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Shaping the Ideal Child: Children and Their Primers in Late Imperial China by Limin Bai
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reference when there are many holdings of certain types of documents, including material about Alien Registration and Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test. As a researcher who only rarely does archival work, I found the guide very easy to understand, and the large amounts of information about the wide-ranging holdings clearly laid out. Entries are arranged thus: archive location, series title, creator of the series, volume of records, brief description of the series, item title and identification number, and a general description of the item. I was very interested in discovering, for example, that correspondence files from 1950 detail the replacement of the term "Asiatic" with "Asian," and discuss the "use of offensive terms in immigration correspondence" (p. 30). Even with the brief descriptions afforded by the format, the level of detail about resources is good.

The guide covers records and documents held in all Australian states and, in the final chapter, Jones also includes resources for research about Chinese in neighbouring island territories. Given that Australia "was closely involved in the administration of Papua and New Guinea and other territories in the Pacific region" (p. 233), this broadening of scope for the guide is useful and relevant.

Chinese-Australian Journeys is a great resource for anyone who is researching migration and Diaspora history, genealogy, and the socio-political conditions for Chinese Australians from 1860–1975. The guide is clearly formatted, providing germane summaries of key events and policies, a reference list for further reading, and contact details for National Archives branches around Australia.

TSEEN KHOO

Shaping the Ideal Child: Children and Their Primers in Late Imperial China. By LIMIN BAI. [Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2005. 311 pp. ISBN 962-996-114-8.]

The focus of this book is on the moral development of children in pre-modern China. The author uses children's primers to demonstrate how Chinese educators used the social and natural environment to shape childhood development. Bai seeks to reconstruct what Neo-Confucian educators believed they were doing and how they tried to achieve their goals. Along the way she describes the educational impact of Wang Yangming and his followers, who stressed the individual development and the moral potential of each person to become a sage. According to Bai, Wang's pedagogy is comparable to John Dewey's educational philosophy.

Bai's seven chapters present three major themes: the history of traditional primers; early Chinese perceptions of childhood; and Confucian intellectual movements and their impact on the education of children. Chapter one summarizes early Chinese notions of the child and the stages of childhood development Confucians emphasized. Chapter two presents a brief history of the traditional primers used in early education, and Bai

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describes how their content reflected the three dominant Chinese schools of Confucian thought: Han Learning, Song Learning (Neo-Confucianism), and Qing dynasty evidential research. All three traditions, according to Bai, linked literacy to moral and religious education. She thus concludes that there were no basic changes in educational philosophy from the Song through the Qing dynasties.

In chapter three, Bai ties the humble origins of children's primers to village textbooks, and she shows how Wang Yangming and his followers later infused them with content that stressed the perfectibility of each child. Beginning with chapter four, Bai presents the moral prescriptions for ritual performances and good manners used by Confucian educators, which treated the child as an adult-in-training. Chapter five continues this discussion by tracing the exemplary historical figures described in the primers and how these past exemplars were expected to influence children. Chapter six breaks important new ground by describing the training in literacy and numeracy skills expected of children.

In chapter seven, Bai explains how the Confucian elite's fear of the undisciplined freedom of uneducated peasant children led to a call for popular education. In this way, the need for colloquial primers was tied to the larger educational agenda of civilizing the lower classes. Bai concludes that the goal of indoctrination lay at the core of the primers and Confucian pedagogy, although this was complemented with efforts to convey various kinds of knowledge. Ritualizing the body aimed at controlling the external environment, and schooling internally promoted the child's moral development. In this manner, Confucians used elementary education to shape Chinese society and culture.

Bai also describes how the rise of social Darwinism in the late 19th century influenced reformers such as Liang Qichao, who called for new ways to educate children on the eve of the 1898 reform movement. Liang's vision for modern Chinese education stressed synthesizing Confucian and Western educational practices. Bai also stresses Lin Shu's early 20th-century search for an alternative education for children based on new primers. Bai's account ends on the eve of the May Fourth era, when the iconoclastic denial of Confucian teachings and pedagogy peaked. The subsequent challenge to traditional Chinese notions of child-rearing painted a dark picture of the role of traditional primers in producing totally indoctrinated children, an image that this book seeks to challenge.

Overall, Bai links Confucian primers to efforts to reconstruct an ideal society, but she admits that the primers themselves reveal more about what a child ought to be like rather than what he really was like. We know, for instance, that the rites of male passage from children to young adults in elite families were measured by the number of classical texts that mastered at a particular age. Capping of a young boy between the ages of 16 and 21, for example, implied that he had mastered the Four Books and Five Classics, the minimum requirement for any aspirant to compete in local civil service examinations.

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Although Song scholars had criticized the uselessness of rote learning for moral cultivation, one of the ironies of the late imperial educational regime was that it required careful memorization of Song Learning annotations of the Classics to succeed in the degree market. Such rote learning tended to cut against the grain of moral cultivation, because neither the primers nor the examinations could measure morality directly or determine whether the memorization of orthodox doctrine brought with it increased intellectual awakening.

Usually before they entered clan or temple schools at the age of eight, students had already memorized the *Thousand-Character Text* and *Hundred Surnames* primers, which both dated from the Song. In addition, they mastered the *Three-Character Classic*, which was a Song Learning tract from the early Yuan. Altogether these three famous primers contained about 1,500 different written characters within the total of 2,636 graphs in them. Pre-school sessions at home, often under the guidance of their mothers, enabled students to memorize the important sequences and combinations of written graphs that were peculiar to the classical written language. The memorization of primers was reinforced by calligraphy practice.

Estimates of the total number of graphs per Classic have been disputed, but literati educators did schedule the memorization process according to the number of graphs in each. Many characters of course frequently repeated. Wang Chang (1725–1806), a private academy teacher during the 18th century when all of the Five Classics were required in the civil examinations, confidently told incoming students at his academy in Nanchang, Jiangxi, in 1789 that it would take students only 690 days, if they were diligent, to recite from memory the more than 200,000 words in these five texts.

Bai thus underestimates the degree to which repetition as a habit of learning based on reciting and copying the primers was the key to developing the child's memory. The child's ability to memorize was thus highly prized among literati and in popular culture. Legends of men who as youths had committed prodigious amounts of information to memory were often recounted. For those without photographic memories, instruction in mnemonic skills was part of the classical teaching repertoire in imperial China where oral recitation was aided by rhyming characters, four-character jingles, and the technique of writing matching and balanced, antithetical pairs of characters.

Composition and the ability to compose poetry in regulated verse represented the culmination of the transition from childhood to the young student. Apart from the obvious differences in the social status and political power between elites and commoners, one of the key differences between them was that among the former the ability to write took precedence. The male children of elites were in training, via memorization and calligraphy practice, to become a classically trained literatus who could write his way to fame, fortune and power.

Composition, then, was the final stage of a classical education that began by mastering primers. Reading alone was insufficient in such a

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cultural context. The limitation, control, and selection of the "writing elite," not the enlargement of the "reading public," were the dynasty's goals. Nevertheless, one of the unintended consequences of the wide use of the primers that Bai describes was an expanding population of functionally literate men and women from the Song period on.

BENJAMIN ELMAN

Peking University: Chinese Scholarship and Intellectuals, 1898–1937. By XIAOQING DIANA LIN. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. 233 pp. $70.00. ISBN 0-7914-6321-4.]

This work of intellectual and institutional history is premised on the author's contention that Peking University played a central role in modern China's intellectual development. Lin agues that early Peking University's scholars helped foster a new relationship between Chinese and Western, and traditional and modern, learning and that they thus transformed Chinese intellectual life in wide-ranging ways. She focuses on scholars' efforts to integrate modern science with the traditional Chinese concern for ethics and treatment of education as a moral enterprise. The book focuses on scholars involved in the humanistic disciplines of philosophy, history and literature; at the end Lin also considers the fields of education, psychology, political science and law, mainly from the perspective of those social science disciplines' only partially successful integration into the new social universe that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s.

Lin first discusses Peking University as an institution; she reviews its founding (in 1898) and its early leaders' visions and also provides information about the school's changing relationship to the state. In the main, whereas before 1911 Peking University was a creature of the Qing government, following the revolution, and especially after Cai Yuanpei took over as chancellor in 1917, it developed greater autonomy from the state and moved toward a progressively more universalistic approach to knowledge. Lin then moves on to a case-by-case study of various academic disciplines. The background history in the first three chapters helps frame the material in the next five, but the more purely intellectual historical chapters, where the book's most original contribution is made, are narrow in focus and are not well assimilated with the broader institutional history of Peking University or with the broader flow of Chinese history.

Intellectual life here seems to unfold in a social and cultural vacuum, perpetuating the myth of universities as isolated ivory towers. Unfortunately, Lin makes only a limited effort to engage existing scholarly work that could provide a fuller historical context for her discussion. There are hardly any students at this school and there is almost no mention of the May Fourth movement or other life-shaping political events. If politics

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