

HUGH R. CLARK. *Portrait of a Community: Society, Culture, and the Structures of Kinship in the Mulan River Valley (Fujian) from the Late Tang through the Song*. xiv, 473 pp. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007. ISBN 978-962-996-227-2.

With the present volume Hugh Clark presents a thorough in-depth research of a local community in Fujian province during “a time of change” (p. 1), that is, the period from the late Tang through the Song dynasties. The volume investigates the social development of élite kin groups in the Mulan river valley (immigration and mobility, composition, segmentation, and structures as well as marriage connections, Part I, society metaphorically called the “warp” of the community by the author) and religious and literati culture (Part II, culture being addressed as the weft respectively). A tapestry with warp and weft as metaphors for society and culture in order to explore the Mulan river community from multiple angles and gradually weave together a full picture – this is the methodological framework Clark has chosen to present his history. The introduction (pp. 1–33) in detail resumes relevant primary sources as well as the early social development in the region under discussion. Besides local gazetteers (*difangzhi*), collected works of scholar-officials (*wenji*) as well as so-called “random-notes” (*biji* or *zaji*), the investigation is primarily based on a rich fund of local genealogies (*zupu*, *zongpu*, or *jiapu*) and funerary inscriptions, that means, sources that portray the community above all from a local perspective. The volume has both a glossary, appendices providing examination figures, an explanation of genealogical terms, a table with dates of surviving genealogical prefaces, and an index.

Clark, it becomes evident, seeks to “upgrade local history.” Emphasis and centre of his investigation clearly lie on local history. He intends to show that developments on a local level, that local history or “micro-history,” have its own value (“Local history is not mere antiquarianism”, p. 317) – despite of the fact that the macro historical development of the empire is of course of primary importance. History, he stresses, “must always be considered a dialog between the ‘macro’ and the ‘micro’, [...] between the holistic and the particular, [...] the empire and the locality” (pp. 299, 318). In this context, Clark contrasts his study with the influential works of scholars such as Robert Hymes¹ and Beverly Bossler.² The latter namely put their emphasis on questions of how local networks were related to the wider policy and were consequently not concerned with locality as such. Clark, on the contrary, views the historical development from the perspective of locality. He seeks to demonstrate that well before élite culture defined answers to questions such as how kinship had to be understood or how it was practiced, “innovations were occurring at local levels, led by local elites who were driven by local concerns” (p. 5). Consequently, Clark’s study is full of local cases and examples.

1 Esp. *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-chou: Chiang-hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

2 *Powerful Relations: Kinship, Status, and State in Sung China (960–1279)*. Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University, 1998.

Analyzing the composition of local élite kin groups (section 2, pp. 37–79), Clark shows that we basically have to distinguish between early immigrants who had fled the mid-8th century upheavals (old families of the Tang) and *nouveaux immigrants* (new men) who arrived in the course of the late 9th and the 10th centuries, such as for example “the men of Gushi” (Guangdong). In the course of time, almost inevitably, tensions between these two groups emerged. More important, however, than just a change in the composition of the local élite, were changes in social mores among the kin groups. The new men were equipped with a new consciousness that distinguished them both from the imperial élites in the northern heartland and from local élites they had encountered in the south, a “close circle into which few penetrated and from which few fell” (p. 79). The new men rather fostered a “climate of mobility” and “unprecedented social fluidity.” In this context, we also have to see the fact that the culture of Song Minnan granted merchants and commercial activities an unusual measure of respect, an open attitude which allowed new kin groups to build up a commercial base to join the regional élite (p. 71).

In section 3 (pp. 81–121) Clark examines the closer meaning of kinship, discussing their segmentation, division, and structures and distinguishing between “functional” (embracing those who took part in activities of the group) and “putative” (those whose ultimate tie was acknowledged but who were not participants of the activities) ones. As groups grew more complex, they developed internal sub-divisions, which created tensions between the parts and the whole and challenged the whole’s integrity. Examples like the Huang family of Puyang and the Fu family of Luofeng show that despite of segmentations the ultimate goal and centre of identity, however, remained the “whole” (*zu*). But the case of the Zhuzi, Baida, and Fangshan kin groups of the Fang family present a different perspective. Segmentation and division was obvious and the “whole” spread up into separate “currents” (*pai*). Such example may show, that on the local level, kinship was a relative concept (pp. 102–103).

Section 4 (pp. 123–167) examines marriage connection. Clark provides numerous examples to demonstrate “that marriage within the Mulan valley was *at all times* first and foremost a local affair” (p. 165). The élites did not pursue a what Clark calls “capitalist orientation” to the essential exclusion of their natal ties (p. 167), local ties, on the contrary, were always present and did matter.

Section 5 (pp. 171–211) investigates the religious culture in the valley, from the early religious heritage, the growth of Buddhism as well as Daoism and popular cults during the Later Tang to Northern Song. Religious life in the Mulan valley, Clark shows, was characterized by many religious strands including shamanic beliefs and a diversity of deities – with the female deity of Mazu emerging as the most powerful one by the 13th century. As a rule, Clark concludes, religious efficacy, not orthodoxy was the central idea behind religious behaviour. Many examples are provided to demonstrate that and to what extent various religious beliefs influenced each other. Buddhism, for example, was by far not only the belief of the common people. Participation of famous personalities, such as Ouyang Yan, on the other hand, may serve as evidence that the power of Buddhism went far beyond the common people.

The world of scholarship and statecraft – literati culture – is examined in section 6 (pp. 213–254). This includes an analysis of examination culture – both *jinsbi* and the so-called “facilitated degree” (*tezouming*) – political activity and intellectual affiliations. The valley did produce dominant political figures, such as for example Cai Xiang or Cai Jing, even though they were not numerous. A large number of individuals, if only a small percentage of valley natives, had long-lasting records of public service in local and central positions. Most of the persons mentioned in examination lists, however, had very modest careers. Yet, power and influence of Minnan in the political world of the Song, especially the Southern Song, cannot be denied. But as for the intellectual orientation in the valley, although local scholars possessed direct ties with prominent figures of the new *daoxue*-movement (locally perhaps best

represented by Lin Guangchao), such as Cheng Yi or later Zhu Xi, the *daoxue*-tradition as well as scholarship as a whole remained primarily local. To say it in Clark's own words, "as the worlds of politics and philosophy pulled apart, their [the local elite's] real interest stayed with the former" (p. 254).

"Kinship lies at the cusp between religion and secularized literati culture" (p. 255). In this context, the worship of one's ancestors (in shrines) and the definition of a common ancestor (in genealogies) constituted basic elements in the self-definition of kin groups. As the sudden influx of outsiders during the Tang-Song interregnum constituted a challenge to the identity of the indigenous families of the valley, and, in addition, at the end of the Tang most of the old families had reached their 5th generation, beyond which mourning obligations ceased, this gradually led to new practices of self-definition. One such practice has to be seen in the building of ancestral shrines: independently of a concrete religious context, kin groups started to build shrines in which they could worship their former ancestor(s). Obviously, what was needed was a place where the collective ancestral line could be worshipped apart from individual graves. Another practice was the composing of genealogies: local kin groups sought to position themselves within the changing social order following the interregnum by "up-dating" their genealogical roots. Until the Southern Song, kin group genealogies developed not only into an increasingly orthodox exercise, but they were used for defining a common identity at an increasing local level. But with progressing socio-economic development, as experiments in corporate welfare and landholding increased, it became more important to define who was entitled to share the benefits and who not. Consequently, genealogies in the Mulan river valley gradually evolved from tools of preserving identity to tools for limiting identity (p. 287).

Local shrines in the Mulan valley, Clark emphasizes, were quite different from Zhu Xi's model of an ideal ancestral shrine. Thus, rather than regarding Zhu Xi's famous *Family Rituals*, or the works by Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu *et al.*, as points of departure, "historians should regard them as resolutions, the reification of diverse practices into a standard body of orthodox kinship" (p. 261). In this context, Clark once again argues in favour of paying more attention to local histories without neglecting "the whole" – the Mulan river valley is not China, yet it is "not separate from the larger concept" (p. 318).

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LINDA COOKE JOHNSON. *Women of the Conquest Dynasties: Gender and Identity in Liao and Jin China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011. xxxiii + 254 pp. ISBN 978-0824834043.

The era between the 10th and 13th centuries marks one of the most decisive ruptures in the history of China. With the Song 宋 (Northern Song 960–1127, Southern Song 1127–1279) success to reunify the Central China Plain, China experienced under the Song dynasty another economic and cultural apex in its history. During the same time period, which was a time when "barbarian" incursions renewed, the menace from the north and northeast became progressively grievous, resulting to the establishments of the successive non-Chinese empires of the Khitan Liao 遼 (907–1125) and the Jurchen Jin 金 (1115–1234). During this period of time, "no single orthodoxy prevailed" (p. xxi) and there existed no "China" as it was understood before or since, but rather a territory divided among different