


collaboration with warlords received by CYP supporters and the “masses”? (122)? Although the author rightly notes the risk of the “over-estimation of the CYP’s role” (16) in this effort to make it visible, one does get the sense that he holds the underlying assumption that the CYP’s ideology was viable in and of itself. Also, he espouses the notion that the CYP ideology always corresponded to the actions of its leaders—“the CYP founders practiced what they believed” (16)—but this has never been the case in politics anywhere. Overall, a detailed and systematic critique of the CYP’s shortcomings and the tensions between ideology and practice is wanting.

To stay on the topic of the relation between ideas and actions, a more methodical analysis of the “unmaking” of the “radical right” referred to in the title, would have also been valuable. The book treats the “decline” of the CYP rather abruptly and haphazardly, and suggests that external factors were the main reason: the CYP “lost its revolutionary momentum” when the Second Sino-Japanese War erupted in 1937. It had no “resilience” and its military actions were “not sustainable in an adverse environment.” Ideologically, “ultranationalism” suddenly lost its appeal when China became an ally of the USA and UK against Japan in the 1940s (176). Furthermore, the CYP suffered from “a lack of solid military power and consistent financial sources” (207). Some of these factors, however, were presumably longer-term issues and deserve more attention, whereas other factors have been left out. Lastly, only one sentence refers to the CYP’s later history in Taiwan (256).

Regarding structure, many of the figures, movements, and ideas make a sudden entry, so the narrative thread can be hard to follow for those who are not already familiar with this period. The sections and chapters sometimes appear disconnected, while chapters also overlap at times, perhaps because some of the latter were published earlier as articles. A few mistakes will unavoidably slip into every book, but this book could have done with more editing as there are countless *pinyin* errors and typos throughout the book. Although the chronology at the start is extremely useful, a brief list of the main actors with a short biography and affiliation would have helped to provide an overview of the various groups and the interactions between them.

The Compensations of Plunder: How China Lost its Treasures

By Justin Jacobs. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020) 352 pp. \$82.50 (cloth), \$30.00 (paper)

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doi:10.1017/jch.2023.1

Published in 2020, *The Compensations of Plunder* appeared at the beginning of a wave of public reckoning regarding looting, the stewardship of cultural heritage, and the restitution of cultural artifacts from countries in the Global North to those in the Global South. Since then, museums in Germany, the United States, and Great Britain have returned more than one thousand of the sculptures and plaques collectively known as the Benin bronzes to

Nigeria. These artifacts were pillaged by British soldiers from the royal palace and surrounding areas of the Kingdom of Benin in 1897. Simultaneously, renewed attention has been drawn to the theft of religious sculptures from Buddhist and Hindu temples in South and Southeast Asia from the mid-twentieth century onward, abetted by networks of art dealers and smugglers, including those with scholarly connections, that facilitated their unlawful transfer to museums and private collections in North America and Europe.

The Compensations of Plunder addresses a distinct set of cultural artifacts acquired under very different circumstances: manuscripts, paintings and other objects from Buddhist cave shrines and archaeological sites along the Silk Roads in present-day Gansu province and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The book focuses principally on one figure, the Hungarian-British archaeologist and explorer Marc Aurel Stein (1862–1943), who led three expeditions to Central Asia between 1900 and 1916, and a fourth expedition in 1930 that was cut short by unfavorable conditions. Funded principally by the Government of India, the expeditions resulted in the collecting of tens of thousands of objects that are today divided mainly between the British Museum, British Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, and the National Museum of India. The manuscripts and paintings were neither looted nor smuggled; knowledge of Stein's activities was in fact openly acknowledged by local officials, to whom Stein showed off his discoveries and for whom the Chinese translation of one of Stein's expedition reports was considered to be an essential introduction to the Western-style natural sciences (pp. 22–28, 115).

The core question asked by Jacobs is, how did Stein and other Western archaeologists gain the goodwill and trust of local Chinese officials? Jacobs cites the Chinese historian Wang Jiqing, who argued that the explanation for Stein's successful expeditions lay in the aggression of Western powers toward China, Stein's "cunning nature," and the corruption of the Qing government (p. 20). Jacobs instead proposes a new theoretical framework that eschews the "criminalizing and anachronistic discourse of nationalism" and is based on "an explicit recognition of three factors that defined the course of any archaeological enterprise: class, empire, and profit" (pp. 29–30). Jacobs further analyses the impact upon different social classes of three forms of capital: economic, political, and social (p. 32). Key to this is the fluctuating valuation of Silk Road manuscripts and artifacts as worthless, profitable, precious, or priceless (pp. 34–35).

Chapters One to Three trace the ascendancy of Stein and fellow explorers, and Chapters Four to Six follow their gradual fall from grace. In Chapter One, we learn that the warm reception initially shown to Stein and his fellow explorers was due to their ability to offer generous wages to local Muslim laborers during the agricultural off-season that compensated for or exceeded the perceived value of cultural artifacts, as well as their reputation as purveyors of Western medicines. Jacobs's focus on socioeconomic class continues into Chapter Two, which argues that Chinese government officials considered men such as Stein to be members of the cultured elite on par with themselves, and collectors in the manner of Confucian gentlemen with whom they shared a mutual appreciation for Chinese calligraphy. The value of cultural artifacts lay in the possibility of their exchange for social, political, or economic capital on the part of local officials. The utility of Stein and others in this regard carries over into Chapter Three, which analyzes the imperialist ethos shared between European explorers and their Chinese hosts.

A turning point arrives in Chapter Four, in which Silk Road cultural artifacts began to be perceived as priceless treasures of a national Chinese cultural heritage in the wake of the fall of the Qing Dynasty and establishment of the Republic of China. Anger directed toward the American Langdon Warner (1881–1955), who removed mural paintings and took away sculptures from the Mogao Caves during the first Fogg

Museum expedition in 1923–24 spread among local peasants suffering from drought and famine, and bubbles over into Chapter Five, now set against the backdrop of increasing political instability in China. Nevertheless, the promise of diplomatic capital led certain government officials and scholars to assist the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin (1865–1952) in his acquisition and export of items against the terms of the Sino-Swedish Northwest Scientific Survey of 1927. Chapter Six closes with the downfall of Stein who, caught between national, regional, and scholarly interests and accused of despoiling China’s cultural heritage, was expelled from Xinjiang in 1931.

The Compensations of Plunder benefits from Jacobs’s close reading of the archives, putting it ahead of Peter Hopkirk’s *Foreign Devils on the Silk Road: The Search for the Lost Cities and Treasures of Chinese Central Asia* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), which was written on the basis of published expedition reports and secondary scholarship. The book provides a wealth of insight into personal motivations and interpersonal interactions, and shines when it brings these voices to life. The multiplicity of actors and the messiness that they bring to the narrative at times works in tension with the tidy structuralism of Jacobs’s arguments regarding the “compensations of plunder.” Furthermore, while the book’s aim is to step away from discourses of nationalism, as it turns out, increasingly vigorous discourses of nationalism and a coherent Chinese cultural heritage did matter, particularly when set against the backdrop of the waning British Empire and the nationalist agenda of scientific archaeology in 1920s China. When Jacobs critiques “current political agendas” and the “fog of nationalist disinformation that arose in the years after Western archaeologists packed up their bags and went home” (p. 276), he may be overlooking the point that such thinking was already entrenched when Western archaeologists were still in China.

In sum, *The Compensations of Plunder* makes an important intervention in studies of the Silk Roads, cultural heritage preservation, and modern Chinese history. It lays the groundwork for further thinking about the intersection between empires, nation-states, and cultural heritage in ways that complicate and augment our understanding of the troubled history of twentieth-century collecting.

The Cambridge Economic History of China, Volume 1: To 1800

Edited by Debin Ma and Richard von Glahn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 732 pp. \$155.00 (cloth).

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doi:10.1017/jch.2022.41

Richard von Glahn describes his magisterial *The Economic History of China* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) as an attempt to “tell the story of the Chinese