

objects as gifts and by the destruction of many royal palaces at the fall of the Ming. But Qing censorship could be another cause. In my own study of Ming kings, I discovered that the Qing regime's systematic massacre of Ming imperial kin caused surviving kin to migrate and to change their surname. Early in its reign, the Qing systematically suppressed all mention of the Ming imperial clan and its members in local gazetteers. May such censorship have applied to Ming kingly artworks also?

Craig Clunas's *Screen of Kings* is rich in detail and comprehensive in its treatment of larger issues and themes in art history, material culture, and Ming history. The book is extremely successful in inspiring intellectual curiosity and in providing a basis for further research on the issues mentioned above.

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Prosperity's Predicament: Identity, Reform, and Resistance in Rural Wartime China. By ISABEL BROWN CROOK et al. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013. xxiv, 301 pp. \$85.00 (cloth).
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While every book represents a collective effort, this one embodies the persistence and dedication of five remarkable individuals. It began when Isabel Brown Crook, born and raised in China by Canadian missionaries, and Yu Xiji, a preschool teacher from Zhejiang with some medical training at Peking Union Medical College, sought work with the National Christian Council (NCC) to participate in its rural reconstruction projects. On behalf of the NCC, Crook and Yu conducted an anthropological house-to-house survey in Prosperity Market Village (*Xinglongchang*) in rural Sichuan in 1941. Beginning in the late 1990s, historian Christina Gilmartin worked with the two researchers (with both until Yu's death in 2006, and continuing with Crook thereafter), to transform thousands of survey notes into a scholarly monograph. Following Gilmartin's untimely death in 2012, historians Gail Hershatter and Emily Honig honored their friend and colleague by taking up her last work and bringing it to completion in collaboration with Crook. The result is a very precious window into rural Sichuan after the internecine warfare of the warlord years and during the War of Resistance against Japan (1937–45).

The contours of daily life emerge with arresting clarity from chapters arranged thematically to cover farm work, sideline products such as incense sticks and hog bristles, local power holders, reformers, marriage, and healthcare. The five creators have produced a work that speaks in one voice and seamlessly merges historical analysis with anthropological data. They deftly describe how ordinary people eked out a meager existence by dint of clever survival strategies, constantly plagued by military conscription, tax farming, banditry, and illness. At the same time, village life was dominated by the wrangling of local power brokers known as the Robed Brothers, or Paoge, members of a secret society that held more clout than either the local or the national governments, and ultimately brought all reform efforts to a halt.

These dynamics explain why, during the year and a half that Crook and Yu were in Prosperity, the town had four township heads. The first, Sun Zhonglu, was a modernizing reformer with connections to a local landlord family as well as to educated elites in Bishan, the county seat. While he faced significant opposition from the local leader of the Paoge, Commander Cai (who had gained both fame and wealth fighting in warlord

armies), Sun's own ties to local society enabled him to be a successful leader. However, the Nationalist government wished to reap more financial benefits from rural society, and to that end appointed three successive township heads from other towns; each outsider in turn failed to overcome the local power of the Paoge. The Paoge also disrupted the NCC's largest project in Prosperity, a salt cooperative designed to share its profits with local farmers and ensure the poor affordable access to a crucial commodity. Such a project would have robbed a local Paoge man of the handsome profits he reaped through illegal salt sales, so he covertly bought all the shares and coerced the farmer members into electing him as chairman. The salt cooperative collapsed, and the entire NCC project came to an abrupt end.

By contrast, the NCC experienced marked success with its health clinic, thanks to the labors of Nurse Zhu Xiuzhen. Zhu worked patiently, allowing the evidence of her healing powers to assuage villagers' fears of outsiders and their lack of familiarity with Western-style medicine. For its part, the Nationalist government experienced some success in educational reform, though change came slowly and only when the Paoge did not object; government efforts to curb opium dealing and gambling, two significant sources of Paoge income, did not fare so well.

Crook and Yu's original survey notes have been published in China in Chinese, and the English translation will soon be available at www.isabelcrook.com. Yet this book offers something more: as a scholar's interpretation of the field data, it brings the story of Prosperity circa 1941 into conversation with several threads of scholarship, and confirms many previous findings. Here we see a Sichuan version of Prasenjit Duara's cultural nexus of power, an affirmation of William Skinner's theories of rural market networks, and confirmation of Lloyd Eastman's argument that military conscription and tax farming spelled disaster for many wartime Sichuan farmers (though the authors do not cite Eastman). These works are clearly visible to scholarly readers, but they do not enter directly into the text or interfere with the stories of the 1940s, making the text inviting to readers at any level. The chapters can stand on their own as classroom reading assignments.

Prosperity's Predicament illustrates what those of us who research wartime Sichuan know from our sources, that the War of Resistance produced a unique opportunity for collaboration between the central government and nongovernmental reformers, all of whom had high hopes. But it also shows the tragedy that a few selfish and powerful men could wreak on a desperately poor populace. It does not blame the Nationalist government or argue that it was doomed to fail, but rather shows that any rural reform effort required formidable skill and political savvy in order to succeed. Melding meticulously assembled field data with scholarly insight, this exceptional work will remain a definitive study of twentieth-century rural Sichuan for years to come.

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The Southern Garden Poetry Society: Literary Culture and Social Memory in Guangdong. By DAVID B. HONEY. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013. xiv, 258 pp. \$45.00 (cloth).
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On one level, David Honey's new book is about Cantonese poems. The book provides the first comprehensive study of literary images that Cantonese writers commonly