalty that the Code mandated. In fact, this process of negotiating between actual cases and codified law appears to have been exactly how the statutes came into being. Take, for example, Statute 3 of Article 26 of the Qing Code: “A criminal who commits two crimes both of which are liable for death by *lingchi* [dismemberment by slicing] will be inflicted with additional cuts during the execution.” This statute was promulgated in 1811 to deal with a sentencing problem that the framers of the Code had neglected to concern themselves with—and reasonably enough, given that the frequency of having to sentence someone for committing two offenses, both of which deserved the worst penalty in Chinese law, must have been so low as to have required no reflection on whether such a person deserved anything worse than *lingchi*—though it would not be immediately obvious what a more severe penalty might be. It would be incorrect to argue that this revision came about through what might be called case law. Jiang and Wu are sensibly cautious about not mistaking the revision of the imperial Code with the case-law process. Revision of imperial law was the result of a very different judicial procedure operating through a process of petition, memorial, and edict. Even so, almost invariably particular cases were what set the process of revision in motion.

In the superb chapter that follows, Pierre-Étienne Will takes the discussion of law cases into the field of forensics, showing the extent to which practice mattered in the prosecution of legal cases when medical evidence was involved. The emergence of forensic casebooks led, he argues, to the formation of what he calls “collective databases,” providing magistrates with knowledge beyond their own experience. Through this feedback mechanism of knowledge-sharing among magistrates who took an interest in forensic examination, these men, by effectively presenting their research to each other, ended up producing themselves as a community of specialists. From Will’s perspective, forensic casebooks not simply showed their readers how to reason, but produced new knowledge of forensic evidence. Evidence of a different sort, oral testimony, is the subject of the chapter that follows Will’s, in which Yasuhiko Karasawa pursues the more delimited task of reconstructing how those who wrote up legal cases in the Qing assimilated oral evidence so that it could meet the ultimate bureaucratic test of validity: consistency.

The next three chapters deal with medical cases. In hers, Charlotte Furth returns to the theme raised by Will, the production of new knowledge. Reflecting on the links between judicial and medical cases, she shows that the medical casebooks emerging in the Ming focused the attention of practitioners on symptoms, a concern that paved the way for producing specialist medical knowledge that was previously unavailable in the standard medical texts. Ping-chen Hsiung takes a similar approach in her history of pediatric casebooks, showing as well how these were used for training pediatricians. Judith Zeitlin then subjects the medical genre to a literary analysis, examining the

narrative structure of cases in a casebook by a late-Ming physician, situating the knowledge he produced in relation to the problem of authority and the production of social status.

The last two chapters of the book treat the reader to one study each of Chan cases and Confucian cases. Robert Sharf does a brilliant job of resituating—in effect, redefining—the *kōan* away from the conventional notion that it was meant to defeat intellection by showing that exact hermeneutic issues were at stake in these often elliptical teaching devices. Once we know what these issues are, we can begin to see that outwardly nonsensical exchanges between brilliant masters and their puzzled disciples were actually part of ongoing arguments about specific aspects of Buddhist practice and understanding. *Kōan* were intended to have meaning in relation to particular doctrinal challenges, not to deny or defy meaning's possibility, as Western interpreters of Zen once insisted.

In the closing chapter of the book, Hung-lam Chu explores Confucian casebooks, a case genre that emerged in the wake of the others. He argues persuasively that the best known of these casebooks, Huang Zongxi's *Mingru xue'an*, should be read as just that: a casebook, not a history of Ming Confucianism, as it conventionally is. Huang's book was not intended to serve as an account of what happened to Confucianism through the Ming; indeed, if that were its purpose, one would be forced to suggest that Huang did a poor job. Rather, *Mingru xue'an* was a dossier of instructional materials that Huang compiled "to help guide students in a path of Confucian learning where an individual's virtuous practice is the final determinant of the efficacy of his knowledge." *Xue'an* were engaged in a different pedagogy than Chan *gong'an*, perhaps, but they were analogous in their purpose of stimulating thought and directing understanding. I suspect that Chu would have been unlikely to develop this finding without interacting with the other subfields the editors have brought together in this book.

Even given the high quality of the individual studies, the book ends up being far more than the sum of its chapters. It brings together the fields of law, medicine, religion, and philosophy into a common enterprise of inquiry that enables each to contribute directly to our knowledge of the others, demonstrating what can be learned by stepping across subfield boundaries. The editors have also included a bibliography of printed casebooks in all genres, helpfully presented in a chronological appendix that, once again, underscores the value to historians of approaching texts in terms of their genre. The book is a China historian's dream, and would be an ideal textbook for a graduate course on the rich array of themes and sources for the history of late-imperial China that make this field such an appealing one in which to work.

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