



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China: His Life and Thought. by Nicolas Standaert

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But a concluding chapter could have provided some personal interpretation and further evaluation.

The main question seems to be that of significance. What is Hu's place among the more than fifty Chinese who came to the West during the eighteenth century? Is he representative, or is his case marginal (to be compared with the unfortunate destiny of three missionaries jailed in Canton in 1710 on the vaguest charges and still under arrest after eleven years)? Indeed the book gives the impression that the coming of Chinese to the West was condemned to failure.

Even if Hu appears to be an exceptional case, the book offers enough material for further analysis in the field of contact between cultures. One could reflect on the different ways Chinese and Europeans behave in regard to eating, sleeping, and ritual or how they conceive propriety and relations between men and women. One could also look for a possible explanation for Hu's "madness." Foucquet declares him to be a fool. Du Halde attributes his strange fits to a "bodily indisposition brought on by the sudden change of food and climate" (p. 71). Cultural anthropologists would probably see in him an example of culture shock; his behavior changed radically because of the totally different environment and the dual impossibility of communicating about his experiences either with people of the foreign culture (Hu did not speak French) or with people of his own culture (few of whom had similar experiences). These taxing circumstances could be the reason why he became emotionally disturbed.

Without doubt Spence's book is enjoyable reading because of its fluent narrative and is instructive because of the interest Hu's case offers.

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Yang Tingyun, Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China: His Life and Thought.
By NICOLAS STANDAERT. *Sinica Leidensia* 19. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988.
xii, 263 pp. Fl 84 (paper).

Readers will find that this study of the life and thought of Yang Tingyun (1562–1627) is an informative case example of the dialogue between Christianity and Confucianism in late-Ming China. Standaert places Yang's career as a Confucian official and Christian convert within seventeenth-century elite intellectual life. The author shows how Yang's orthodox Neo-Confucianism reflected the typical concerns of his time. In addition, Standaert usefully links Yang's political career and moral concerns to the Tung-lin Academy partisans then prominent in imperial politics. Finally, the author presents Yang's Christian thought and deftly demonstrates the linkages between Neo-Confucian philosophy and Christian doctrine in his ideas.

Part 1 of Standaert's study focuses on Yang's life and presents the official, private, religious, and Western sources for Yang's "identity card" (p. 5). It also discusses Yang's official career, family ties, social life, Buddhist past, and Christian beliefs. Chinese sources on Yang's life stress his Confucian ethics, whereas Western materials emphasize his religious life. Why the difference? According to the author, this is because of the "separation between ethics and religion in China" (p. 104). In China "the dominance of Confucianism over the ethical values" was paralleled by the role of religion, whether Buddhism or Christianity, as a "supernatural sanction to the Confucian values" (p. 104). Such assumptions, posing as facts and raised in a single concluding paragraph, lead Standaert to conclude that "Yang Tingyun was a very moral and deeply religious man" (p. 105), ethically Confucian and religiously Christian.

Part 2 is the core of Standaert's study, containing accounts of Yang's writings on "heaven" (including sections on God, incarnation, history, and hell) and "man" (with sections on the goodness of nature, morality, practicality, and Christian practice), which Standaert intersperses with thoughtful analysis of Neo-Confucian theory and Catholic doctrine. The author demonstrates how Yang sought Christian truths in the Confucian canon and Confucian truths in Christian writings. For example, God the Father in Christian writings becomes "God the Great Father-Mother of us men" (p. 117) in Yang's fascinating refraction of Western Christianity. In essence, Yang sought to present the Jesuits as "Western Confucians" (*Xiru*; p. 130), while at the same time castigating Buddhists as the main offenders of Confucian orthodoxy.

The book describes the Buddhist and Jesuit reaction to Yang's efforts to find common ground between Confucianism and Christianity. Buddhists presented their religion as the true complement to Confucianism in their anti-Christian polemics. From their perspective, not only did Christianity subvert Buddhism; but, according to the Buddhist monk Xingquan, men like Yang "disgrace[d] our emperors and ministers" (p. 167). On the other hand, Jesuits carefully queried Yang about his Confucian and Christian beliefs in an effort to gainsay what they considered "Chinese atheism." Matteo Ricci and others believed that Neo-Confucians—unlike ancient Confucians—conceived of Heaven as a "material body." Early Jesuits sought in the ancient classics spiritual terms equivalent to the Christian God.

The intellectual issues raised are thought provoking. One hopes Standaert will continue to explore this uniquely documented cultural debate among Confucians, Buddhists, and Christians by reconstructing the precise historical threat the Jesuits posed to the tense compromises worked out between Buddhists and Confucians since the Tang dynasty. The difficulty Confucians had with the historicity of Christ vis-à-vis the documented legacy of the sage-kings of Chinese antiquity suggests that the question of which tradition had final authority included larger issues of cultural and political hegemony. Although Yang claimed that Western teaching about Jesus Christ "completely agrees with the Way of Yao, Shun, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius" (p. 200), his ecumenism was shared by only the most accommodative Confucians and Catholics.

Standaert concludes that although Yang was a Buddhist early in life, he clearly was a Christian during his mature years. At the same time as he embraced the Christian faith, however, Yang continued to practice Confucianism in his official and ethical life. Amplifying these conclusions, the author confirms Yang's commitment to Neo-Confucianism by evaluating his thought according to William Theodore de Bary's classification of Ming orthodoxy and discussion of late-Ming intellectual trends.

Finally, Standaert contends that Yang occupied a significant place in the "dialogue of cultures." The author develops a schematization of the "process of interpretation" (p. 221) between China and Europe in the seventeenth century. Analysis of Yang's interpretation of Christianity, the author argues, corrects the impression given in Jacques Gernet's *Chine et christianisme: Action et réaction* (published in English as *China and the Christian Impact*) that late-Ming Neo-Confucians never sufficiently comprehended Christianity and were more interested in European morality and science. Standaert's effort to correct the record is undercut, however, when two pages later he points to the inherent "dialogue of misapprehension" between Chinese Neo-Confucians and European Jesuits. Unfortunately Standaert saves these unresolved insights for last. Introduced earlier and properly amplified, the theme of comprehension versus misapprehension would have added immeasurably to the book.

Standaert's study, despite its limits, is an important contribution to Chinese in-

tellectual history and cross-cultural dialogue. It marks an important step in recapturing the importance some late-Ming Confucians attached to Jesuit religious teachings and why so many other Confucians and Buddhists were opposed.

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Daughters Of the Canton Delta: Marriage Patterns and Economic Strategies in South China, 1860–1930. By JANICE E. STOCKARD. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989. xii, 221 pp. \$32.50.

In an appendix to this book Janice Stockard discusses how she arrived at “the right question” for her fieldwork in Hong Kong (in 1979) and came to challenge Marjorie Topley’s influential argument about the existence of marrying and nonmarrying forms of resistance in the Canton Delta. The Topley paradigm began to fade for Stockard when she gathered information from 150 elderly women on “a paradigm of marriage as a process” entailing a delayed virilocal transfer of the bride that could last three to four years. What had long been considered a deviation from a wider Confucian-dominated tradition is here presented as a social norm—“the customary marriage pattern for an extensive area in the Canton delta” (p. 4). Stockard thus “learned to differentiate the radical practice of refusing to live with a husband [the paradigm of resistance] from the norm of not immediately settling with him” (p. 189).

Stockard argues that Topley’s interpretation of data is based on a fundamental misunderstanding. The framework of reference for a more authentic interpretation must shrink to coincide with an area where sericulture links up with the practice of delayed transfer marriage, an area that extends to seven counties in the Pearl River Delta and at the height of the practice in the early twentieth century incorporated several million inhabitants. Where resistance to marriage existed, it was on a somewhat more limited scale than Topley had suggested. Moreover, the resistance was shaped by the particular local form of marriage. Evolving over time and in response to changing historical conditions, it appeared in different guises: as compensation marriage (whereby the legitimate bride purchased a substitute to fulfill her conjugal duties in bed and in the kitchen); as sworn spinsterhood (with a ritual proclaiming entry into a state of perpetual virginity taking the place of the marriage ceremony); and as a spirit marriage (initiated by a sworn spinster or unmarried girl whose marriage to a dead unwed man would provide her with a spiritual resting place).

A unique combination of variables in the Canton Delta of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—a predominance of sericulture and settlement patterns favoring the economic contribution of women and a popular ideology encouraging the choice of chastity over wife- and motherhood—supported Topley’s findings of a broad spectrum of unorthodox manifestations of female resistance to a commonly held inexorable fate. These same variables made Stockard place fate (dictated by cultural strictures) right back into the heart of the area of marriage resistance. Acts of resistance become secondary in significance to practices informed by normative behavior. One of the many merits of the book is that Stockard challenges a much-cherished paradigm in the literature of female resistance with thorough research and documentation. Paradigms exist to be overthrown—but how will Stockard’s paradigm stand up to close scrutiny?

Does Stockard’s refutation put to rest claims that “tensions generally felt by women in traditional society,” as Margot I. Duley puts it, were in the case of women here translated into opportunities, where as Topley argues, women chose their fate rather