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Review of, Modeling Peace: Royal Tombs and Political Ideology in Early China by Jie Shi

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Jie Shi. *Modeling Peace: Royal Tombs and Political Ideology in Early China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. ix, 358 pp. Hardcover \$60.00, ISBN 978-0-231-19102-9.

Modeling Peace: Royal Tombs and Political Ideology in Early China analyzes two Western Han royal tombs—belonging to the king of Zhongshan, Liu Sheng (r. 154–113 B.C.E.), and his wife, Queen Dou Wan (buried c.118–104 B.C.E.). Liu Sheng was a king and senior imperial family member, being the ninth son of Western Han Emperor Jing and the elder brother of Emperor Wu. Royal tombs are a class distinct from the imperial tombs of the Western Han emperors and empresses that are located near the Han western capital, Chang’an (present day Xi’an). The tombs under review are two of about eighty Western Han royal tombs so far discovered across the kingdoms and prefectures of the Western Han Empire. Excavated in 1968 at Mancheng in Hubei Province, the tombs of Liu Sheng and Dou Wan were extremely rare finds, having remained complete and undisturbed for more than two millennia. Importantly, these two rock-cut tombs retained their original forms and were discovered with their grave goods well preserved, revealing the tombs’ internal order at the time of the funerals for the deceased.

Jie Shi, assistant professor of art history (awarded the Jye Chu Lectureship in Chinese Studies) at Bryn Mawr College, examines these separate adjacent tombs as a complementary pair. Jie Shi poses the key question in the book’s Introduction: “Did a ruler’s inherent sagely identification and political responsibility, which eventually distinguished him from all his subjects, have an impact on the design of his tomb which also marked his royal identity?” (p. 10). As Liu Sheng was sent by his father, Emperor Jing, to rule the Zhongshan kingdom near the northern frontier of the Western Han Empire, a region with a population comprised of both Han and non-Han ethnicities, Shi discusses the tomb elements in the light of Liu Sheng as ruler and peacemaker, and establishes the tombs as models providing a framework for the analysis of other royal Western Han tombs. He systematically analyzes the tomb fittings, furnishings, and tombwares, as well as bodily remains, clothing, and jade suits, from the perspective of social status, political symbolism, hybrid cultural meaning, spiritual purpose, and artistic qualities. Shi reveals the embodiment in the tomb of Liu Sheng’s identity, revealed in his posthumous name—*Jing wang* or “king of peace.”

The chapters are organized into two main parts. Part I focuses on visual and material evidence, analyzing the tombs’ forms and contents. It explains the personal and spiritual aspects of the two tombs, their complementarity as a gendered pair of tombs belonging to husband/king and wife/queen, and hybridized cultural identity. Chapter 1 focuses on the materiality of Liu Sheng’s

tomb, conceptualizing the tomb as container for the soul. It examines the multilayers of containment from the king's body and its enshrouded clothing, its precious objects, and ornaments placed on the body and jade suit, to the coffin and casket. It explains the plan and organization of the tomb as a place of personal repose with storage areas and ritual spaces designed so that "the deceased king could unite his body and soul to secure a postmortem immortality" (p. 60). Chapter 2 establishes the tombs of Liu Sheng and Dou Wan as separate but complementary mirrored plans forming a harmonious whole. It considers the two tombs through the lens of gendered spaces with distinct forms and paraphernalia, comparing tomb plans and specific objects such as the jade suits and inventories of gendered possessions. Shi asserts that the two tombs together form "one house" combining the private residential, social, and ritual spaces of Han palatial architecture. Chapter 3 demonstrates the incorporation of non-Han and archaic elements alongside typically Han characteristics in the architecture and objects within the two Mancheng tombs. It argues that multicultural styles, forms, and symbols imbued in the design, decoration, furnishings, and objects within the tombs encapsulate the peaceful rule of the Han king Liu Sheng over ethnically Han and non-Han people in the Zhongshan region at the Western Han Empire's northern frontier through a sense of cultural inclusion and mutual respect.

Part II widens interpretation of the two Mancheng tombs to consider their political, social, and moral public functions. It reflects on their patronage, master planning, and audience reception as imperially funded monuments created and maintained by government administration. Textual material is drawn upon to shed light on the tombs in this large context, using direct evidence such as inscriptions on artifacts within the tombs, historical and administrative records, and ritual and philosophical treatises of the Han and pre-Han periods. Chapter 4 contrasts the private aspects of Liu Sheng's tomb discussed in Part I with its public aspects. It considers Liu Sheng as royal patron with decision-making powers over the tombs' inception, with the tombs' production effected as publicly sponsored projects and their continued maintenance funded through the state treasury. Chapter 5 explores the philosophical position of Liu Sheng as ruler and the pacifist tones implicit in his posthumous title *Jing wang*. Shi assesses inscriptions on artifacts within Liu Sheng's tomb as belonging to Huang-Lao philosophy and Confucian thought, and ties these to Liu Sheng's political ideology emphasizing peace and harmony. Chapter 6 speculates on audience reception of the tombs from multiple perspectives. As the tombs had remained undisturbed since they were sealed, they provided a rare opportunity to be assessed as "installations" bearing witness to the funerals of each tomb occupant. Shi interprets the tombs from the viewpoints of the living and the dead through the hypothetical gaze of spectators at the funeral, government official departments, and ancestral spirits in the underworld.

Modeling Peace: Royal Tombs and Political Ideology in Early China stands out as the first comprehensive English language scholarly study of two undisturbed and fully excavated Western Han royal tombs. It is significant because it builds our understanding of the overall development of extremely high-status Chinese tombs by establishing a model for the interpretation of Western Han royal tombs. The book is a detailed, rigorous description and analysis of the two tombs exploring them on a number of levels from the personal to the spiritual, and from the philosophical to the bureaucratic. Shi's ground-breaking work opens the door for others to contribute future insights and apply additional theoretical frameworks in the analysis of these and other royal Western Han tombs. *Modeling Peace* takes its place alongside other landmark books such as Wu Hung's *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (1989) and *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs* (2010), and Tonia Eckfeld's *Imperial Tombs in Tang China, 618-907: The Politics of Paradise* (2005). Its 358 pages incorporate illustrative maps, color plates, black and white figures, and tables in support of the discussion, which encompasses Chinese dynastic history, tomb culture, archaeology, history, politics, and belief.

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Barbara Witt. *Die "Nezha-Legende" im Roman Investitur der Götter (Fengshen yanyi): Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung und Kontextualisierung*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020. viii, 207 pp. Hardcover €38.00, ISBN 978-3-447-11398-4.

Science, whether consciously or not, is subject to fashions. I remember the time when it seemed as if the majority of budding sinologists, when defending their PhD theses, felt compelled to reverently invoke the insights of Pierre Bourdieu, to name but one fashionable academic figure of the recent past. In Barbara Witt's investigation into the Nezha 哪吒 legend in the Late Ming dynasty novel