

explain the different costs involved in the editing and publishing process. He goes even further, using information from eleven gazetteers dating from 1510 and 1642 as well as scattered data about other books, woodblocks, and paper prices, to speculate about the details of the different production costs (for blocks, paper, and labor). Although some readers may find the figures and calculations confusing, it has to be said that, given the limits of the sources available, scholars are obliged to look for alternative systems in order to correlate these scarce data.

In the last part of the book, Dennis demonstrates not only that the gazetteers were essentially printed items, but that they addressed many more readers than is usually estimated, even though they were non-commercial books. Although officials, would-be officials, and Confucian school teachers and students were the main target audience, Dennis also mentions families with lower level officials among their members, “commoners,” isolated examples of a farmer and an artisan, and even women (p. 253). Moreover, the diffusion of gazetteers, and the resulting audience they reached, often surpassed the local dimension of the editorial project as a result of the mobility of the administrative staff, the distribution of volumes to private people (compilers and donors) and to institutions (schools, academies, libraries), and the possibility of making copies or reprints on demand. Therefore, gazetteers are presented in Chapter 6, “Target Audiences and Distribution,” as a part of the parallel process of increasing the number of available books and their potential readers, on the one hand, and of spreading Chinese culture even to the outlying regions, on the other. Following the same logic, the chapter “Reading and Using Gazetteers” opens with a presentation of officials reading gazetteers in order to learn about the locality where they were assigned before undertaking administrative tasks: “When scholar-gentry first arrive, they necessarily rely on the gazetteer” writes one of them in 1502. Dennis then proceeds to enumerate other types of readers and forms of reading: travellers, such as Du Mu 都穆 (1459–1527) or Xu Xiake 徐霞客 (1587–1641), who read or bought gazetteers; collectors who analysed the contents to make lists and catalogues, but also to find information needed to complete their own works, such as the historian Qi Chengye 祁承燾 (1563–1368); editors who extracted passages to enrich other publications (encyclopaedias, for example); *litterati* who transferred content from *difangzhi* to *biji* 筆記 (notebooks) and vice versa; and finally, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, people who were looking for information about their lineage and their ancestral home. Contained in this last chapter is also a key study on water control in Shangyu 上虞 and neighboring counties (Zhejiang province) over a period of two hundred years, beginning in the middle of the fifteenth century. These pages show how opposing and competing groups may have shaped the contents of the successive editions of local gazetteers, as well as how, at the present time, these same gazetteers are precious sources for retracing the story of the litigations and lawsuits over water control for the Zaoli 皂李 and Xiagai 夏蓋 lakes.

Although the number of gazetteers, especially for the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), is so huge that there remains plenty of material for other studies devoted to this subject, this monograph is an important contribution to understanding the publishing of this category of books over several centuries and in different regions of the Empire. Through his multi-faceted approach, Joseph Dennis has enriched a field in the history of Chinese book production that has received little attention, up to now, in Western studies, demonstrating its wealth and potential for development.

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*White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crisis and Reform in the Qing Empire.* By WENSHENG WANG. Cambridge, Mass.: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. Pp. 252. \$42.

On Lunar New Year, 1796, the Qianlong Emperor abdicated after sixty long and glorious years on the throne. Almost immediately, the new Jiaqing Emperor faced a rebellion in the internal borderlands of Hubei, inspired by the millenarian teachings of White Lotus sects. On the southeast coast of Guangdong he faced another crisis: pirate raiders allied with the new Vietnamese Tay Son regime

(1788–1802) and incursions by the British, emboldened by the apparent weakness of the Qing Dynasty. At court, the new emperor's ability to respond was hamstrung by his father's insistence on ruling from retirement until his death in 1799 and by the continued influence of Heshen, the former emperor's corrupt favorite. In *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates*, Wensheng Wang argues that these "all-encompassing contentious crises" were not the beginnings of a long era of dynastic decline, as they have often been portrayed. Instead, Wang asserts that the dual crises at the frontiers provided the Jiaqing Emperor with "the space and dynamic for a 'decisive intervention'" (p. 10) to root out corruption at court and reform imperial administration. The book's core is a study of policy reforms, focused on responses to the two frontier crises and to the more general political malaise of the early Jiaqing Reign (nominally 1796–1820, but effectively starting in 1799). Wang's first goal is largely theoretical: by complementing bottom-up narratives with central state responses, Wang aims to study how individual *events* join into "conjunctures" where change is possible and ultimately lead to "structural transformation" (p. 11). His second goal is largely historiographical: by rehabilitating the Jiaqing Emperor as a capable and conscientious monarch, Wang aims to shift the longstanding notion that presents 1800 as the beginnings of Qing decline.

*White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates* is structured along a dialectic between "a view from the bottom" based largely on prior studies of the White Lotus and piracy crises and "a view from the top" that is the main product of Wang's original research on court records and policy essays of the early Jiaqing court. The first chapter, set in its own section, introduces the "Origins of the Qianlong-Jiaqing Crises." Wang presents three related developments leading to the early Jiaqing crises: increased demographic pressures on the land, the growth of sporadic violence into organized anti-state protests, and the Qianlong Emperor's tendency toward excessive repression of dissent and unrest. Following David Ownby's *Brotherhoods and Secret Societies in Early and Mid-Qing China*, Wang argues that by viewing protests and sporadic lawlessness as forms of rebellion, Qianlong's repressive policies effectively turned criminal gangs and secret societies into rebels. The next two chapters aim to demonstrate the emergence of the crises through "A View from the Bottom" of the White Lotus Rebellion and South China piracy, respectively. These chapters build theoretically sophisticated syntheses of earlier work on the two events and develop a theory of the relationship between the two crises. Wang argues that in both cases, border trespassers "found their agency" and tested the limits of state power through "the making and unmaking of government-stipulated boundaries" (p. 40). By visibly challenging state claims to control these areas, both White Lotus sectarians and South China pirates represented a more general challenge to state authority and legitimacy. But Wang argues that major crises were not inevitable; Qianlong's adversarial policies escalated the scale and significance of any form of heterodoxy or border crossing.

The third section of the book focuses on developments at court up to and through the two crises. Chapter four, "Court Politics and Imperial Vision," continues Wang's case against the Qianlong mode of rulership, building especially on Philip Kuhn's *Soulstealers* and Beatrice Bartlett's *Monarchs and Ministers* to argue that Qianlong's drive to personally control government led to passive opposition among the bureaucracy and factionalism in the Grand Council. Chapter five, "The Inner White Lotus Rebellion"—an explicit reference to James Polachek's *The Inner Opium War*—is perhaps the strongest in the book. Here, Wang shows how Jiaqing used the external crises of the rebellion to resolve an internal crisis: his struggles to remove Heshen and his clique from power at court. Wang argues that Jiaqing showed exceptional timing and admirable restraint, executing Heshen for his misconduct in suppressing the White Lotus sects but avoiding a systematic purge that might paralyze the government, and even using the crisis to reclaim finances embezzled by Heshen's clientage network. Chapter six continues this narrative through a careful analysis of the "The Jiaqing Reforms," including policies to prevent factionalism and overreach in the Grand Council and Imperial Household, the use of capital appeals to better control local and regional administrators, increased use of gentry resources to put down the White Lotus Rebellion, and use of Han officials to counterbalance Manchu power at court. The final chapter on "The Piracy Crisis and Foreign Diplomacy" gives related treatment to the South China Sea. Wang argues that the proximate piracy crises stemmed from more systemic problems with the imperial tribute system, and was ultimately resolved by beginning to shift toward new forms of

bilateral relations between China and Vietnam and China and England. These four chapters build on a large body of existing institutional history, but Wang does a remarkable job synthesizing it with new material, and makes a convincing argument that it was the conjuncture of crises that allowed Jiaqing to reform and renew Qing government.

*White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates* overwhelmingly succeeds as a study of the Jiaqing court and its interventions into the two crises. The in-depth exploration of the Jiaqing Emperor's timing and use of language makes a convincing case that the monarch was oriented toward reform and moderation. The book is somewhat less successful in theorizing the Jiaqing reforms as a more sweeping corrective to Qing government: on the one hand, the argument goes too far to demonize the Qianlong mode of rulership; on the other hand, it overstates the significance of the Jiaqing reforms themselves. Wang himself is careful to qualify that while "Jiaqing's reforms inaugurated an extended period of consolidation and restoration . . . they could not make the dynasty the master of its own destiny and guarantee its longterm stability" (p. 13). To be sure, we cannot blame the reforms for creating the contexts in which new problems emerged, such as the growing independence of regional gentry. But the Jiaqing reforms also failed to accomplish many of their more explicit goals, such as decreasing graft or circumscribing the power of the Grand Council. Furthermore, Wang probably overstates the extent to which his arguments overturn the earlier historiography. His position parallels, rather than upends, existing scholarly positions. The extensive theoretical engagement in the text also makes for a narrative that can be challenging at times; portions of the book would be difficult to understand without prior knowledge of both the events themselves and the body of earlier scholarship. Nonetheless this is an excellent study of the Jiaqing court's response to the White Lotus Rebellion and South China piracy, despite occasional theoretical and rhetorical overreach. It is highly recommended to scholars of Qing history.

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