

and “The assassins strike”, focus on the first emperor of Qin (r. 221–210 BCE): the former depicts the emperor’s birth and accession to the throne (despite not being the king’s biological son) and his later power struggles with his half-brother and mother, while the latter spotlights Jing Ke’s failed attempt to assassinate the emperor.

In translating *Kingdoms in Peril*, Milburn primarily eschews literal translation in favour of a free style that, besides keeping the text’s flow fluent and natural, works well for this novel: Feng’s novel is full of allusions and references to characters and plots in other (usually untranslated) chapters that, were the translation literal, would require footnotes. Because the original novel contains multiple narrative threads and the translated storylines are taken from multiple chapters, the translator sometimes summarizes the original text’s transitions between narratives, a method that echoes Feng’s own invention of characters and plots to fill gaps in his historical sources. The translation also offers glimpses of the novel’s original form by quoting poems, including Feng’s explanations of difficult terms, and using couplets for many of the chapter titles that are imitations, if not translations, of the original.

Though the translation is generally of very high quality, it contains several small errors. For instance, in one poem (p. 72), *fendai* (粉黛) is translated as the colours of “the beacon fires”, though it should refer to Queen Bao, the *femme fatale* of the dynasty: literally face powder and eyebrow pigment, *fendai* is used as a metonymy for imperial consorts in many poems. Another example is the title *guojiu* (國舅, “brother-in-law” of a lord or a king), which is translated as “Leader of the Nation” (p. 137). Some romanization of names is also confusing – the table of contents lists “Ai Lao” (p. vii) despite his appearance as “Lao Ai” in the story (p. 303) – and there are several mistakes in the romanization of characters’ names, such as Zhao “Xi” rather than “Su” (p. 120). It is also regrettable that Milburn does not address how Feng reconciles inconsistencies among his sources or her reasons for selecting these nine stories from the text’s forty or fifty. None of this, however, keeps *Kingdoms in Peril* from being a fluent, pleasant translation equipped with a helpful introduction. For readers who enjoy fascinating historical novels and researchers interested in Feng Menglong or late imperial Chinese literature generally, *Kingdoms in Peril* is a must-have.

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XIAOSHAN YANG:

Wang Anshi and Song Poetic Culture.

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Wang Anshi and Song Poetic Culture studies Wang Anshi’s 王安石 (1021–86) poetic works and activities and their interrelations with Song poetic culture. As the author indicates in the introduction, the five chapters of the book may be read independently, while together they form a mosaic of Wang’s work and the literary and historical contexts that define Wang Anshi. Topics of the five case studies include Wang’s influential but controversial “Song of Brilliant Lady” 明妃曲, his

anthology of Tang poems – *Tang baijia shixuan* 唐百家詩選 (*Select Poems of A Hundred Tang Masters*), the critical discourse pivoting on his late poetic style, his engagement with Buddhism as seen in his imitation of Hanshan 寒山 and his descriptions of Bell Mountain 鐘山, and the political circumstances of Northern Song factional struggles that contextualized his poem “Hard to Trust You” 君難託.

Xiaoshan Yang’s contribution first of all lies in that he largely deepens our understanding of Wang Anshi. Although Wang’s historical significance is in general not doubted, widely known traditional labels (such as “one of the Eight Masters of Prose Writing in Tang and Song 唐宋八大家”) and frequently mentioned characteristics of Wang’s literature (e.g. general recognition of Tang poetry’s influence on him) often in effect conceal the fact that Wang is one of the most understudied writers of the Song dynasty, not to mention that political bias in history has directed traditional evaluation of Wang Anshi’s literature towards certain peculiar directions. While the twenty-first century has witnessed remarkable progress in Wang Anshi studies exemplified by Liu Chengguo’s 劉成國 *Jinggong xinxe yanjiu* 荆公新學研究 (*Study of the New Learning of the Duke of Jing*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), Wang’s literature has not received the attention it deserves. Yang’s book makes a great contribution to both Wang Anshi studies and studies of Song poetry.

The book successfully establishes a paradigm of studying poetic culture through the prism of a representative poet. Such a methodology is especially desirable for the investigation of Song poetic culture, which is defined not only by common features of the age but also by star poets who showed different individual characteristics. While such a poetic culture is irreducible to any simplified summaries, Yang’s examination of Wang Anshi provides diverse perspectives in its approach. The issues investigated include reception history (chapters 1 and 2), the Tang–Song poetic transition (chapter 2), new discourse of poetic criticism that originated in the Song (chapter 3), interplay between literature and religion (chapter 4), and tension between literature and politics (chapter 5). These issues are not picked at random, but are interrelated. For example, the political discourse discussed in chapter 5 also provides a backdrop for us to deepen our understanding of the controversial reception of “Song of Brilliant Lady” that Yang discusses in chapter 1. The way in which Yang structures the book convincingly shows that Song poetic culture is a self-contained yet open-ended system, though the reader may be curious as to whether the chapters could be arranged in a different order.

Some of the points Yang raises appear obvious at first glance, but are in fact very insightful and innovative. For example, at the end of chapter 2 (pp. 122–3), Yang points out that the truly formative forces behind the formation of Tang canons in the Song were manifested mostly in scholarly endeavours of editing and collating the collections of individual Tang authors and in conducting poetic criticism on these authors, rather than in the inclusion of these authors in anthologies. This seems to be quite straightforward once it is stated; but as soon as we consider the amount of scholarship that investigates the reception of a poet by examining the frequency that his works are selected in anthologies, we see that Yang indeed points to some serious misconceptions about anthology and reception history. Inspiring examples like this can be found in every chapter, showing potentials for further study.

To some extent, the book shows a tendency to exhaust as many materials that are related to the topic of discussion as possible, and is thus very informative. Thoughtfully organized, these materials enrich each chapter’s content and effectively drive the narrative towards the theoretical consideration looming behind such narrative. For example, in the section “Toward the Wang Anshi style” in

chapter 3, Yang investigates various comments on Wang's poetry and implicitly but convincingly indicates that literary style is accumulatively constructed based on layered reception of an author's work rather than being consciously created by the author himself. The discussion not only strengthens our grasp of Wang Anshi's poetry but also endorses recent scholarship on reception history studies in the field of pre-modern Chinese literature.

The book offers accurate translations of many important texts of Song poetic criticism; its extensive footnotes provide rich information for further reading. These contributions should be appreciated by any reader. Meanwhile, the book may leave some readers with the impression that it does not articulate a strong agenda about Wang Anshi and Song poetic culture. It is worth stressing that Wang, compared with other eminent Song literati such as Ouyang Xiu 歐陽脩 (1007–72) or Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), is a complex historical figure and has been shrouded in misunderstandings throughout history. Up until now the field has not been ready to host mutually competing agendas to evaluate Wang in the historical context of Song poetry and poetics. In my opinion, Yang's approach to studying Wang Anshi is the most appropriate: it reflects Yang's caution as a knowledgeable expert on Song literature, while the book's contribution to Wang Anshi studies is beyond any doubt.

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SASSMANN, MANUEL and SUN HUA (eds), series ed. LOTHAR LEDDEROSE: *Sichuan Province. Volume 5. Wofoyuan Section E–F*. (Buddhist Stone Sutras in China.) xi, 557 pp. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz and Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, 2021. ISBN 978 3 447 11268 0. doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000095

The fifth volume on Sichuan in the monumental *Buddhist Stone Sutras in China* series continues the impressive teamwork of the Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften to document the famous site known as Wofoyuan (Grove of the Reclining Buddha). Vol. 5 surveys Caves 71, 73, and 76 in Section E and Caves 83 and 85 in Section F. All material is provided in both Chinese and English. In this volume, the only engraved text translated (on pp. 35–8) is the impressive stele-shaped inscription in Cave 81, discussed below.

The first part ("Introduction") consists of two chapters, a survey of Sections E and F by project leader Lothar Ledderose and an analysis of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottama-Sūtra* (Golden Light Sutra) by Michael Radich. Inscriptions featuring a synoptic version of the "Golden Light Sutra" are distinctive features of Caves 73 and 76 in Section E. Further discussion of the two introductory chapters is provided below.

The second part, "Catalogue", includes meticulous coverage of each cave in Sections E and F. All the volumes in this series provide high-quality documentation, enabling other scholars to incorporate study of the site. For each cave, coverage includes a "Description" subsection giving an overview, location, measurements, a layout of each wall with a report on the state of preservation, and a