

their identity in contemporary international society.<sup>3</sup>

Overall, this is an excellent contribution to the comparative historiography of all five early-modern Eurasian empires, rich in empirical material, and fertile for further studies on linking memory, identity, and selective legitimacy. After all, even Freud said that forgetfulness, which is seldom unintended and therefore intentional, is one of the best defense mechanisms at our disposal.<sup>4</sup>

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Yan Chen. *The Maritime Silk Road and Cultural Communication Between and the West*. Translated by Haitao Mu, Caiyun Gao, and Chen Chen. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020. 206 pp. (ISBN: 9781498544054). doi:10.22679/avs.2023.8.1.010  
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Yan Chen (1916–2016) was Professor of Oriental Studies at Peking University and played an active role in advancing Mainland Chinese scholarship on the maritime silk trade after the Cultural Revolution. This book is the English translation of eleven well-researched articles that Chen published from the late 1980s. While each essay is a stand-alone chapter based on Chen's careful reading of archaeological findings and Chinese literary sources, one common thread that links all eleven chapters is the transformation of multiple maritime trading and logistics routes that connected China with Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

Chapter one draws on the Hemudu Neolithic culture (5500 BC–3300 BC) that flourished south of Hangzhou in today's Yuyao, Zhejiang Province to construct an indigenous seafaring tradition in East China. Chapter two documents the evolvement of several maritime commercial routes in the middle Tang dynasty. While Canton and Yangzhou attracted Arab and Persian merchants, Penglai, formerly called Dengzhou, in Shandong Province was a major trading port for northeastern Asia. Chapter three studies the circulation of Chinese products in mercantile activities across the East China Sea and the South China Sea. The next two chapters highlight the centrality of Zhejiang Province in the East China Sea's maritime commerce and that of Canton in the South China Sea's trading networks, respectively.

Shifting the focus to Southeast Asia, chapter six refers to the Bay of Siam (today's Thailand) as an attractive destination for Chinese sailors, merchants, and migrants. Chapter seven celebrates China's close maritime ties with the Arab world, boosting the movement of spices and other goods. Chapters eight and nine revisit the legacy of Ming Admiral Zheng He's naval expeditions to the Islamic oceanic world (1405–1433), solidifying China's tributary

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<sup>3</sup> Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. (London: Penguin Books, [1901] 2002).

influence across maritime Asia before the age of European colonialism. Just a century after Zheng He's voyages, God, gold, and glory drove the European expansion into Asia, with Malacca, Macau, and Manila becoming the cornerstones of such encounters. Chapter ten reflects on the founding, in 1557, of a Portuguese settlement in Macau and chapter eleven evaluates the Macau-Manila silk trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Portuguese and Spanish merchants helped connect China with the Lusophone and Spanish-speaking worlds.

Conceptually, two valuable insights can be discerned from Chen's broad historical coverage. First, Chen critiques the longstanding image of imperial China as that of an agrarian empire capable of asserting its domination over an influential maritime world through policies of persuasion and coercion. Although maritime commerce and seafaring activities were often subject to political interventions of territorial powers, their evolution was also made by historical actors from within. Chen's combination of top-down and bottom-up analyses foregrounds forces internal to these seafaring communities against external pressures that not only constrained but also spawned network formation in the oceanic sphere. Second, Chen treats maritime China and Southeast Asia as a distinct world region that cut across traditional political divides and that constituted an integrated economic and sociocultural zone. The spread of maritime trade across Southeast Asia and beyond entailed a variety of overlapping human and cultural relationships that tied peoples and communities together. These commercial ties were embedded in the Chinese, Arab, Persian, Indian, Malay, Portuguese, and Spanish seafaring traditions that had evolved over time. The best way to appreciate such pluralistic and interconnected components of maritime China is to move beyond traditionalist and nationalist traps in conventional historiography.

Methodologically, Chen's approach is that of macro-history, focusing on cross-regional and structural forces that contributed to the growth and demise of maritime trade routes across centuries. His analytical lens is shaped by the old Sinocentric worldview, treating neighboring kingdoms as China's tributary vassals, not sovereign equals. By framing the stories of Zheng He's expeditions as an example of a Chinese civilizing mission and the history of Portuguese Macau as one of shared sovereignty with the Ming and Qing governments, he seems to be repurposing the past of the Maritime Silk Road and incorporating it into contemporary China's diplomatic, economic, and geopolitical efforts to engage with maritime neighbors. One wishes that the translators had included a reflective introduction to situate Chen's scholarship in the changing Chinese historiographical research on the Silk Road since the 1980s. Thus, this book must be read in relation to the latest historical publications on the Maritime Silk Road.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Craig Benjamin, *Empires of Ancient Eurasia: The First Silk Roads Era, 100 BCE–250 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Franck Bill, Sanjyot Mehendale, and James W. Lankton eds., *The Maritime Silk Road: Global Connectivities, Regional Nodes, Localities* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2022). One should also consult the impressive list of monographs and edited volumes in an authoritative book series entitled "East Asian Economic and Socio-Cultural Studies—East Asian Maritime History," edited by Angela Schottenhammer. [https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/series\\_332.ahtml](https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/series_332.ahtml)

Despite this minor limitation, Chen's portrayal of the Maritime Silk Road as a cosmopolitan frontier is of great importance at a time when China has weaponized a nationalistic perception of its maritime legacy, viewing control over the sea lanes and the possession of a blue-ocean navy as essential symbols of a rising power, confronting neighbors over disputed waterways, and cutting off rival states' access to the ocean. The escalation of maritime sovereignty disputes in recent years has prompted a reimagining, in both academic and political circles, of Asia as an oceanic space with greater humanistic connections and partnerships, not regional competitions and conflicts.

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Hao Chen. *A History of the Second Türk Empire (ca. 682–745 AD)*. Brill's Inner Asian Library, Volume: 40. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021. 316 pp. €27.50. (ISBN 978 90 04 46432 2). doi:10.22679/avs.2023.8.1.011

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The story of the Second Turkic Empire or the Second Turkic Khaganate is intriguing because it is one of our most well-known nomadic empires and rose from the ashes twice in history. This is a story of an empire filled with intrigue, romance, family drama, and outside influence. Despite this interesting story, The Second Turkic Empire is a part of history that we do not discuss in the West as it is often seen as a side note to the grand histories of Rome, Persia, and China. The Empire's place in history is somewhat ironic given the fact that in the two centuries that the First Turkic Empire (552–603 AD) and Second Turkic Empire (682–744 AD) were the dominant power in Central Asia, historians see for the first time in recorded history a nomadic empire which bordered and posed a threat to three major empires at the same time (China, Iran, and the Byzantine Empire), something that was unprecedented. An additional aspect of the Second Turkic Empire that will be discussed more later is the fact that they are not only one of the first Altaic people to leave behind physical archaeological remains but also the first to leave behind a language that we can understand and translate, that being what we commonly call Turkic.

This historic empire has a fascinating history that is truly worthy of more in-depth research. In the book *A History of the Second Türk Empire (ca. 682-745 AD)* by Hao Chen, the author goes through this history not just as a historian, but as a linguist and an archaeologist. The book is intended as a historical sourcebook, guiding the readers, both laymen and experts, through the history of the Empire.

The book is split into four chapters, not including the introduction and conclusion, as well as the appendices at the end. The four chapters, lay out the history of the empire, in chronological order, giving each period a unique title, namely Chapter 1 "Revival of Power,"