

historians in China and the West and information gathered in the town and from discussions with local specialists.

The outstanding feature is the comprehensive coverage of developments since 1949. The narrative of the history of the town and its industry during the PRC has been extended to the early 21st century by judicious use of the wealth of new official publications that have appeared since the 1980s. These include city records, gazetteers, and works on education, statistics, wages and other aspects of the industry.

While many state-controlled factories continued in existence through the 1980s, the intensification of economic reform in the 1990s was not kind to Jingdezhen. The larger factories and kilns were wholly or partially privatized and many closed down in the 1990s. By the middle of that decade, production was dominated by hundreds of small workshops, many of them specializing in mass-produced replicas of Ming and Qing wares – of varying quality – for the tourist trade. The commercialism that had been apparent in 1983 was now the main driving force of production. In the early years of the 21st century the character of the town was altered by redevelopment and there were serious attempts by local officials and private entrepreneurs to revitalize the industry. However, demand for the town's products was weak and the priorities of the local government swung towards encouraging interest in the heritage of Jingdezhen. Ceramic tourism was promoted and artistic residencies were offered to potters from around the world. The net result was the town's decline from a once great manufacturing centre into something approaching a ceramics heritage park. The fate of Jingdezhen in the 21st century is depressing. In 2013 local officials applied for recognition of the town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. While this reflected a continuing interest by local politicians in the town's heritage, it was also a tacit admission that a revival of the manufacture of porcelain, in the quantity and of the quality that had marked that heritage, was unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Maris Boyd Gillette's book is a welcome addition to the literature on Jingdezhen. It is well sourced and benefits greatly from research in the town and familiarity at first hand with the practical aspects of the industry. It is a pity that it does not end with a stronger conclusion that would make the pattern of the town's rise, fall and reinvention more explicit.

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*Taiping Theology: The Localization of Christianity in China, 1843–64*

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xvii + 281 pp. £66.99; \$100.00

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In this expanded publication of his 2013 doctoral thesis, Carl Kilcourse re-examines the Taiping phenomenon employing perspectives and insights from the burgeoning scholarly discourse related to world Christianity. The result is a fascinating exploration of Taiping theology that argues convincingly for revisions to current understandings of Taiping motivations and ideology.

Fluctuating between Marxist attributions of class motivation and missionary cries of “heresy,” scholarly views of Taiping motivations have generally avoided recognizing the Taiping as being primarily shaped and driven by religion. Thomas Reilly's

*The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom* (University of Washington Press, 2004) is perhaps the most prominent work to break this pattern, arguing convincingly that the Taiping's theological revulsion at the Chinese imperial usurpation of God's own title *di* preceded and grounded their political ambitions. Kilcourse shares Reilly's basic conviction, though his unravelling of the threads of Taiping leader Hong Xiuquan's understanding of the Christian God *shangdi* leads him in a different direction – into a nuanced exploration of how the complicated interplay between missionary Christianity, Chinese folk religion and Confucian morality shaped Taiping theology. Informed by studies in world Christianity such as Andrew Walls's *The Translation Principle in Christian Mission* (T. and T. Clark, 1996), Kilcourse identifies the Taiping phenomenon not as a departure from some essentialized notion of Christian orthodoxy but rather as one of the many localized expressions of Christianity that make up the global church. In this reading, local religious practice and Confucian morality provided familiar reference points for Hong and his followers as they sought to make sense of their newly embraced Christian faith within their local context. The vernacularized Christian literature of the missionaries – particularly translated scriptures – facilitated this process of glocalization, drawing the attention of Hong and the Taiping community to certain specific connections between Christianity and local culture.

In his search for Taiping theological identity, Kilcourse focuses on the personal writings of Hong Xiuquan and several other Taiping leaders, as well as a host of Taiping religious and political treatises and commentaries. Missionary publications such as Liang Fa's *Good Words to Admonish the Age* (*Quan shi liang yan*) and Gutzlaff's scripture translation are also integral to the study, with Kilcourse reading them alongside the Taiping documents to highlight instances of convergence or dissonance. Throughout, close attention is paid to the local religious world of south China as well as the Confucian morality that so profoundly shaped Hong's early years. Kilcourse then demonstrates how the mutual interaction of these various "sources" in Hong's life produced the unique localized expression of Christianity known as the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

After the methodological introduction and a brief historical overview, each of the remaining chapters in *Taiping Theology* examines a different key aspect of Taiping religious belief and practice. Kilcourse begins by outlining the Taiping notion of world salvation, with particular attention to the Chinese *shangdilhuangdi* traditions and how they shaped Hong's reading of vernacularized Christian literature. Next, Kilcourse delves into Hong's identity as Jesus's younger brother and his concept of the Christian Godhead, exploring the factors that pushed him towards a radical monotheism that rejected the missionary emphasis on the Trinity. Turning his attention towards theological praxis, Kilcourse next examines the interplay between the biblical Decalogue and Confucian morality, highlighting the ways in which local factors shaped the reception and application of translated Christian materials by Hong and his followers. The final two chapters deal with the role of charismatic gifting in Taiping leadership conflicts and Hong's hybrid view of gender relations within the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, effectively demonstrating both the active interpretive agency of local receptors of Christian literature and the often-unexpected ways the global becomes local. The result of all this is a revised picture of the Taiping: hierarchical and patriarchal rather than egalitarian, not primarily political and ethnic but rather explicitly Christian yet in a very Chinese way.

Readers may come away wondering if in a world of plural Christianities it is possible for the term Christian to mean anything at all. An adequate discussion of this central debate within the field of world Christianity, however, would have distracted

unnecessarily from the focus of the current study. Kilcourse's contribution lies in both his careful reading of the primary source materials, and his application of world Christianity's insights to those readings. *Taiping Theology* is a welcome addition to scholarship on this mid-19th century phenomenon, and should be required reading for anyone seeking to understand the true motivations of Hong Xiuquan and his Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. The book would also be useful as a case study for graduate level courses dealing with issues related to glocalization, East–West cultural interaction or Chinese religion in general.

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*Fact in Fiction: 1920s China and Ba Jin's Family*

KRISTIN STAPLETON

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ix + 280 pp. £20.99

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*The Lost Geopoetic Horizon of Li Jieren: The Crisis of Writing Chengdu in Revolutionary China*

KENNY KWOK-KWAN NG

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Taken together, the two books under review provide the best possible overview of literary and intellectual, but also more broadly social, life in Chengdu during the Republican era (1912–1949). Each study focuses on one writer, while at the same time presenting an engaging portrait of New Culture Chengdu, and questioning connections between social, intellectual and literary history. Ba Jin (born Li Yaotang, 1904–2005) and Li Jieren (1891–1962), both Chengdu natives, were undoubtedly Sichuan's greatest novelists of the Republican era. Both spent time in France, Li Jieren as part of the “Diligent Work, Frugal Study” programme in 1920–1924, Ba Jin more briefly as a student in 1927–1928, and both acknowledged a debt to the French 19th-century novel. Both largely fell silent as writers after 1949, and devoted themselves to reworking their earlier novels. Li Jieren came under particular political pressure during the Anti-Rightist movement in 1957 (for his involvement with the poet Liushahe), while Ba Jin was subjected to reeducation and lost his wife to an untreated cancer in the Cultural Revolution. Both had heterodox leanings, Ba Jin towards anarchism, and Li Jieren towards Sichuan nativism, as Kenny Ng argues. Despite this blemish, Ba Jin went on to be enshrined in the PRC writers' canon (summed up in the ditty Lu-Guo-Mao, Ba-Lao-Cao 魯郭茅巴老曹, which includes another Sichuanese, Li Jieren's classmate Guo Moruo) and became president of the Writers' Association in the 1980s. By contrast, Li Jieren's contribution was consistently downplayed as that of a regionalist writer, and his *Collected Works* in 17 volumes (probably still not entirely complete) were first published only in 2011.

Ng's book, a reworked version of his doctoral dissertation defended in 2004 at Harvard, represents the most engaging kind of doctoral research: each footnote is brimming with rich theoretical and comparative material, as is the bibliography. Stapleton's book, reworking many of the themes of her earlier landmark study of