

the margins of antiquity and diagonal or tangential to the hegemonic narratives of the time, can provide insights that could never be obtained by rehearsing the established viewpoints of classical studies. Indeed, one might observe that the (only ephemerally) spotless white dust jacket of the hardback edition under review seems almost designed to act as parable for the inevitable, instructive, and highly beneficent 'contamination' of any lingering notions of 'white antiquity'. Carried along for a prolonged period of time, both the dust jacket and the classical reception have become adorned by fascinating tints.

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HYUN JIN KIM: *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China*. Duckworth, London 2009. ISBN 978-0-7156-3807-1. VI, 217 pp. EUR 60.

It is in no way surprising that Sino-Hellenic studies have exhibited a notable surge in recent years: no doubt this reflects a combination of real-life circumstances with the increasing openness of classical studies to methodological cross-fertilisation. Indeed, the recent review article by Tanner (*JHS* 129 [2009]) demonstrates well the advantages of a properly conducted comparative approach in the study of China and Greece, even as it shows how little favour the method in general has enjoyed among the classicists. One likely reason is the extensive knowledge of two entirely independent traditions that is required from a scholar embarking on such a study. It is, then, quite understandable that this contribution by Kim, focusing upon historiography and ethnography, makes no assumptions about the readers' background knowledge about the early Chinese dynasties and literature. Another explanation for the dearth of comparative studies may derive from the notional exceptionalism of classical antiquity (in the West), which may have appeared to many previous generations as barely conducive to comparisons with other traditions. A similar mentality may have held sway among students of Chinese classics.

In terms of original cultural particularism – in opposition to its inherited forms – however, the epistemic appeal of comparing the Sinocentric and Hellenocentric worldviews is quite obvious: both Chinese and Greco-Roman cultures entertained strong and theoretically buttressed notions of both moral and spatial centrality, and in both cultural traditions the formal constraints of literary traditionalism tended to create an 'ethnographic stasis' with very little testing against the anthropological realities in the field. During the classical period in Greece, Kim's primary chronological focus, writers' stylistic dependency from and reverence towards their predecessors was perhaps less pronounced than during later periods, and hence might be argued to contrast quite strongly with the mellow quality of any criticism directed at their precursors by the Chinese litterati. Antiquarianism, though subsequently a strong formative influence within both Chinese and Greco-Roman ethnographic and historiographic traditions, is treated only in passing by Kim; even so, texts such as the *Huainanzi* and the *Shanhaijing* clearly formed an already established pool of quasi-ethnographic knowledge which Sima Qian had to negotiate with (88–94).

The sections dealing with Greeks and their ethnocentricity in Chapters 1 to 3 are dependable but rather predictable, and are mainly designed to contextualise Herodotus' worldview; one supposes that a specialist in Sima Qian might say the same regarding the Chinese sections of the same chapters. But even if both writers are eminently 'classical' in terms of their

reception and influence, it may be questioned if either represent accurately their respective contexts. Another matter is the question whether Greek and Chinese worldviews during the relevant periodisation are, in fact, systemically very amenable to comparison. *Shiji*, especially, is written from the confident position of the Han Empire and projects to the past many of its perceptions of exceptionality and centrality. If we had fuller sources into Achaemenid perceptions of ethno-cultural difference, it might well emerge that a very fruitful comparison could be mounted between the Persian Empire and Han (or possibly Tang) China. What we have are vestiges of Near Eastern 'imperialistic' particularism, and as Burkert, West and others have demonstrated, Near Eastern thinking must have affected early Greek thought. On the level of individual authors, one is currently left wondering about the potentially interesting results in comparatively juxtaposing Sima, with his subtle critique of past rulers, moralising discourse on imperial expansion, and ambiguous treatment of barbarians, with Tacitus rather than Herodotus. Although the two (or three) writers all demonstrate how regular a choice the ethnographical mode has been for authors involved with debates on power, autocracy, and freedom, one may question whether the pairing of Herodotus and Sima Qian is actually the most natural one for comparison. Shankman – Durrant 2000, for instance, focused upon Thucydides and Sima Qian.

The field of Sino-Hellenic studies is an expanding one: since 1982 it has enjoyed the support of the international journal *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident*. Kim's work can also be compared with two quite recent contributions to 'comparative barbarology'; namely, the *Enemies of Civilization* by Mu-chou Poo (State University of New York Press, 2005) and the accomplished article of Stuurman 2008 ("Herodotus and Sima Qian", *JWH* 19) on Herodotus, Sima Qian and the 'anthropological turn' of historiography. The latter, in particular, represents the comparative study of the respective 'Fathers of History', which seems to have grown into a modest industry in its own right. Quite understandably so: the two historians seem to offer an attractive point of entry to the study of ethnographical historiography, and Kim justifies his choice well (4–7). The conclusions of Kim's Chapter 4 ("Herodotus and Sima Qian") conform quite well with those of Stuurman, though generally he is perhaps less nuanced and open to recognising ambiguity within his sources. Both agree that Sima's *Shiji* exhibits less prominent cultural relativism – and more ethnocentrism – than Herodotus (Kim 93; cf. Stuurman 13, 39), though one should also note that *Shiji* is not written, unlike *Histories*, for the explicit aim of preserving the great accomplishments of both insiders and outsiders. For cultural relativism, it seems that the *Huainanzi*, influenced as it was by Taoist thinking, provides the clearest exemplars (88). It might be quite fascinating for a Sino-Hellenic specialist to mount a study comparing Stoic and Taoist opinions on cultural relativism and universalism.

Kim's Chapter 5 aims to contribute to the voluminous field of studies on Herodotus' *Skythikos logos* by comparative readings from Chinese sources (mainly Sima's *Shiji* and the collaborative work *Qian Hanshu*) on the Xiongnu, arranged to a large extent thematically. What emerges as a clear difference between the cultural environs of Han China and classical Greece is the lack of sedentary urban societies of comparable complexity in the East, as Kim correctly notes (115–24; sedentary rivals are treated in Chapter 6). Hence, it would appear that in response to the slightly differing set of questions that arose in their context, the Greeks were required to develop a more nuanced theory of civilisation. Even the nomadic peoples to the north, a constant feature for both China and Greece, were treated in slightly different ways – though this may be due to their more frequent intrusions into the Chinese heartland.

For the Greeks, they appeared to be a less immediate threat, though theoretically intriguing, as attested both by Herodotus and the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places*. It may be noted that Kim expresses quite a lot of scepticism towards the Hartogian reading of Herodotus' Scythians (113–15), not all of it justified by the simple expediency of buttressing Kim's own comparison between the broadly coeval Xiongnu and Scythian societies.

Even as it was quite easy for the Chinese to project into international relations the Confucian notion of filial piety that younger siblings or children owed to their elders, the Greeks of the classical era would have found themselves in the unflattering circumstance of being those youngsters, even if such a mentality had prevailed among them (cf. Kim 45–9, 55–8). But while this mentality probably did not prevail, the technique of explaining differences between Greeks and Chinese by differing mentalities or cultural analogies (criticised by G. E. R. Lloyd) does constantly loom within works of this comparative type. It is more conducive and less essentialist to rather focus upon explaining the differences. In a very interesting section Kim notes that a decisive (and dismissive) polarisation between the *Huaxia* and 'barbarian nations' arose in China only after most of the surrounding societies had been conquered (64). So while the Greek exacerbation of intergroup perceptions stemmed from an outgroup threat, the corresponding phenomenon during the Zhou dynasty (or possibly a back-projection under the Han dynasty) had more to do with a lessening of outsider threats. His observations about the notion of barbarians 'becoming *Huaxia*' through corrective acculturation are also instructive and this tied into the discourse on ideal rulership in a way that saw full-fledged parallels in the West only during the Roman Imperial period, though the possibility of barbarians 'becoming Hellenes' was already recognised in some Hellenistic thinking. As implied by Stuurman (2009, 2, 24), the focus of Chinese literature was that of an empire looking outward, whereas for the Greeks of the classical era the empire was the enemy.

What, then, can Kim's comparison of Chinese and Greek material tell us about xenological writing? The danger of postulating a kind of 'Axial Age' of literature is present, though luckily avoided in this particular contribution. Neither historiography nor geography, the principal registers through which Greek description of foreign peoples was propagated developed along identical lines in China, and hence there are clear differences in the literary modalities involved. Structurally, however, some striking similarities emerge. Moralising evaluations of the strange customs of foreign groups are common and often topical. Since ingroup bias as an almost universal factor in intergroup relations has been reasonably demonstrated, the final import of a comparative study in this vein, however, will certainly stem from debunking the possibly lingering scholarly presuppositions of exceptional or teleological qualities in any cultural process of ancient civilisations.

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Ancient ethnography – i.e., both the barbarians inhabiting the confines of Greco-Roman literature and those who actually led lives in diverse parts of the classical world – is something of a fashionable topic at the moment. This has become evident from a veritable deluge of recent