

REVIEW

Lisa Raphals. *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Reviewed by
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Lisa Raphals's latest book is a lucid and well-organized survey of divination in early China and ancient Greece. So as not to be constrained by Greek and Chinese terminology that does not map neatly one-to-one, she introduces the technical phrases "mantic activity" (p. 2) and "mantic practitioners" (Figs. 1.1–3, pp. 8–9). One might object that these are still not culturally neutral, inasmuch as the word "mantic" has purely Greek roots,¹ but this problem happily does not interfere with her exposition, which is rich in relevant primary texts on both sides. (My own terminological suggestion would be "forecast," which, unlike "divination" or "prognostication," does not imply that the practice is irrational or presupposes peculiar divinities.) I am not qualified to judge the Greek material, but the Chinese sources are accurately and appositely presented. Another strength is the range, with both received and excavated texts from several different sites, including Baoshan 包山, Wangshan 望山, Jiudian 九店, and Shuihudi 睡虎地.

The book is organized thematically, taking the reader on a tour of sources, theories, the range of practitioners, their methods, the types of questions posed and answered, and so on, with a survey of Greek and Chinese evidence in each chapter, and a comparative section toward the end. Because Raphals handles primary sources so ably, the book can serve as a handy reference for any researcher looking for the available sources pertaining, for example, to the types of practitioners, both formal and informal, who operated in ancient China. Or their methods (turtle and milfoil, astromancy, hemerology, etc.) and how these changed over time.

If there is one general shortcoming, it is that the *secondary* literature is not as well accounted for. Not to be captious, but there are instances

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1. On p. 101, incidentally, Raphals implies (maybe I am misreading her) that Plato was wrong to associate *mantis* with *mania*, but the two undoubtedly share the same proto-Indo-European root: *men.

where a fuller engagement with recent scholarship would have forestalled mistakes. For instance, it is clear that Raphals misunderstands the concept of *xingde* 刑德, which she translates questionably as “sanctions and virtues” (p. 139; see also p. 243), without citing John S. Major’s study elucidating the term.² Even when the analysis is not compromised in this manner, readers still deserve references to leading scholarly opinions, and these are often missing—for example, Roel Sterckx³ on animal physiognomy (pp. 95f., 143ff., and 351), Richard Rutt⁴ on methods of yarrow-stalk divination (p. 131), David W. Pankenier⁵ on “field-allocation” (*fenyé* 分野) astrology (p. 132), Guo Jue⁶ on whether divination is rational (p. 165), Yuri Pines⁷ on the religious functions of early historiographers (p. 312), Nathan Sivin⁸ and Manfred Porkert⁹ on causes of disease according to *Huangdi neijing* 皇帝內經 (p. 32of.),¹⁰ Edward L. Shaughnessy¹¹ on the Wangjiatai 王家臺 *Guicang* 歸藏

2. “The Meaning of *hsing-te*,” in *Chinese Ideas about Nature and Society: Studies in Honour of Derk Bodde*, ed. Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987), 281–91.

3. *The Animal and the Daemon in Early China*, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany, 2002), 25ff. and 156ff.

4. *The Book of Changes (Zhouyi): A Bronze Age Document*, Durham East-Asia Series 1 (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 1996), 145–201.

5. *Astrology and Cosmology in Early China: Conforming Earth to Heaven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 265–88. (The relevant chapter was originally published in 1999 and was thus available to Raphals even if the revised version in this book was not.)

6. “Divination,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Chinese Religions*, ed. Randall L. Nadeau, Wiley-Blackwell Companions to Religion (Chichester, UK, 2012), 419–40. More recently, Albert Galvany has explored this question in “Signs, Clues and Traces: Anticipation in Ancient Chinese Political and Military Texts,” *Early China* 38 (2015), 151–93.

7. *Foundations of Confucian Thought: Intellectual Life in the Chunqiu Period, 722–453 B.C.E.* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2002), 14–26. (Raphals does list this book in her bibliography.)

8. *Traditional Medicine in Contemporary China*, Science, Medicine, and Technology in East Asia 2 (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987), esp. 100–102.

9. *The Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine: Systems of Correspondence*, MIT East Asian Science Series 3 (Cambridge, 1974), e.g., 148–52.

10. Here she also mis-Romanizes the title of a paper by Yamada Keiji and refers to Paul U. Unschuld’s response without citing it: “Der Wind als Ursache des Krankseins: Einige Gedanken zu Yamada Keijis Analyse der Shao-shih Texte des *Huang-ti nei-ching*,” *T’oung Pao* 68 (1982), 91–131.

11. “The Wangjiatai *Gui Cang*: An Alternative to *Yi Jing* Divination,” in *Facets of Tibetan Religious Tradition and Contacts with Neighbouring Cultural Areas*, ed. Alfredo Cadonna and Ester Bianchi, *Orientalia Venetiana* 12 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2002), 95–126. Shaughnessy’s more recent book, *Unearthing the Changes: Recently Discovered*

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(p. 334f.). Similarly, scholarly readers who check Raphals's footnotes will discover that some bibliographical investigation is often necessary, because her references are not always accurate and sometimes she even cites the wrong publication.¹² A little more detail-oriented work of this kind would have made the book more useful and reliable.

Nevertheless, *Divination and Prediction in Early China and Ancient Greece* will serve as an excellent first resource for students and scholars who wish to acquaint themselves with the extant sources before venturing into this immensely complex field on their own. It will undoubtedly aid the cause of comparative research, as Raphals intended.

Manuscripts of the Yi jing (I ching) and Related Texts, Translations from the Asian Classics (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), would not have been available to Raphals while she was writing.

12. Another example: p. 301, where she states that Hans Bielenstein responded to a paper by Wolfram Eberhard, but cites the wrong one; it should be "Beiträge zur kosmologischen Spekulation Chinas in der Han-Zeit," *Baessler Archiv* 16.1 (1933), 1–100. In the same discussion, she provides the wrong date for Sivin's "Cosmos and Computation in Early Chinese Mathematical Astronomy"; it should be 1969.