

present-day discourse on human rights, provided the moral and theoretical basis for the creation of an international hierarchy of nations that linked sovereignty to putative degrees of humanity. Here again, characterizations of Chinese law served an indispensable role in the process of boundary-setting through the elaboration of cultural difference and national identity.

In his final substantive chapter, Chen links the discursive formations pertaining to Chinese law and society developed in previous chapters to Britain's ability to claim the Opium War as just. Chen notes that British opinion in regard to the opium trade and the onset of hostilities was far from united. Yet even among those who opposed the opium trade as immoral, the Chinese seizure of opium stocks constituted an offense against British property and national honor, thus framing the conflict as a primarily legal issue of what constitutes a just war under international law. At the core of this rationalization lay the relationship between international law and acknowledgment of the legal jurisdiction of sovereign nations within national borders. Tropes pertaining to the barbarity of its laws and the despotism of its government now facilitated the argument among British officials and parliamentarians that China was beyond the pale of international legal rights. This, however, did not absolve China of the obligation to obey international law in regard to the sanctity of property and national honor. Given the grievous injury that China has inflicted upon the British nation and its citizens in these respects, military force was therefore warranted. In this manner what was regarded by many as an immoral trade was transformed into an enabling discourse that essentially shifted the basis of Sino-western relations. The Opium War thus codified by treaty the idea that China was an exception to the tradition of territorial sovereignty because its laws were deemed incompatible with the now universalized notions of western justice.

The chief flaw in this work is a tendency toward over-theorization, particularly in Chapter Four. Thankfully, theory never outruns the empirical evidence Chen marshals in support of his claims. Some readers may be distracted by Chen's moralizing in regard to the present-day demonization of other groups in the name of international law or liberty. The text also contains several minor factual errors that might well have been caught by more assiduous proofing (the Kangxi emperor's reign, for example, began in 1661, not 1644). These faults notwithstanding, Li Chen has delivered a carefully crafted and highly articulate study that will soon be required reading for students of comparative law, imperialism, and Sino-western relations in general.

*Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture in Early Medieval China: A History of Early Muzhiming.* By TIMOTHY M. DAVIS. Leiden: Brill, 2016. 414 pp. \$162.00, €125.00 (cloth, ebook).

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*Muzhiming*, which Timothy Davis translates as "Entombed Epigraphy," is a form of commemorative text, usually inscribed on a square slab of stone and buried in the tomb of the deceased person. The text usually starts with a preface containing

biographical information on the deceased, followed with a rhymed elegy lamenting the death or praising the life of the deceased. Although the origin of the *muzhiming* tradition is still uncertain, the earliest example of the self-referential use of the term *muzhiming* in discovered inscriptions is the one for Liu Huaimin 劉懷民, dated to the eighth year of the Daming 大明 era of the Liu Song 劉宋 state (464 CE). The text and translation of this inscription can be found on pages 61–65 of Davis's book. The tradition of *muzhiming* continued to flourish in the later dynasties, gradually diminished in the late Qing and Republican periods, and eventually disappeared during the reform of the funeral and burial systems after the establishment of the People's Republic of China. Large numbers of inscriptions have been discovered and collected since the Song dynasty. One current national project in China is to organize and publish all the *muzhiming* discovered after the establishment of the PRC. The second stage of the project has already yielded twenty volumes each containing three hundred to four hundred *muzhiming*. The third stage is estimated to yield a similar number by 2022. It is safe to conclude that *muzhiming* is one of the most important primary sources for studying ancient Chinese history, literature, and culture.

Even though western sinologists have recognized the significance of *muzhiming* as a primary source for a long time, there have been few special studies on this subject. As the first book in English to thoroughly examine *muzhiming* with a special focus on the early medieval period, Davis's book provides a concrete foundation for any researcher who would like to pursue this subject. This book examines the origins, development, and functions of the early medieval *muzhiming* in their historical and social contexts.

The first chapter deals with the social functions of early medieval *muzhiming*. Research on this topic usually focuses on elite families and their marital relations, but Davis goes beyond this to raise two further questions: 1) Why were epitaphs displayed at funerals, buried in tombs, and circulated as manuscripts? 2) What antecedent commemorative genres influenced the rhetorical structures and physical forms of medieval *muzhiming*? Davis convincingly shows that the diminishing of elite families' real authority after the collapse of the Han and their migration to the south made *muzhiming* one of the means for them to shape their legacy and enhance their social influence. One advantage of *muzhiming* over other commemorative forms is that the family was able to maintain control of the content of the inscription.

The second chapter, on the religious functions of *muzhiming*, is probably the most difficult but also the most exciting chapter. It is difficult because Davis attempts to connect *muzhiming* with two different but equally important conventions of the early period and to demonstrate that *muzhiming* is a blending of both. The first one is the canonically sanctioned inscription tradition, which includes the bronze inscriptions of the Zhou, stelae of the Qin and Han, and inscriptions on coffins and stones in early tombs. The second convention is the so-called common religious tradition seen in burial-plot purchase contracts (*maidiquan* 買地券), tomb-stabilizing writs (*zhenmuwen* 鎮墓文) and tomb inventories (*qiance* 遣策). Each one of these could be a specialized area of study by itself. Davis navigates through these different types of materials, concluding with a close reading of a *muzhiming* text and showing that *muzhiming* emerged from a blending of both conventions for the purpose of satisfying people's religious needs.

In the third chapter, Davis demonstrates the historical movement of epigraphy from above the earth to underground and explores various reasons for this move such as

government restrictions and political unrest. Again, he carefully scrutinizes different types of tomb inscriptions such as the pillar, bronze mirror, and brick inscriptions. Through analysis and comparison of such inscriptions, Davis shows that those alternative methods of identifying the deceased paved the way for moving the epigraphs underground during the era of political turbulence.

Chapter Four consists mainly of case studies for epitaphs from the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties. Those epitaphs are prior to the fifth century and generally considered non-standard. The political instability after the collapse of the Han gave rise to various different types of burials, involving the relocation and alteration of the inscribed stones, for instance, because of burial away from lineage homelands, transfer of burial, and joint burial. Davis also points out that the relocation and alteration of epitaphs stemmed from the need to identify the deceased as well as gain support from both the spirits who look after the deceased and living kin.

In Chapter Five, the author explores the differences between the biographical narratives in the historical records and in commemorative texts such as *muzhiming*, and the motivations behind these two different types of compositions. By examining two Jindynasty cases, Davis shows that the state-sponsored historical records had their own historiographical goal such as advocating moral or political models, whereas the family maintained control of the content of *muzhiming* to shape their own family memory and to reinforce their family status. By comparing examples of epitaphs from the time prior to and after 494, when the Northern Wei moved its capital from Pingcheng 平城 to Luoyang 洛陽, Davis concludes that the practice of *muzhiming* was elevated in the Northern Wei as part of the sinicization process initiated by Emperor Xiaowen.

The last chapter focuses on answering one of the questions the author raised at the beginning of the book: How did entombed epitaph inscriptions develop into an essential commemorative genre esteemed by the literati? By comparing *muzhiming* with other commemorative texts and by focusing on Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508), one of the key figures during the canonization process of *muzhiming*, Davis convincingly shows the transformation of *muzhiming* from a marginal form of writing to an independent, esteemed literary genre.

The discussion in the first chapter on the circulation of epitaphs in manuscript form is especially important. The physical form of *muzhiming* seems to prohibit easy transfer of the texts, so it may not be obvious that the texts were once circulated in manuscript form. Ample evidence provided by Davis proves beyond doubt that they were. Early on, however, the author raised the question “Why were epitaphs displayed at funerals?” (3). But nowhere does he indicate how he knows that this is the case. It seems that the display of epitaphs at funerals has been taken as a fact in the absence of direct evidence.

Similarly, the evidence that *muzhiming* integrate some characteristics of the texts from the common religious tradition is relatively thin. The example Davis gives shows the term “spirits of Heaven and Earth” (*lingqi* 靈祇), which he considered to indicate spirit pacifying, similar to the function of burial-plot purchase contracts. The distinction between the canonical tradition and the common religious tradition remains vague. Davis clearly points out that his definition of “common religion” refers to “specific mantic techniques—such as alternative modes of exorcism, spirit propitiation, divination and strategies for coping with the dead—that are absent from the ritual classics and yet were widely practiced by people from all socio-economic classes” (92n1). Thus his criterion

is whether or not a type of text is included in the ritual classics. But why do inscribed coffins qualify as canonical since they are not mentioned in any classics as are the other types of texts in this tradition? Why do tomb inventory lists belong to common religion since most of them show very little religious tendency? Is it even necessary to include tomb inventory lists in this category since they seem to serve different purposes than burial-plot purchase contracts and tomb-stabilizing writs? Moreover, even though Davis refuses to use social or economic status to distinguish these two types of conventions, it is difficult to neglect the existence of a social and economic status distinction in these two types of conventions. Because of their costs, bronze inscriptions and stone stelae did not appear in poor people's tombs, whereas burial-plot purchase contracts and tomb-stabilizing writs are widely found in the tombs of low status people in the Han dynasty (even though burial-plot purchase contracts originated from upper class practices in the pre-imperial period). What was the impact of this distinction in the development of *muzhiming*? Which convention weighed more? Did the material used for *muzhiming*, namely the slabs, in any way also play a role in the development, given the potential cost of purchasing, carving, and moving a stone? The tomb-stabilizing writs often show strong Daoist ideas such as the application of seals of the Yellow God. This kind of Daoist reference is rarely seen in *muzhiming*. The extent to which *muzhiming* were influenced by the common religious tradition is still not very clear.

The problem of forgeries of *muzhiming* and their rubbings is not mentioned. Davis uses an epitaph of Tao Jun 陶浚 (d. 492), the son of the famous poet Tao Yuanming 陶淵明, as one example to comment on the topic of epitaphs produced prior to the move of the Northern Wei capital in 494 (292–95). But the authenticity of this particular epitaph is still debated. It might be helpful to draw readers' attention to the problem of possible forgery, even if only in a footnote.

The last question is in regard to the word "canonization" that the author chose to describe the rise of *muzhiming* as a literary genre. This word is often used in the study of the Chinese classics to describe the process by which those texts were gradually established as classics. I am not entirely sure if this is a proper word for the development of *muzhiming*. The argument that *muzhiming* gradually evolve from marginal writing to an essential commemorative genre is, to be sure, convincing. But can we call the process of establishment of a literary genre canonization? Can any of the epitaphs be called a canon?

This book is undoubtedly a great accomplishment in the study of *muzhiming* as well as in studies of early medieval history and literature. In at least the following three aspects this book makes great contributions to our understanding. The first one is the emphasis on the physical form of *muzhiming*. One important difference between *muzhiming* and other literary writings is that *muzhiming* are not just texts, they also are physical objects since so many of them are still extant in their original stone form. Davis not only studies the texts themselves extensively, but also pays a lot of attention to the stones, how they were produced, even reused, moved from above the ground to underground as well as moved from place to place when graves were moved. Archaeological information regarding the burials where the discoveries occurred is also provided when available. The special orthography of inscriptions is addressed briefly. Davis noticed two different forms of calligraphy and distinctive rendering of characters appearing in one epigraph (216). Those distinctions convincingly show that the inscriptions were carved at two

different times. A separate chapter or a section to address the issues of calligraphy and orthography in the early medieval *muzhiming* would have helped to amplify the picture of the development of *muzhiming*. Especially, in discussing *muzhiming* from the Northern Dynasties (Chapter 5) and the canonization of *muzhiming* (Chapter 6), the execution of calligraphy could also serve as important evidence to strengthen the author's arguments. Other physical features, such as the blank spot or starting a new line when encountering certain esteemed terms, are also worth consideration in connection with the formal nature of *muzhiming*. Although the rule of "leveling and leaving blanks" (*pingqueshi* 平阙式) was formally established in the subsequent Tang dynasty, is there any trace of it in the early medieval period?

Second, in each chapter Davis provides at least one case of close reading, complete with the transcriptions of the text, full annotated translation, and in most cases, an image of the original rubbing. The inclusion of the rubbing is especially welcome since scholars can use it to re-examine the original text. Translation of these texts is not an easy task due to the fact that *muzhiming* not only were often composed in a highly poetic, literary way, but even the preface part was also often written in the style of parallel prose and contains various historical allusions, some apparently fabricated.

Last but not least, this book is not just about *muzhiming* as a particular literary genre, but is also about commemorative culture in general. Not only are various other commemorative genres appearing in the transmitted literature discussed, but more importantly, many other types of memorial inscriptions and entombed texts are examined, most of which are known only through archaeological discoveries. With both transmitted texts and discovered types presented together, this book can serve as a starting point for anyone who is interested in early and medieval Chinese commemorative culture. The book demonstrates Davis's vast knowledge and deep understanding in the history and literature of early and medieval Chinese.

In sum, *Entombed Epigraphy and Commemorative Culture in Early Medieval China: A History of Early Muzhiming* is an exemplary interdisciplinary study which successfully brings together archaeology, history, literature, and textual studies.

*Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100–1700.* By JOSEPH DENNIS. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015. xvi + 390 pp. \$49.95, £39.95, €45.00 (cloth).

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The past two to three decades have seen a series of pioneering studies published on the history of books and publishing in late imperial China. Previously, the predominant concern of Chinese book history had been the history of printing technology, or rather the Chinese invention of woodblock and then moveable-type printing and the supposed transmission of both technologies over Eurasia to a pre-Gutenberg Germany. Since the publications of Oki Yasushi and Inoue Susumu in the 1990s and then Lucille Chia's 2002 study of Jianyang publications from the Song through the Ming dynasties, we