

"**Forgotten Voices**," for early China and beyond  
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**recommended bibliography:**

**on women:**

Leung, Angela, Medicine for Women in Imperial China (London: Brill, 2006).

Li Ju-chen [Ruzhen], Flowers in the Mirror, trans. Lin Taiyi (Berkeley: UC Press, 1965), the Chinese *Gulliver's Travels*, with a female heroine or two! **One of my favorite books of all time.**

Mann, Susan, The Talented Women of the Zhang Family (Berkeley: UC Press, 2007).

Nylan, Michael, "The Administration of the Family," in China's Early Empires: a Reappraisal, supplement to the Cambridge History of China, vol. 1 (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

Swann, Nancy Lee, Pan Chao: foremost woman scholar of China (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies rpt. of 1960 ed.).

**on everyday life:**

Benn, Charles D., Daily Life in Traditional China: the Tang dynasty (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).

Gernet, Jacques, Daily Life in China: on the eve of the Mongol invasion, 1250-1276 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

Loewe, Michael, Everyday Life in Early Imperial China during the Han Period, 202 B. C.-A. D. 220 (New York, Putnam, 1968; reprint by Hackett).

Lowe, H.Y., The Adventures of Wu: the life cycle of a Peking man (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). **One of my favorite books of all time.**

Waley, Arthur, The Life and Times of Po Chu-i (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1951).

coming soon: Michael Loewe's book tracing the life of a young boy from plough boy to low-ranking official (from Hackett)

**on the economy:**

Swann, Nancy Lee, Food and Money in Ancient China: the earliest economic history of China to A.D. 25 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950).

Yang Lien-sheng, Money and Credit in China, a short history (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

NB: Of great use to understanding early and middle-period China is Patricia Crone's Pre-Industrial Societies for general background; also Neville Morley's The Roman Empire (Palgrave Macmillan 2010), and his Ancient History: key themes and approaches (New York: Routledge, 2000); and M.I. Finley's The Ancient Economy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973). Economic behaviors and theories were alike in most pre-industrial civilizations.

**on legal cases:**

Hegel, Robert and Katherine Carlitz, Writing and Law in Late Imperial China (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

McKnight, Brian, The Quality of Mercy: Amnesties and Traditional Chinese Justice (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981; also his Law and Order in Sung China (Cambridge: CUP, 1992).

Loewe, Michael (several essays in China's Early Empires, see above) on law.

Sommers, Matthew, Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

**for great fun, and lots of information, please read the Judge Dee mystery stories by R.H.(Robert) van Gulik. There are a lot of them. All the great novels of late imperial China are now available in good translations.**

Guidelines for teaching early, middle-period, and late imperial China:

- (1) The economic behaviors, the law, belief systems and gender relations were startlingly different in each of the three periods (contra the "common wisdom" that China underwent little or no change throughout the long imperial period from 221 BC to 1911. That means one cannot, in good conscience, "wing it" by merely extrapolating from one period to another.
- (2) As with other countries, there is a much greater gap between pre-modern and modern within the country than there is among pre-modern societies (or modern societies, for that matter).
- (3) In China, the growth of the large clan system in response to capitalism led to the dwindling of rights for women, as well as for men who were not heads of households. Whereas in Han China, a woman could "marry herself off" and many women were heads of households, in Qing China, neither was theoretically possible (though it happened in practice). This means, the unfolding story is not one of *progress*, but always of the convergence of a number of complex factors.
- (4) In China, economic rights (rather political freedoms) were always more important.
- (5) Many books talk of the "weight of Chinese tradition." That weight was no heavier (and possibly lighter) than in Europe.
- (6) Much is explained about Chinese history by a single look at a graph for population growth over the centuries.
- (7) The "Han" people have never been a single ethnic group speaking a single language. About half of the people now classed as "Han" would have been regarded as "barbarians" for a millennium or so of imperial history. Both southerners and northerners once lived outside the "Central States" (i.e., Zhongguo; the word we use for "China" today) along the Yellow River valley, the early "heartland" of Chinese civilization.
- (8) Unlike Rome, the early empires in China did not define themselves by war. In general, the civil virtues were more esteemed than the military virtues.
- (9) There have been suppressions of rich monasteries in China (when their vast land and slave holdings threatened to take too much off the tax rolls), but there have been no religious wars over doctrinal beliefs. So while many historians of China in the old days used to talk of Confucian orthodoxy (and heterodoxy), there is no real counterpart in China to the Mediterranean religions with their sectarian fights. Aside from clerics (i.e., professional religious experts), few people in China's imperial history ever characterized themselves as Confucians, Buddhists, or Daoists. Most people believed the head of household could take care of the religious duties of the household, except in dire emergencies when outside help could be called in.
- (10) For most of China's imperial history, China was arguably the richest country in the world.
- (11) For most of China's imperial history, its subjects were continually inventing new scientific theories and technology. See Robert Temple, [The Genius of China](#) for a host of eye-openers.
- (12) The civil service examinations in China were first put in place in mid-Tang, and they came to define "fairness" and the possibility of upward mobility only in the Northern Song (11th c.)
- (13) Aside from the throne, Chinese inheritance was "partible" (equal division among sons, with a dowry given to the women in families that could afford it), in contrast to Europe where primogeniture prevailed. The effect: much upward and downward mobility in China, for anyone who had five sons new that his children would only inherit only 1/5 of his wealth, if something were not done to increase it during his lifetime. Very few fortunes lasted as long as three generations, except for members of the ruling family.
- (14) China, during its imperial history, never had a large aristocracy. Bureaucrats ran the government from the beginning – bureaucrats who were hired and fired (not hereditary).