

their own lights. Where women's own writings survive, it would seem incumbent upon us to take their words seriously, and allow them to speak for themselves.

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*Spatial Imaginaries in Mid-Tang China: Geography, Cartography, and Literature.* By AO WANG.  
Amherst, NY: CAMBRIA PRESS, 2018. Pp. xii + 362. \$119.99.

In this book, Ao Wang expands and complicates our understanding of mid-Tang (roughly from the 790s to the 820s) literature by exploring the interplay between “geographical advancements” and “spatial imaginaries” (p. 1). This is an unexplored realm in the study of Tang literature. By “geographical advancements,” the author means “progressions in the geographical understanding of space,” a broad concept that includes “the accumulation of new geographical knowledge,” “a heightened geographical awareness,” “new spatial perspectives on the world,” and “new ways of thinking about human inhabitation” (p. 1); “spatial imaginaries” refers to “the conceptual counterpart of this phenomenon within literature” (p. 2). In this project, the author is not discussing the influence one had on the other, but how geography and literature developed hand in hand in the mid-Tang period.

Of course, there had already been interaction between geography and literature prior to the mid-Tang. The author shows that geographical works, including the “Tribute of Yu” (Yugong 禹貢) in the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), the *Classics of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanghai jing* 山海經), and the various “records of the earth” (*diji* 地記), are highly literary in nature; they in turn inspired the spatial imaginaries in contemporary and later literature. Nevertheless, Wang claims that the prominent status geography held in the mid-Tang was unprecedented, and he illustrates this in his first chapter, “Geographical Advancements in the Mid-Tang.” In the aftermath of the An Lushan Rebellion, when the empire was struggling to restore imperial superiority and regain its control over local areas, “geography emerged as a field of knowledge that was of crucial importance to the empire” (p. 39). As a result, a group of multi-talented scholar-officials including Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824), Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), and Li Deyu 李德裕 (787–850)—many of whom held high positions at court—actively engaged in making and studying maps and geography. Among their achievements in geographical exploration, the grand *Map of Chinese and Foreign Lands within the Seas* (*Hainei huayi tu* 海內華夷圖) by Jia Dan 賈耽 (730–805), the *Maps and Treatises of the Provinces and Counties of the Yuanhe Reign* (*Yuanhe junxian tuzhi* 元和郡縣圖志) by Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758–814), and the various map-guides (*tujing* 圖經) “provided inspirations for literary writers and led them in different directions” (p. 60).

Having set the context, in the following four chapters Wang discusses the interplay between geography and literature in the mid-Tang period from four aspects. The second chapter, “The Big Picture: Poetic Visions and the Cartographic Eye,” considers the conversations between a selection of mid-Tang literary texts and grand maps, in particular Jia Dan’s “Map of Chinese and Foreign Lands within the Seas.” The literati’s experience of reading grand maps together with their familiarity with cartographic knowledge and vision allowed them to create spectacular images of the world on paper, images whose representation of geographical features was then infused with a poetic and evocative appeal. Insightful as the author’s analyses of those literary texts often are, I do not always agree with him, especially when he claims that in Zhang Hu’s 張祜 (792–853) “Two Poems on Contemplating a Painting of Mountains and Seas” (“Guan shanghai tu ershou” 觀山海圖二首), “the imposition of a contemporary map view on an ancient painting creates the decisive tension that alienates the poet from the religious realm commonly associated with the painting” (p. 116). There is no compelling evidence suggesting that paintings of mountains and seas were often associated with the religious realm, and the lack of religious elements in Zhang Hu’s poems does not necessarily entail “a contemporary map view.”

The third chapter, “The Shifting Shape of the Local Sphere: Map-Guides and Literary Writings,” turns its eye to the central role map-guides played in mid-Tang literati’s writings in and about local

spheres. Whether as tools for officials to gather local information or guidebooks for literati to explore regional sites, these map-guides inspired and facilitated literary writings in the mid-Tang period. Accordingly, behind the poetic expressions in mid-Tang local literature was “an epistemological layer of geographical knowledge and spatial imagination” (p. 131), which was often acquired by consulting local geographical works in general and map-guides in particular. In addition to revealing intertextual relations between literature and map-guides, this chapter makes another contribution: it brings to our attention some largely neglected literary genres, including altar records (*tanji* 壇記), office inscriptions (*tingbi ji* 廳壁記), and prayers (*zhuwen* 祝文, or what the author calls “orisons of appeal” [p. 133]). This surely heightens the reader’s awareness of the breadth and richness of Tang literature.

While the second and third chapters focus more on the role of geographical works in shaping the spatial imagination, the fourth chapter, “Into the Deep South: The Aesthetics of New Landmark Creation,” centers on how literati used landscape essays to establish new dwelling places and create new landmarks in the deep south, especially the Lingnan 嶺南 region. As the author demonstrates, the “landscape essays” (namely, “prose writings wherein descriptions of natural scenery are structurally and thematically indispensable” [pp. 195–96]) by scholar-officials demoted to the deep south are always understood in the tradition of “banishment literature” (*bianzhe wenxue* 貶謫文學), that is, reading the favorable literary representation of landscapes as the result of individual authors’ political frustrations. However, when we situate the landscape essays in the context of southward migration after the An Lushan Rebellion, it becomes clear that those writers were not merely appreciating the landscape as travelers; rather, they “all strove to create the central spatial imaginary of their new home in the deep south” (pp. 196–97). Being able to be made into a dwelling place became an important requirement of the landscape. On the other hand, many places mentioned in those landscape essays subsequently became landmarks featured in later geographical works.

The fifth chapter, “Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen: The Wonder of Interactive Geography,” considers the ways in which two prominent literary figures of the day integrated into their poetic exchanges various geographical elements, or what the author calls “interactive geography” (p. 257). Both poets were equipped with rich geographical knowledge, which allowed them to evoke in their writings a mental map through which they mutually trace each other’s locations or texts in the imagination and thus create a shared textual space in defiance of their physical separation. Whether “interactive geography” actually “contributed significantly to their unparalleled popularity in the mid-Tang” (p. 299) is open to discussion, but it does, to be sure, form an integral part of many of the writings by Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen.

Some minor errors aside (e.g., the translation of Yuan Zhen’s “Song of the Southeast” [Dongnan xing 東南行] [p. 286] is missing the second and third lines), there is no denying that this book makes a major contribution. It draws our attention to important materials and literary genres that have been largely ignored, and presents a new aspect of the mid-Tang literary landscape by bringing spatial imaginaries to the table. This is a challenging task, but Ao Wang has tackled it with success.

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*Ancient Chinese Encyclopedia of Technology: Translation and Annotation of the Kaogong ji (The Artificer’s Record)*. By WENREN JUN. Abingdon, UK: ROUTLEDGE, 2018. Pp. xxviii + 525. \$224 (cloth); \$49.95 (paper).

The “Kaogong ji” 考工記, which dates approximately to the fifth century BCE, is a book that covers about two dozen technological areas of the Eastern Zhou era. For a few of these areas, only the names remain. For the rest of them, we are more fortunate to have descriptions that have been passed down, probably in a haphazard way. The “Kaogong ji” was incorporated into the *Zhou li* 周禮 (The Rites of the Zhou) to hold the place for its last section entitled “Dongguan” 冬官 since the original material for the “Winter Office” section had been missing. Now an integral part of the Confucian