

Sima Qian seems to imply, be fixed through textuality. I should add, somewhat parenthetically, that this is precisely what *Shi ji* itself in some measure accomplished for we know that the Simas made ample use of oral accounts in producing their history, particularly for the period still accessible to direct or indirect human memory. But, all in all, Sima Qian's comments in the passage cited above carry more than a little ambivalence, perhaps even some anxiety, on the issue of orality—albeit a somewhat different type of orality than that discussed in Havelock.

There is ample evidence that the Empire of the Text is an act of containment, more or less successful, and we must continue to try to uncover precisely what forces were being contained. In a way, this is what Connery himself wishes to do in his concluding, and very fascinating, “humanist fantasy” (pp. 169–70).

A final cautionary word. Much of Connery's experiment is portrayed as reading against the sinological grain. There is assuredly no reason why sinology, any less than other traditional fields of study, should escape the deconstructive urge. (Tibetology has certainly taken it on the head recently.) But sinology can become something of a straw man (and, fortunately, the gender reference here is slowly becoming less accurate). I, for one, see little unity of vision these days among those who still have the courage to describe themselves as sinologists—and also little desire to exclude anyone from the club because of some deviant theoretical inclination. The Warring States Working Group, managed by Bruce Brooks, should provide evidence of how lively and varied contemporary sinology can be. So let me conclude with a compliment, not at all meant to be backhanded. Connery's book, whatever else it may be, is an excellent work of sinology that deserves our careful engagement.

STEPHEN DURRANT
University of Oregon

Maritime Sector, Institutions, and Sea Power of Premodern China. By GANG DENG. Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999. xix, 289 pp. \$69.50.

Gang Deng sets out to show that, in contrast to frequent oversimplifications about the “continental” nature of the Chinese state and economy and its overdetermined weakness as a participant in naval confrontations and maritime trade, premodern China had a very considerable presence in the maritime world. This is not quite as novel a revision as Deng sometimes implies, but his energetic and erudite contribution to the discussion still is very much to be welcomed. Especially impressive is his inventive pursuit of data on backward and forward linkages of maritime trade, including many items that have not occurred to previous investigators, such as the constant need for iron nails and rivets for the construction and maintenance of ships and the items in the Chinese pharmacopoeia for which the sole sources were maritime imports. Whatever numbers are available, however tentative, are cited and analyzed. The range of Chinese materials consulted is very impressive, from standard histories and other old books to the most recent scholarship. Every scholar studying premodern maritime China will want to consult this book for its many citations and suggestions.

These scholars, however, will soon notice the limitations of this work. Deng's knowledge of the relevant scholarship in English, French, German, and Japanese, better grounded in relevant western-language sources and sometimes more sophisticated in analysis than the Chinese scholarship, is very spotty indeed: no

Dermigny, no Chaunu, no Gardella, no Von Glahn, and so on. He seems to have little concern for the nature of the Chinese works he cites; summary modern works, and even dictionaries, and an article by Jiang Zemin are simply cited when their assertions should have been used with caution and traced to the sources as far as possible.

Deng is an economic historian. Many of his quantified arguments are intriguing. Some of his equations seem to add nothing to the analysis. He is extremely prone to writing phrases such as “supposing . . .” or “it is reasonable to guess . . .” in seeking to make the most of some unsatisfactory piece of evidence. He sometimes loses track (as did many Chinese statesmen) of the distinction between travel and warfare on the open ocean and on rivers and lakes. In a topical/analytic frame, exposition and analysis move erratically among examples separated by several centuries. His basic questions, like those of his mentor E. L. Jones, are ones of China-Europe comparison. His discussions of Europe for comparative purposes show familiarity with the high points of the recent literature, but not much depth of reading. Beginning with a very hazy concept of “sea power,” he comes in his conclusion to an important distinction between a maritime presence like China’s—motivated solely by private commercial goals—and the mercantilist profit-power interactions of the Europeans who came to dominate the world’s oceans after about 1750. But I am not sure that the concept of opportunity costs will bear the explanatory burden he places on it in these final pages, and I think it unfortunate that he ends with a diagram related to it that seems to me to add nothing to the exposition.

This is the fourth book Deng has published between 1993 and 1999. Clearly he is a scholar of great ambition and creativity who reads, thinks, and writes very fast. He has worked so fast over such a wide range of topics that many less ambitious and wide-ranging scholars will not be able to see beyond his defects of documentation and argument to appreciate the erudition and stimulation he gives us.

JOHN E. WILLS JR.
University of Southern California

Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950. Edited by JOSEPH W. ESHERICK. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000. x, 278 pp. \$55.00.

Over the course of the past few years, the attention of historians has focussed to a remarkable extent on the experience of Chinese cities in the early decades of the twentieth century. Attraction to this subject has been perhaps most compelling among scholars of Chinese origin and of a certain generation—scholars, apart from the contributors to this volume, such as Shi Mingzhen, Lu Hanchao, Shao Qin, and Wang Di—who have personally witnessed in their formative years a renewed frenzy of reformist changes in the Chinese urban scene. The book under review is a benchmark work, bringing together research by a number of key contributors to this new scholarly literature, and offering a broadly informed collective assessment of the late-Qing and Republican elite project fundamentally to remake the cities. It is a volume which no student of Chinese history should miss.

By orchestrating this inquiry, Joseph Esherick reinforces his claim to be America’s leading historian of twentieth-century China. Indeed, the contributors include so many of the editor’s students, former students, and *lao pengyou* that it has almost the appearance of a (premature) *festschrift*. Included are studies of Canton by Michael Tsin,