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Literary Societies of Republican China

Thomas D. Curran Ph.D.

Sacred Heart University, currant@sacredheart.edu

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Kong. But today, now a global power, China has sought models of commercial law. Hence, Hong Kong law may yet sway Mainland law.

One bilingual judge, Timothy Lau, remarks on page 232, "To some extent, the Chinese legal system today is influenced by the Hong Kong legal system."

University of California, Davis

Benjamin E. Wallacker

Denton, Kirk A. and Michel Hockx (eds.): *Literary Societies of Republican China*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), ix + 591pp., pbk \$46.95. ISBN 978-0-7391-1934-1.

Inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), who believed that writers operating within a literary field seek to acquire symbolic or cultural capital in the form of legitimation, prestige, and opportunities for social networking, the authors represented in this collection survey thirteen literary groups in China's Republican period that promoted the ideas and self-interest of their members. Usually the individuals that formed these associations were professional writers, but they were also at times academics, polemicists, or political party propagandists. In earlier times they might have had comfortable careers within China's bureaucracy. Following the abolition of the civil service examination system in 1905, however, that avenue to advancement was closed, and the literary-minded members of China's educated elite had to find other ways to make a living. As these essays show, literary societies could provide institutional support for such people.

One of the strengths of this collection is its coverage. Scholarship in the People's Republic of China during the liberation era ignored or marginalized literary figures and groups that existed outside the leftist mainstream. Since Mao Zedong's passing, however, Chinese scholars have demonstrated that the Republican literary field was far richer than had been thought, and this collection builds upon their work by showing that there was, indeed, considerable variety within the Republican-era literary community. Among the new emphases is the fact that there were greatly divergent views as to the role literature should play in changing society and the approach it should take toward China's traditional culture. While Republican-era leftists may have attempted to dominate the field – a theme that emerges repeatedly in this collection—their dominance was by no means complete; there was considerable space for groups whose literary output and institutional affiliations placed them outside the leftist mainstream. One example is that of clubs that met routinely to share classical-style poetry, continuing a centuries-old tradition that distinguished literati from commoner. Interestingly, during the Republican Period old poetic forms retained their vitality, and devotion to literary pursuits as a form of social entertainment provided a mechanism by which to sustain elite literary traditions and foster cultural networking. Another example is popular "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly" fiction that dealt with such conventional topics as beauty and sentimental love. Apparently, such traditional literary types retained their popularity within the urban middle class despite the tendency of left-leaning New Culture critics to condemn them as frivolous and socially irresponsible.

Denton and Hockx point out in their introduction that, aside from being an arena for competition in the realm of literary expression and ideas, the Republican literary field was also a battleground for readership. Competition for scarce resources and readers led to institutional innovations, such as the Chinese Literary Association, a sort of union for writers that created an independent field for non-political literary figures and competed with other groups for access to

the literary market. Other examples include the Creation Society, a “politically motivated organized collective” [p. 103] that originated in a neo-Romantic movement and aimed at social transformation with a Marxist slant; the Critical Review (Xueheng) school, a network of conservative intellectuals inspired by Irving Babbitt to aim for the preservation of the best of Chinese (and Western) culture; and the Yusi Society, a non-political, non-ideological, and exceedingly loosely structured group – it had no membership lists, rules, or even meetings – that was held together by little more than its members’ shared interest in publishing their work. In these examples and others, the essays in this collection do a great deal to describe the organizational infrastructure that supported publication – networks of editors, publishers, investors, academic factions, and political parties – and they show how each of the groups mentioned contended with the practical aspects of the publishing industry. By focusing as intensively as these papers do on the ways by which groups of writers organized themselves, a great deal of information is brought out that adds to our knowledge of literary production as well as social networking in early twentieth century China.

Coverage in these essays is both broad and relatively deep, the editors’ purpose being partly to provide in one place details that might form a foundation for further scholarship. Although the collection is unified by a common attention to the aforementioned themes, each chapter could easily stand alone as an introduction to one of the groups. Taken as a whole, the book is a welcome addition to a field that has recently moved away from preoccupation with textual analysis to exploration of the contexts behind the texts.

Sacred Heart University

Thomas D. Curran

Mühlhahn, Klaus: *Criminal Justice in China: A History*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009) [vii] + 365pp., \$29.95. ISBN 978-0-674-0332308.

The author brings special credit to the discipline of history, which he teaches at Indiana University. That is, though his specific topic is criminal justice, he has written a neat and eloquent history of modern China. No doubt part of the reason is the pervasive relation between criminal justice and the politics and culture of China. While the book could not be sole source, so meticulous is the author in his citation of sources and his organization of material the reader may stand in awe of such a competent narrative.

The book is divided into large chapters, Imperial China – The Right Degree of Pain; Republican China – The Prison Regime; and two chapters on the struggle between the Nationalists and the Communists. The first is War and Revolution – Trials of Terror, and the second portrays the victorious Communist State – Reform Through Labor, coming down to the late 1970s. Finally, in a brief but solid conclusion, the author ventures into the present and future.

The reader will note that a goodly amount of the book is devoted to the twentieth century horror, the concentration camp. The author gives a fascinating account of the institution under the Nationalist government, continued and grown under the Communists. The author’s interest is broader than China. Shortly after publication of this book he brought out in the March 2009, Volume 6 Number 1 issue of *World History Connected* (available online) a splendid piece entitled “The Dark Side of Globalization: The Concentration Camps in Republican China in Global Perspective.” The worldwide range of concentration camps runs from the baldly murderous camps of Nazi Germany to the shameful imprisonment of Americans of Japanese descent following Pearl Harbor. But there seems to be a theme that underlies all: the wish to iso-