

contribution to the field. Let us hope that Liang soon receives a biography that is both comprehensive and readable.

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Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA in China, 1919–1937. By JUN XING. Bethlehem, Penn.: Lehigh University Press, 1996. 238 pp. \$39.50.

In recent years, the roles and expectations of transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in international relations have grown. A study of one of the earliest such institutions provides a historical perspective on this phenomenon. Jun Xing's monograph on the YMCA's influence in China during the 1920s and 1930s has the potential to clarify the promise and limitations of today's NGOs. In this primarily narrative study, Jun Xing explains how the YMCA's adoption of "the social gospel" in the early 1920s appealed to Chinese students and made the Y a prominent force in Republican China. Unlike the paternalistic approaches of many earlier Christian groups, the social gospel emphasized social service rather than evangelism, which was much more welcome in China.

In addition to adopting the social gospel, the YMCA sinified during the 1920s, both institutionally and in its message. Jun Xing argues that its ties with the U.S. attenuated as the institution became financially self-supporting and its staff "indigenized." By this he means that by the mid-1920s, the preponderance of Y leaders ("secretaries") were Chinese nationals, and the Americans who were on staff immersed themselves in Chinese culture and treated their Chinese colleagues as equals. The YMCA's theology was transformed, too, emphasizing Jesus as a reformer and an ethical model (like Confucius) rather than a divine savior.

Ironically, in the 1930s, some of the very factors which had made the Y successful in China militated against its continued influence. Jun Xing challenges both what he refers to as "the antiforeignism thesis" and the "Bolshevik instigation thesis," which attribute Christianity's failure to take hold in China either to purely "cultural determinants" or to the "intrigues and conspiracies" of international communism. In place of these explanations, he shows that the sinification of the YMCA's message meant that it came to be easily identified with and co-opted by the KMT, especially the New Life Movement. Additionally, the Y's social reform policy never developed into a comprehensive revolutionary ideology. Finally, the Y's lack of consensus on the proper Christian response to Japanese aggression meant that it lost its cohesion as an organization.

In addition to his main arguments, the author offers other interpretive insights. These range from his explanation of how and why the concept of the social gospel was developed in the U.S. but not adopted by the YMCA there, to a discussion of the many similarities between communism and social gospel Christianity, an examination of the dynamics between Chinese and American secretaries of the organization, and analyses of how YMCA leaders responded as they did to local political events.

The author has undertaken and succeeded at the task of writing a disquisition that is truly transcultural; however, the study does have shortcomings. It remains narrowly institutional, providing an account of the people and policies of the YMCA, without specifying its contributions to the more general study of Republican Chinese history. More attention to some of the conceptual paradigms now being used to study

cross-cultural interaction would have strengthened the book. Jun Xing claims that Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony will be his guiding theoretical tool, but after a single paragraph in the introduction, this concept does not reappear.

The author ignores the role of gender in the student movement or the formation of the YMCA, to the point of including Maud Russell in a list of "American men" (p. 171). A discussion of the similarities and differences between the YWCA and the YMCA might have proven valuable since other studies have argued that the YWCA played a key role for women workers in Shanghai, and in communist recruiting efforts there (cf. Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919–1949* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986]).

The book contains a brief bibliographical essay on cross-cultural scholarship, as well as an index and photographs of YMCA secretaries. The preface notes that "most of the names in the original sources, on which this study is based, used the Wade-Giles transliteration . . . to make these names consistent with the historical documents, I will leave those names in Wade-Giles form" (p. 21). This reader thus expected that other names and terms would be given in Pinyin, but this was not the case. The confusion is compounded by errors in Wade-Giles and even Japanese romanizations.

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Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China. By MAYFAIR MEI-HUI YANG. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. viii, 370 pp. \$45.00 (cloth); \$18.95 (paper).

With the rejection of rigid Mao-era limits on Chinese society after 1978, many more than one hundred cultural flowers have bloomed. In the diversity of cultural practices that have characterized China's reform era, we see both new styles and fashions imported from the West and apparent revivals of traditional customs. A number of scholars have been working intensively to describe and explain the latter. To what extent did traditional customs and practices persist under the surface during the decades of Mao's rule, or are present forms a genuine revival? To what extent do these revivals testify to the enduring strength of the Chinese cultural tradition, or are they to be explained much more as reflections of popular experiences during the socialist and reform eras?

Mayfair Yang's book represents one of the most ambitious and systematic attempts to deal with a whole range of such questions. Her focus is on a key complex of contemporary Chinese beliefs and practices, *guanxixue*. Yang's anthropological predecessors, such as Fei Xiaotong and Morton Fried, presented cogent analyses of the importance of *guanxi* (social relationships, connections) in pre-1949 China, analyses which have been added to by scholars in Taiwan and Hong Kong in recent times. However, she points out that the term *guanxixue* (roughly, connections-ology, or the art of social relationships of her subtitle) is distinctive to the PRC. Her study is concerned not simply with describing the extent to which contemporary Chinese rely on personal connections and networks to pursue goals and seek security. This study is as much or more focused on the nature of the popular discourse that has arisen in an atmosphere of virtual obsession with the cultivation of useful personal ties.