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The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan: Adapting to a Changing Religious Economy by Yunfeng Lu

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The book lacks a concluding chapter to draw the implications of the individual chapters together. The editor's claim that contextualization is a methodological approach seems unjustified. Throughout the book, contextualization appears to be more an object of inquiry than an analytical category facilitating our understanding of various local forms of Chinese Christianity. Despite the lack of sound methodological information, *Contextualization of Christianity in China* deserves much credit for trying to bridge the boundaries between theology and the social-scientific study of Christianity in China. It demonstrates again the need to pay serious scholarly attention to the multiple social worlds of Chinese Christianity.

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*The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan: Adapting to a Changing Religious Economy*, by Yunfeng Lu. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008. xii + 201 pp. US\$65.00 (hardcover).

According to Taiwan's Ministry of the Interior, in 2006 Yiguan Dao was the third largest religion on the island. While various books and articles have touched on this religion, including Meir Shahar's *Crazy Ji: Chinese Religion and Popular Literature*, David K. Jordan and Daniel L. Overmyer's *The Flying Phoenix: Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan* and Daniel L. Overmyer's *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China*, none have discussed the differing historical manifestations of Yiguan Dao or provided holistic accounts of its practice. Yunfeng Lu's study analyzing the religion's growth and adaptations to social change performs this role admirably.

Lu's book is the product of three months of fieldwork, undertaken in Taiwan in 2002 at Yiguan Dao divisions affiliated with the World I-Kuan-Tao Headquarters. The book covers three stages of Yiguan Dao's history: its origin in mainland China, its arrival on Taiwan, and the period after its legalization on the island in 1987. The study is driven by two main theories: the religious economy model and the sect-to-church theory. Lu demonstrates that the diverse religious landscape of the Chinese world comprises a "religious market" in which competing religions vie for patronage (p. 12). He then uses the sect-to-church theory to show how the "deregulation of religious markets in Taiwan" (p. 157) in 1987 enabled Yiguan Dao to become more church-like than sect-like.

Lu begins by discussing the antecedents of Yiguan Dao cosmology and its origin in mainland China. The history of Yiguan Dao proper begins with Zhang Tianran's declaration in 1930 that he was its eighteenth patriarch. After this, the religion grew rapidly. Lu covers the period from Zhang's declaration until the

Communist victory on the mainland, after which the religion was suppressed. He then shifts his focus to Taiwan, where Yiguan Dao was outlawed by the Kuomintang in 1952. Here, Lu shows how state repression in Taiwan actually provided an impetus for missionary activity. In this sense, it was a positive factor in the expansion of Yiguan Dao.

Lu then describes the transformation of the religious environment in Taiwan in subsequent decades, when educational levels in society rose significantly and Buddhist organizations also experienced rapid growth. Yiguan Dao was legalized, and in 1989 the Civic Organizations Law lifted restrictions on the formation of religious groups. These events led Yiguan Dao divisions to make a number of changes to their doctrine and forms of religious practice. For example, there was an effort to make its theology more appealing to educated members. While spirit-writing had been an integral part of Yiguan Dao since the 1930s, by the 1980s it was viewed with suspicion. By 2002, the time of Lu's fieldwork, spirit-writing was performed at only one Yiguan Dao division. The diminished level of importance attributed to spirit-writing removed a potential source of schism, since initiators could no longer claim the Mandate of Heaven and form breakaway groups. Lu relates how spirit-writing was replaced with meditation, thus aligning Yiguan Dao with a religious environment in which Buddhism was becoming increasingly popular.

Another example of doctrinal changes being made for a new religious market comes from the encounter of Yiguan Dao with Christianity. During the 1950s in Hong Kong, Christian personages began making revelations during spirit-writing sessions. Lu notes that Yiguan Dao's engagement with other religions has continued in Taiwan and discusses elements not only of Christianity but of Islam and folk religion now found in Yiguan Dao cosmology. In an environment where belief-systems compete openly, this has allowed Yiguan Dao to establish itself as being superior to other religions. However, although it incorporates elements from other faiths, the Yiguan Dao eschatological system remains pre-eminent.

During the period of state suppression, believers focused on converting new members through missionary activity. To avoid detection, Yiguan Dao divisions also employed an organizational structure in which they had little contact with each other. This has changed since legalization and, to reduce fractionation, Yiguan Dao divisions have sought a more geographic structure. They have also instituted training courses for members seeking to become initiators. The training ensures that initiators are well-versed in Yiguan Dao theology, and has allowed the development of a professional priesthood. The focus of members has also shifted from missionary work to instilling Yiguan Dao belief in their children. The open institution of training programs, dharma assemblies and Buddha halls has in turn created opportunities for varying levels of involvement among believers. In what Lu calls the "progressive strictness" model, willing members are gradually introduced to higher levels of religious commitment (p. 88).

According to Lu, these developments further indicate the degree to which Yiguan Dao has become more church-like in the new religious market.

Overall, Lu's book is useful in three main ways. First, it demonstrates the usefulness of the religious economy model and the sect-to-church theory in conceptualizing Yiguan Dao. Second, it provides valuable current data which was gathered during fieldwork. This provides an understanding of Yiguan Dao as a living, changing religion. Third, it presents a comprehensive history of Yiguan Dao in mainland China and Taiwan. Just one of these features would have provided the foundation for a fascinating study. Their presence together in the same volume ensures that this multifaceted book will be invaluable to both seasoned scholars and undergraduate students alike.

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*Dragons with Clay Feet? Transition, Sustainable Land Use, and Rural Environment in China and Vietnam*, edited by Max Spoor, Nico Heerink and Futian Qu. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007. xiv + 341 pp. US\$95.00 (hardcover).

*Dragons with Clay Feet* claims to present "state-of-the-art research" on the effects which economic policies and institutional reforms have on agricultural development and sustainable resource use in China and Vietnam. Its chief concern is rather self-evident from the title. China and Vietnam are "dragons" that have risen, economically speaking, over the last two decades. Such phenomenal economic growth is accompanied by intensified ecological degradation, which the editors liken to "clay feet"—although I thought that dragons had "claws"! Anyhow, the relationship between economic development and environmental degradation is a prevalent concern both within the two countries and among concerned observers: a book focusing on this topic and providing comparative analyses of China and Vietnam is indeed timely and necessary.

The book's composition, however, does not fulfill its professed aims. Of the sixteen chapters, the six chapters in Part I are devoted to regional inequality and the sectoral impacts of economic reforms, the six chapters in Part II focus on household production responses, and the three in Part III look at sustainable land management. What is the relationship between regional inequalities and environmental degradation? None of the chapters in Part I discuss this supposed connection, nor is it spelled out in the Introduction. How have household level farming decisions affected environmental change in the context of transitional economies? Most of the chapters in Part II, unfortunately, do not flesh out this connection.

One insight from Part II comes from the chapter by Jing Zhu and Yousheng Li, which attempts to provide a model simulation estimating how increased state