

of a second (black) market will strengthen the tendency to disregard regulations and warnings and is likely to damage the environment even more. A lot of examples from Chinese newspapers illustrate how serious the situation has become.

Smil does not tire of criticising misleading propaganda publications and their repetition by Western "friends of China" in former years. His work, he admits, was made possible by the fact that there have been a number of Chinese scientists in recent years who conducted critical studies on environmental problems and called for immediate action. It can only be hoped that such voices will be heard.

Petra Kolonko

Rudolf G. Wagner: *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion.* (China Research Monographs No. 25). Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 1982. XII, 134 pp., \$ 12.00

With a copious amount of literature on the Taiping Rebellion in many languages one might wonder why another monograph should treat at length this apparently exhausted field once again. But anybody interested in uprisings, specifically religious movements in premodern China and elsewhere, has good reason to welcome the publication of Wagner's *Reenacting the Heavenly Vision: The Role of Religion in the Taiping Rebellion*.

Wagner's book is devoted "to reconstructing some of the categories that informed the Taiping perception of the vision" (p. 4). It is the author's intention to show that the perspectives developed by the Taiping leader, Hong Xiuquan, represented a complete world-view, coherent in itself, thus providing a convincing metaphysical rationale explaining Chinese *and* world history and the role of the Taipings within it. According to Wagner this world-view responded to both the Chinese charges leveled against Christianity and the revivalist theology of the foreign missionaries. At the same time it was meant to be enacted, i.e. to provide strategies necessary for establishing the Heavenly Kingdom on Chinese soil. While it was this world-view which accounted for the tremendous success of the Taipings, the failure to adapt the vision or strategies to the changing circumstances within and outside of the Taiping Movement was responsible for the final collapse and defeat: "... so that the vision was responsible for both the success and the demise of the rebellion" (p. 5).

Having thus defined the aim of his study in the Introduction (pp. 1-5), Wagner analyzes in Chapter II, "The Framework of Perception" (pp. 6-29), the syncretic construction of Hong's vision based on Chinese history, Chinese mythology, as well as

Christianity. His observations about Taiping Christianity are, as far as I know, the first attempt to analyze the Christian ideological complex in 19th century China, its enemies, and the fascination which it owed to its revivalist orientation.

In the next chapter, "Interpretation of the Vision" (pp. 30-40), Wagner continues to investigate the syncretic construction of Hong's world-view, identifying as sources the Old and New Testament and Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress". The Taipings not only interpreted these texts in the light of Hong's own vision, but they used them to interpret the vision itself, i.e. to identify the main protagonists, like the Old Father, Hong himself, the fiend, Confucius, and the "Brothers and Sisters". Here the Taipings' concern for a rational and overarching explanation of past and present is highlighted; this can also be detected in the fact that they did not gloss over inconsistencies, but "preserved the doubts" (p. 40).

Chapter IV, "Developing Categories" (pp. 47-66), focusses on the perception of a salvation history on Chinese soil incorporating the "family of nations".

The translation of Hong's vision into action was expected to be successful due to obvious divine support. This is the subject of Chapter V, "Reenacting the Heavenly Vision" (pp. 67-101). Here the Taiping movement's social realities come into their own: paraphernalia, like titles, dress, and architecture; behaviour patterns defining the role of women, the "breaking with the old" which ensued from conversion, and the rejection of ethnic differentiation and Chinese kinship hierarchy; the social composition of the Taiping host; their religious life; and last, but not least, the handling of "disobedient children".

The last Chapter, "The Taipings and the West" (pp. 102-112), changes the focus to the more political circumstances with which the Taipings were confronted: potential alliance with different Chinese rebel groups; opposition from Zeng Guofan's and Li Hongzhang's rural volunteers; the presence of the foreign powers, especially the British; internecine warfare within the Taiping movement. The manner of interaction between these realities on the one hand and the vision on the other demonstrates the Taipings' failure to redefine the vision or its interpretation in terms of reality and experience, thus causing their final decline.

Apart from this explanation of the Taipings' failure the most important conclusions to be drawn from Wagner's book are the following:

- Hong's success was based on his capacity to describe a "realistic and meaningful universe that provided the framework for both the understanding and solution of a surprisingly large number of problems" (p. 115).
- This sort of creative achievement was rooted mainly in his syncretic approach, manifested both in his vision and in the field of technology and institutions. By these means he was able to incorporate foreign ideas and accomplishments into a single overarching explanation.

– Hong's rationale assumes the "notion of a prospective development of history" (p. 117) which represents a change from the circular concept of history to a linear salvation history, thus giving the Taipings strength and persistence. However, I would like to point out that this is nothing new in Chinese history, since the various messianic movements in the Chinese context are characterized by this concept of linear salvation history.

So far Wagner's book is a careful case study of the ideology of a Chinese messianic movement, the Taiping Rebellion. Taking into account the enormous significance of religion in this movement, Wagner's approach stands in sharp contrast to prevailing interpretations of Chinese messianic uprisings, which regard religion as a secondary aspect. Wagner does not explicitly deal with explanatory alternatives – in fact he makes only passing reference to Marx's own observations on the Taipings and to P. M. Yaps' "psychological interpretation", referring to the mental illness of Hong Xiuquan in the Introduction (pp. 2-3). Besides these unsatisfactory explanations, there exist numerous detailed and stimulating, though positivistic, descriptions of messianic rebellions in Chinese history. A book like Wagner's avoids these shortcomings.

At the same time it is to Wagner's credit that he has approached his material in a way that lends his findings significance beyond the field of mere Chinese studies, not only in terms of historical research in its own right but with regard to still ongoing religious revival and counter-cultural phenomena as well. Although Wagner does not interpret his findings in a cross-cultural perspective, they are of eminent interest in this context. It is needless to insist that Wagner's interpretation of the role of religion in the Taiping Rebellion fits into the theoretical framework to which historians and anthropologists had been led during their cross-cultural discussions in the 60's and 70's, focussing on messianic movements in colonial and post-colonial times in the "Third World" and in the European Middle Ages and comparing them to so-called social banditry in Southern Europe since the 18th century. Wagner thus confirms these generalizations through the example of a Chinese messianic movement.

My only major criticism of Wagner's book is that he does not develop the theme of the Taipings' shift to the notion of a progressive historical development, to the concept of a linear salvation history. A glance at the history of uprisings in Imperial China reveals that great religious movements, like the Yellow Turbans, Fang La's uprising, and the Taiping Rebellion, coincide with historical breaks in terms of structural social change. If it is true that religion in general gives a believer a sense of his own worth and continuity, it is even more true in the situation of an overall socio-political crisis, when old moral visions are challenged and the perception of the world falls apart, that people can be mobilized in large-scale religious move-

ments. Their participation provides them with fulfillment in their search for a renewed identity and a meaningful universe.

The identification with the new spiritual construction is the more successful if old familiar ideas can be synthesized with new ones, still uncompromised and unchallenged by experience. The need to enact the new vision of oneself and the world, the wish to proceed from the vision to its realization, manifests the "inner necessity and intensity of human search for sense and meaning", displays the elementary desire that "man might find his meaningful place in the reality as an integrated whole" (P. Berger).

One of the great merits of Wagner's book is that he has demonstrated through the example of the Taiping Rebellion that religion is not just an epiphenomenon of society, still less an ideological factor which does nothing but stabilize society.

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Kiyooki Tsuji (ed.), *Public Administration in Japan*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press. 1984, 271 pages. Y 3000.

Much has already been written (often stronger in opinion than in fact) about the power and the inner workings of the Japanese mandarin state. Most of the research appears either to have focussed in a monographic fashion on individual institutions – like e.g. Chalmers Johnson's famous post-war history of MITI – or to have been more concerned about a general political economy analysis of Japan's political system, in which the government bureaucracy is a key player.

The volume edited by Professor Tsuji does not claim to fill this gap, but as a clear and factual introduction to Japan's formal administrative structure the book provides useful and reliable groundwork for scholars relying on English and wishing to pursue further research into Japan's governmental operations. The volume consists of 17 fairly brief articles dealing with the essentials of Japan's public administration, covering its legal framework, cabinet organization, public corporations, the civil service system, local administration (its finance and its relations to the central government), the audit system, administrative guidance, remedies against administrative actions, etc...

The majority of these articles were in fact provided by the various ministries and agencies concerned themselves. Predictably, some of them excel in the enumeration of detailed administrative rule book prescriptions. The National Personnel Authority, for instance, describes at great length recruitment, retirement, payment and disciplinary regulations for the civil service – without ever attempting to fill this regu-