

Book Review of

Yao Peng 姚鵬, *Bai nian liuze. Cong Tushanwan dao Zhuxiang hui* 百年流澤: 从土山湾到诸巷会 (Flowing a Hundred Years. From Tushanwan to Zhuxiang-hui), Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju 中西书局 2020, 2 vols., 2, 5, 1349 pp., preface, illustrations, photographs, maps, appendices, indices, bibliography. ISBN 978-7-5475-1740-6 (HB).

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Translated by Katharina Feith

The monumental work (2 volumes; 1349 pages, in A-4 format, price 480 RMB) of Mr. Yao Peng is a surprise in many ways. How could such an unknown historian like Yao Peng, in these times when religious literature is very difficult to publish or cannot be published at all, write such a work on Catholicism during the “age of Imperialism” (1840–1949)?

Who is Yao Peng? He studied at the Central Party School from 1997 to 1981 and has been working in the field of the history of Western philosophy since 1982; he has published on Descartes, Voltaire and on thinkers of the Italian Renaissance.

His brief introduction of the book’s contents is rooted in the political (and ideologically colored) attitude with which missions are judged in China: “This is a book that covers one hundred years of the intellectual history of the Catholic Church in China. The main idea is based on the following facts: In 1842, the Catholic Church came to China again, but after the outbreak of the war in the Pacific in 1942, the Catholic Church in China experienced a final decline in the wake of the defeat of the Allied powers (*yi jue bu qi* 一蹶不起). However, I want to make it clear to the reader what the Catholic Church has actually done in these hundred years – this book is an epic (*yi bu shishi* 一部史诗). No one can copy the achievements of this book: Indeed, it presents in great detail the nearly 400-year history of Catholic publications in China. Through the books, historical backgrounds are illuminated, and through the history, biographies become clearer, thus providing a new approach to many” (www.christiantimes.cn, October 11, 2021).

In his preface, the author also vaguely mentions the sources of his publication, namely certain archives of the individual missionary societies: “The Jesuit books are relatively complete in Shanghai, and they enjoyed wide circulation. It was easy to consult them, so they are given more attention in this work. The publications of the Lazarists and the

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Divine Word Missionaries are less completely preserved, and the books of the Scheutveld missionaries were mainly Sinological works in French, which can be consulted abroad. I have only a few books of the MEP missionaries, the Dominicans and Franciscans, therefore they are not well represented here” (p. 1).

The main text of the work (pp. 1-1045) presents hundreds of publications, with many illustrations of the title pages or interesting photos in high-quality color printing and is also quite attractive in terms of layout. However, it is practically impossible to deduce the content from the chapter headings (four characters each with ambiguous connotations). Who would suspect that the chapter “Tiantang yongfu” 天堂永福 (Eternal Joy in Heaven, pp. 787-814) contains 28 books from the printing press in Yanzhou, Shandong, each presented with a cover picture or illustrations from the contents. Yao Peng also allows himself remarks on the writing style of the missionaries but does not seem to be interested in their biographical data, as shown, for example, by the very rudimentary biography of Joseph Hesser on page 791.

The following chapter is named “The Home of Confucius” (Kong zi guli 孔子故里) and shows pictures of travel guides or other studies published by the Divine Word Missionaries in Shandong a hundred years ago (pp. 815-831). Here you also find the book by Fr. Matthias Hermanns (1899-1972) *Vom Urmenschen zur Hochkultur* (From Primitive Man to High Culture, printed in Shandong in 1935) (pp. 830-831).

The following chapter “Cultural Temple” (Wenhua diantang 文化殿堂, pp. 833-844) deals with the Fu Jen University in Beijing, but lists only two books there (a reprint by Wu Yushan and *Das Jahr im Chinesischen Volkslied* (The Year in Chinese Folk Song [1946] by Fr. Matthias Eder SVD), plus 13 paintings of the *Ars Sacra Pekinensis*, i.e., Christian paintings in Chinese style. A longer chapter (pp. 845-877) then presents Sinological works from *Monumenta Serica* in Beijing.

The work gains special value due to the many appendices; first a list of all the books which were printed in Tushanwan (pp. 1048-1088 Chinese, pp. 1089-1105 Western works), then works from the Jesuit press in Xianxian (pp. 1106-1118 Chinese, pp. 1119-1127 Western works); the books of the Lazarists in Beijing (pp. 1128-1137 Chinese, pp. 1138-1145 Western works); the works from the SVD press in Yanzhou (pp. 1146-1155 Chinese, corresponding to about 300 entries; pp. 1156-1158 Western works); books from the MEP Nazareth printing house in Hong Kong (pp. 1159-1166 Chinese, pp. 1167-1174 Western works, pp. 1175-1179 in minority languages); books of the Catholic Truth Society Hong Kong (pp. 1180-1188 Chinese works); the Salesian Press in Macau (pp. 1189-1199); books of the Franciscans in China (pp. 1200-1201 Western, pp. 1201-1207 Chinese works); CICM books (pp. 1208-1211 Western, pp. 1211-1213 Chinese works); books printed by official Catholic institutions (pp. 1214-1220); and books from the Fu Jen press in Beijing (pp. 1221-1225). This is followed by a list of Catholic periodicals (pp. 1226-1230 Chinese, pp. 1231-1236 Western).

After the presentation of publications, the 20th appendix contains a list of Catholic missionary orders in China (pp. 1237-1250, each with the year of arrival in China and the geographical place of activity).

Then follows a list of Catholic schools in China (pp. 1251-1260). The index of foreign persons (almost all missionaries, pp. 1261-1271) is arranged, according to Chinese bad habits, by the pronunciation of the Chinese names and not by the ABC of the original language. This is followed by a Chinese general index (pp. 1272-1289) and an index of the publications (of Chinese works only, pp. 1290-1343). A tremendous treasure of information! Actually, Yao Peng's work is a must for every historian dealing with China.

In the case of the appendices, it must be said that they generally reproduce foreign personal names and names of book titles fairly error-free, including, for example, French or Latin expressions. Small errors, however, are difficult to avoid with this mass of information. For example, the German contemplative Sisters' congregation *Servarum Spiritus Sancti de Adoratione Perpetua* (SSpSAP) was translated as Zhenglinghui 拯灵会 and not Shengshen yongdaohui 圣神永祷会 (p. 1239). And the much larger community of the Steyl Sisters SSpS (*Congregatio Missionalis Servarum Spiritus Sancti*) is not rendered Shengshenhui 圣神会, but Shengyanhui Shengshen binü chuanjiaohui 圣言会圣神婢女传教会 (p. 1246). Unfortunately, this shows that there are only unreliable sources on the sisters' congregations in China, as practically nothing has been published on this topic.