

Coping with the Future: Theories and Practices of Divination in East Asia. Edited by MICHAEL LACKNER. Sinica Leidensia, vol. 138. Leiden: BRILL, 2017. Pp. xvi + 586. €149, \$172.

In 2009, Michael Lackner, with a grant from the Käte Hamburger International Centers for Research in the Humanities, established a “republic of mantic letters” on the subject of “Fate, Freedom, and Prognostication: Strategies for Coping with the Future in East Asia and Europe” at Friedrich-Alexander University in Erlangen-Nuremberg. The name of the Erlangen center (and this volume) is indebted to Assyriologist Stefan Maul, who coined the term *Zukunftsbewältigung* (“future-coping”) in his 1994 monograph on ancient Near Eastern divination. The goal of the center, according to its website (<http://www.ikgf.uni-erlangen.de>), is “to uncover the historical foundations of prognostication with their impact on our immediate present and our way of coping with the future.” Since its founding, the center has sponsored annual conferences at both Erlangen and abroad, workshops, research projects, lectures, and reading sessions, in addition to inviting postdoctoral and senior fellows to reside at the University to conduct research on aspects of divination.

The volume under review collects twenty papers out of the hundreds presented during the first five years of the project. Due to the wide spectrum of disciplines, eras, and geographical areas assembled for the book, its chapters are essentially “snapshots in time” rather than an organized history of divination in East Asia (p. 6). Both mantic techniques and theoretical approaches are examined; periods range from early to medieval to premodern and modern/contemporary; and—in addition to the primary theme of Chinese divination—Korean, Japanese, and Tibetan practices are presented as well as insights into the transmission of Greek and Indian astrology to the East. Although loosely divided into six parts, with chapters in each section arranged chronologically, the book would have benefited from a short overview preceding each part to contextualize disparate sections and tighten the book’s focus. The editor does provide an informative introduction that adroitly summarizes each chapter. This review will attempt to do the same more succinctly, distributed by section as follows.

1. *Textual and Literary Traditions*. Marco Caboara opens the book with an analysis and annotated translation of the excavated text, *Bu shu* 卜書, the earliest extant survey of turtle-shell divination. This manuscript, dating to the Warring States Period State of Chu, comprises a handbook “that systematizes a body of data with the attempt to build a close, normative system, similar to the early commentarial tradition” (p. 28). It thus may have implications for the study of the commentary genre in early Chinese intellectual history. Next, Bent Nielsen contributes an important study of the late Han dynasty work on the *Yijing*, the *Qian zuo du* 乾鑿度, from the *weishu* 緯書 tradition. He explains in excruciating detail how the work correlates hexagrams to calendrical computations in order to tell which hexagram or line was matched with which day in the future to allow the diviner to predict what may happen on a particular day. Since such correlations might predict the end of dynasties, it “accounts for the repeated proscriptions of the Apocrypha” in the centuries following the fall of the Han (p. 64). In chapter three, based in part on the categorical ranking of articles on divination in dynastic encyclopedias, Paul Kroll concludes that the elite society of medieval China had apparently begun to devalue its practice. He further speculates that “the growing influence of Buddhism and Daoism among the literocracy” to some extent might account for this trend (p. 100). Kroll concludes his study with a close reading of a difficult poem by Lu Zhaolin 盧昭鄰 (ca. 635–ca. 683), “Text to Resolve Illness” (“Shi ji wen” 釋疾文), that provides a rare look into Taiyi 太乙 “cosmic-board” divination. However, the point of the analysis is to show how the poet questions the resulting forecast, indicating the ambivalent attitude of medieval scholars toward divination. In the last chapter of part one, Vincent Durand-Dastès shows how *ming* 命 or fate was not as ineluctable as Confucian tradition would have it, concluding that the Yuan dynasty tale, *The Wedding of the Duke of Zhou and Peach Blossom Girl*, “confirms the existence of an ordered fate, as well as the ever-tempting possibility to subvert it” (p. 144).

2. *Divination and Religious Life*. In chapter five, Esther-Maria Guggenmos provides the first scholarly comparison of all extant parallels of the magic and mantic practices listed in the Buddhist canon (including its Pāli, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions). This allows scholars to trace the transmission of mantic knowledge across cultures and eras, even though the reason for recording such lists was their status as “rejected knowledge” (p. 180). The chapter also provides a bilingual translation of the list

in the Pāli canon. Next, Dominic Steavu traces the history of the function of the divination instrument known as the *shipan* 式盤 from its origin in the Han dynasty as “a tool of hemerological computation” (p. 211), to an astrological divination board in the Six Dynasties, and finally to a strictly ritual device in medieval times under the influence of Daoist and Buddhist traditions (p. 219). Throughout his article, Steavu renders the technical term *shi* 式 as “cosmograph” (rather than “cosmic model,” “cosmic board,” “mantic astrolabe,” or “cosmogram,” as other scholars have translated it), but he incorrectly attributes the translation to Stephen *Little* instead of Stephen *Field* in the text of the article as well as the Works Cited (Stephen Field, “Cosmos, Cosmograph, and the Inquiring Poet: New Answers to the ‘Heaven Questions,’” *Early China* 17 [1992]: 83–110). In chapter seven, Anne C. Klein evaluates Tantric weather forecasting, particularly the prediction of hail storms in the Tibetan countryside and the practices employed by Lamas to protect the crops from inundation. While perhaps more apotropaic magic than divination, the “hail master” observes the weather and analyzes his dreams before taking action, which can be both “peaceful and wrathful” (pp. 248–49).

3. *Divination and Political Life*. Martin Kern opens part three with a fascinating study of a selection of early Chinese texts that reveals how the rhetorical representation of divination in support of political legitimation simultaneously elided actual mantic practice from the literary tradition. In the *Shangshu* 尚書, for example, records of divination were not meant to make sense of the unfathomable, but to “mark rhetorically the most decisive moments of early history” (pp. 282–83). Kern concludes, however, that although this “rhetorical sublation” should not be mistaken for the actual history of divination, it still reveals the truth indirectly by showing how pervasive divination was in daily life. In chapter nine, Kwon Soo Park utilizes records of royal burials in the Chosŏn dynasty to show how divining auspicious times (through *taegil* 擇日) and places (through *taegji* 擇地) for official rituals legitimized the sovereignty of the court. The rules for selecting auspicious dates were so strict “that even the date of the first discussion [for choosing auspicious dates] was determined with great care” (p. 292).

4. *Divination and the Individual*. Hsien-huei Liao begins this section by painting a detailed picture of the intellectual life of Southern Song dynasty chief minister Wen Tianxiang 文天祥, who chose martyrdom rather than serve the conquering Mongols. Although remembered as a paragon of Confucian virtue, Wen was also steeped in the mantic arts such as *fengshui* and *Yijing* divination, as were many scholars of his day. Liao’s conclusion is that the Neo-Confucians had reinterpreted the mantic arts as rational pursuits legitimate for discourse (p. 314). In chapter eleven, Yung Sik Kim examines the beliefs of the Chosŏn *Yijing* scholar, Chŏng Yak-yong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), who rejected occult practices such as physiognomy and astrology while accepting *Yijing* divination because it enabled the diviner to perceive the will of Heaven (p. 350). He believed that divination in his day no longer sought Heaven’s wishes, but instead pursued selfish needs, and thus should be prohibited. Next, Stéphanie Homola, by following the career of a certain Mr. Yao, an itinerant diviner from Qingdao, provides a brief history of street fortune-telling from 1979 to the present with a particular focus on its equivocal position in urban China. She closes with an interesting comparison of the life of the carefree, unconstrained *jianghu* 江湖 (“wanderer”), personified by Mr. Yao, and that of the rebellious, iconoclastic *liumang* 流氓 (“hooligan”), enshrined in the writings of the contemporary novelist Wang Shuo 王朔. Closing this section of the volume, Jennifer Jung-Kim explores the uses of divination by women in contemporary Korea and discovers that women, among other salient reasons, consult diviners “because divination is comforting and is a more socially acceptable form of therapy than psychiatry or psychotherapy” (p. 396).

5. *Divination East and West*. Opening the section on Western influences on East Asian divination, Che-Chia Chang investigates the transmission of Ptolemaic astrology through the unlikely medium of Jesuit calendrical scholars in the Manchu court, as well as the dissemination of the Indian system of lunar mansions—including the zodiac signs—through the translation of Buddhist sutras. Pingyi Chu, in chapter fifteen, examines the Jesuit anti-prognostication agenda, particularly the treatises authored by Ferdinand Verbiest (1623–1688), who argued that mantic texts should be read symbolically, not literally. Chu also claims that the Chinese term for superstition (*mixin* 迷信) was “constructed by the Christian missionaries and their converts in the seventeenth century,” and not imported first from Japan (p. 446). Fan Li and Michael Lackner in chapter sixteen discuss the marginalization of “the study of

fate” (*mingxue* 命學) in late Qing and early Republican China, even though the practice of the mantic arts continued to flourish. They point out that defenders of traditional sciences “were hindered by their one-dimensional, ahistorical understanding of Western science” (p. 15), which might have been better informed by appeals to the humanities, including religious studies. Closing the section, Yong Hoon Jun adds a brief Korean account of the transmission of Ptolemaic astrology to East Asia by analyzing the manuscript of *Seongyo* 星要, which he identifies as the work of astronomer and mathematician Nam Byeong-cheol 南秉哲 (1817–1863).

6. *Reflections on Divinatory Techniques*. Opening the final section, Andrea Bréard analyzes the “quantification of chance” and seeks a mathematical reasoning behind mantic techniques where number is the main component. Using divination by dominoes in late Imperial China as a case study, she shows how “rationalist” approaches to combinatorial procedures—originally concerned with gambling techniques in the early writings on mathematics—lost out to numerological considerations before a theory of probability could be developed (p. 500). Matthias Hayek follows with an interesting study of “chronomancy” in early modern Japan, where temporal data was manipulated in a modular fashion to calculate a divination result. In each case under study, whether “eight-character/four-pillar” astrology, “eight-trigram” horoscopy, or “plum blossom” numerology, the left hand was used to count off cyclical or modular properties, essentially mimicking cosmographs. Closing part six and thus the book, Sanghak Oh analyzes the “physical shape” (*wuxing* 物形) theory of Form School *fengshui* commonly practiced in Korea but uncommon elsewhere. According to this concept, the ideal *fengshui* terrain should physically resemble an auspicious object, such as a lotus, a tortoise, or a dragon. Criticized by Confucian scholars for being “too mystical” (p. 569), it is popular in rural Korea today perhaps because it has “relatively low theoretical precision” and dispensed with “descriptive terms and directions” (p. 575).

In his introduction, Michael Lackner contemplates a number of oppositions that impact studies of divination: *Weltanschauung* (world view) vs. *Lebenswelt* (daily experience), official vs. private, rational vs. irrational, believing vs. disbelieving, etc. In traditional China, the elite class in general did not recognize an incongruity between these two views. That these dual perspectives on divination might seem contradictory is, according to Lackner, a product of Western thinking, which strictly separates science from superstition. Perhaps it is time, and this volume envisages its possibility, “to rehabilitate the study of mantic arts and to re-incorporate rejected knowledge into the research agenda of humanities” (p. 7). *Coping with the Future* is a landmark study of divination in East Asia, mainly for its depth and breadth of scholarship, but also for the impact it will have in elucidating an esoteric subject for a wider audience. The Käte Hamburger Center, under the auspices of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, is to be commended for funding the studies published herein and we applaud Michael Lackner for the years of effort he has dedicated to this project. With this groundbreaking work, if not before, he has distinguished himself as a leader in the field.

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Daily Life in Ancient China. By POO MU-CHOU. Cambridge: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018. Pp. xviii + 258. £71.99 (cloth); £23.99 (paper).

This book follows two attempts that this reviewer has made to provide an account of daily life as it was lived during the two Han dynasties. When in 1968 the first of these was published (*Everyday Life in Early Imperial China*), some outstanding discoveries, as of rich furnishings or manuscripts, had yet to be made public. The author could not expect his readers to have acquired much knowledge of China’s early history, let alone of its archaeology. The second attempt of 2011 (*Bing: From Farmer’s Son to Magistrate in Han China*) was likewise addressed to the general, uninformed reader; by then it was thankfully possible to call both on the wealth of the discoveries of the preceding decades and on the reassessments of China’s imperial history of both Chinese and Western scholars.