

## Brief Reviews of Books

*A Late Sixteenth-Century Chinese Buddhist Fellowship: Spiritual Ambitions, Intellectual Debates, and Epistolary Connections.* By JENNIFER EICHMAN. Sinica Leidensia, vol. 127. Boston: BRILL, 2016. Pp. xvi + 422. €139, \$180.

This book makes a valuable contribution to the study of late imperial Chinese Buddhism by examining a network of monks and lay practitioners connected by relationships rather than geography. Drawing primarily on epistolary sources, it seeks to ground late Ming intellectual, social, and religious history in a particular group of elite men concerned about how they might best cultivate their heart-mind. Eichman uses “mind cultivation” as a bridge concept in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Buddhist and Confucian discourse, especially the work of the Buddhist monk Lianchi Zhuhong 蓮池株宏 (1535–1615) and the Yangming-Confucian Zhou Rudeng 周汝登 (1547–1629).

Eichman challenges the notion that Confucians set the terms of the debate and predominated over Buddhist monastics in the late Ming dynasty, arguing that Yangming-Confucians instead opened up a discursive space that allowed Buddhists to shape their tradition and influence others (pp. 24–25, 114). By providing a focused study of seventy elite men active during the Wanli period (1573–1620), she seeks to inspire similar localized studies that might give a better sense of the contours of Buddhist networks and associations in the sixteenth century (pp. 22, 357). She acknowledges the constraints of her study, namely that the group consists of elite men who met through introductions during examination periods or while in government office and thereby lacks any differentiation of gender, ethnicity, educational attainment, or economic and social status. However, she emphasizes their breadth of intellectual aptitude and spiritual progress, and she includes a brief discussion of wives, concubines, and servants in her discussion of Pure Land practices (pp. 226–41).

Eichman presents her arguments carefully and meticulously, and she provides ample footnotes for specialists in late imperial Chinese Buddhism. Not only does she list all of the epistolary sources consulted and analyzed, but she discusses how such letters were produced, their extant woodblock form, and their reliability, as well as how they were circulated among a select group of friends in a quasi-private form of communication (p. 43). This degree of thoroughness becomes particularly useful when she considers the multiple religious modalities adopted by late sixteenth-century elite men, and the difficulty of characterizing who was “Confucian” or what *ru* 儒 encompassed (pp. 49–52).

Her substantive footnotes clarify how specialized terms or phrases were interpreted.

Eichmann also puts herself in dialogue with a range of scholars including those of networks, epistolary and print culture, religious identity, Confucian Studies, Buddhist Studies, religious practice, lived religion, meditation, religious experience, as well as Pure Land and Chan Buddhism. The structure of her book allows for individual chapters to be easily incorporated into graduate or advanced undergraduate courses as one discusses general topics such as religious identity, ethics, and meditation, or more specific issues such as killing and eating animals, releasing-life societies, encounter dialogues, or Pure Land recitation.

Finally, Eichman allows for and acknowledges ambiguity in her sources, which results in a nuanced and complex rendering of religious thought and practice. She does not try to resolve contradictions such as Zhou Rudeng’s asserting a clear distinction between Buddhist and Confucian traditions while adopting many Chan-inspired spiritual exercises (pp. 97–98). She highlights instances when her descriptive sources conflict with prescriptive or canonical ideas, for example the depiction of a personal link or “self” carried from one life to the next in Zhuhong’s animal tales instead of no-self or the notion of karmic residue retained from past lives (p. 131). She illustrates ways that Zhuhong as a “pragmatic spiritual advisor” accommodated those just beginning to uphold the first precept by allowing them to buy prepared meat dishes, eat “clean meat,” or recite a *dhāraṇī* before the sacrifice of an animal (p. 169). She admits that even though Zhuhong sought to persuade men to give up wearing silk robes, he and his circle were not pacifists, nor did they object to corporal punishments or just use of the death sentence (p. 215). By acknowledging such tensions and demonstrating ways that everyday life impinged on religious thought and practice, Eichman further underscores the importance of embedding doctrinal studies in particular social and cultural contexts.

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*Studies on the Archaeology of Ebla, 1980-2010.* By PAOLO MATTHIAE, edited by FRANCES PINNOCK. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2013. Pp. xi + 664, 226 plts. €98.

As the title suggests, the present volume contains papers by Paolo Matthiae about various aspects of his

excavations at Tell Mardikh /Ebla. The forty-two papers have been arranged by the editor and her team in a rough division of “History and Material Culture” (thirteen papers), then “Architecture: Space, Function, History” (fifteen), and third “Artistic Culture: Monuments and Traditions” (fourteen). This division is indeed a reflection of Matthiae’s main interests and provides the reader with a clear guideline. The papers have been left in their original form in terms of notes and bibliographies, but the illustrations have been gathered at the end of this hefty volume and are numbered consecutively, with relevant new references inserted throughout the original texts. The book’s typography is uniform, fortunately. The original publication in which a paper was printed is noted at each paper’s end.

After the introduction by the editor, Professor Matthiae himself has added a short note on the history of the excavations and a word of thanks to all the people who were involved in them. Matthiae’s work is very well known in Near Eastern archaeology, and this book is an emphatic witness to his high standing in the field. It is of course not feasible to comment on every paper collected in a work like this, but to this reviewer it is clear that the general subjects of architecture and iconography carry Matthiae’s main interest. Thus for instance, the paper on “Architecture and Urban Planning in Old Syrian Ebla” from 1991 (pp. 259ff.) shows a deep understanding and feeling for the place of architecture also in the mind of the ancient inhabitants, and it is a must-read for anyone interested in ancient Near Eastern architecture. The architecture is always viewed against the background of its living and thinking originators, as is clear from, e.g., “About the Identity of the Titular Deities of the Old Syrian Temples of Ebla” (pp. 301ff.).

The papers on iconographical themes are richly annotated and a veritable *Fundgrube*, as in “The Lions of the Great Goddess of Ebla: A Hypothesis about Some Archaic Old Syrian Cylinder Seals” (pp. 383ff., curiously included in the “Architecture” division). However, Matthiae’s more historically oriented papers are also valuable, as for instance the comparison of two richly annotated articles on the end of Ebla in the Middle Bronze II shows (pp. 155ff. and 177ff.).

It has no doubt been difficult for the editor and her team to choose which papers to include and which to exclude, given Paolo Matthiae’s great productivity, but the interested reader will surely find much to his or her liking, if not in the papers themselves then certainly in the many included references. The editor and her team are therefore to be congratulated on the great amount of work they have invested in this book, which is a valuable addition to the library of every archaeologist of the ancient Near East. It is important in these tragic times, when apart from the human tragedy unfolding in Syria, the ancient sites—among which is Ebla itself—are being targeted, that we keep an archaeological awareness of this country’s rich sources of civilization alive.

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*Contentitori neoassiri: Studi per un repertorio lessicale.*

By SALVATORE GASPA. *Philippika*, vol. 67. Wiesbaden: HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG, 2014. Pp. xix + 566, illus. €98.

Containers of different shapes, materials, and functions represent privileged historical sources for the study of material culture. Following the publication of the monumental *Hausgeräte der alten Mesopotamier nach sumerisch-akkadischen Quellen, Teil II: Gefässe* (1966) by A. Salonen, several scholars have produced a series of specialized studies on the terminology for containers occurring in different corpora of the ancient Near East, including W. Sallaberger, *Der babylonische Töpfer und seine Gefässe* (1996), and X. Faivre, “Pots et plats,” in *Et il y eut un resprit dans l’homme: Jean Bottéro et la Mésopotamie*, ed. X. Faivre, B. Lion, and C. Michel (2009), with previous bibliography. The most recent example of such studies is the work of S. Gaspa, focusing on the lexical repertoire of the containers in first millennium Assyria (ninth–seventh century B.C.E.).

Following the methodological approach applied in his previous *Alimenti e pratiche alimentari in Assiria* (2012), Gaspa discusses in detail the terminology for vessels and other types of containers in the three dialects attested in first-millennium Assyria: Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Standard Babylonian. The corpus analysed includes a range of different texts—from administrative documents to royal decrees, from divination texts to royal inscriptions—gathered in the database of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project of Helsinki, with particular focus on the so-called State Archives of Assyria. In specific cases, a number of unpublished texts have also been analysed (see the list on pp. 19–20 n. 41).

The core of the study, the “lexical repertoire” (*Repertorio lessicale*, pp. 25–375), is divided into three main sections and eighteen sub-sections. The first section (§§1–7) presents 160 entries divided according to function: vessels (*Vasellame*, §§1.1–1.7, 105 terms), trunks and other containers (*Casse e altri contenitori*, §2, 21 terms); baskets (*Ceste e canestri*, §3, 10 terms); sacks (*Sacche*, §4, 10 terms); skins (*Otri*, §5, 5 terms); braziers and incense burners (*Braiceri e incensieri*, §6, 7 terms); and crucibles (*Crogioli*, §7, 2 terms).

The second section (§§8–12) deals with terms related to specific parts of containers and their stands (§§8–9), containers defined by dimension (§10) and by decorative motifs and techniques (§11), and measurements of capacities (§12). Appendix B (pp. 499–501) expands on the schematics of the latter, itself mainly based on a previous study of the author, “Vessels in