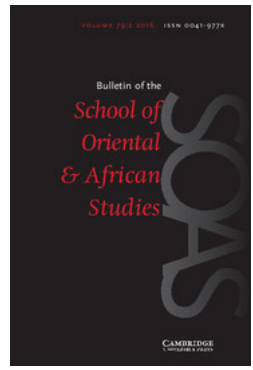

George L. Israel: *Doing Good and Ridding Evil in Ming China: The Political Career of Wang Yangming*. (Sinica Leidensia 116.) vi, 343 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2014. ISBN 978 90 04 28008 3.

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are not so well published, such as the Hongyucun mural-paintings, dated 1309 (ill. 79–83). The pictures were first published in the archaeological journal *Wenwu* in 2012. For the reader wishing to know the basic facts of an illustrated object, it is quite annoying that these are not given in the captions but are appended as a separate list of illustrations. The references to illustrations 139 and 140 are the wrong way around.

It has to be remarked that, with the exception of a few short translated passages, no Chinese characters are provided. This is especially lamentable in the bibliography when it comes to Chinese titles. There is a rich body of footnotes but on several occasions the expected references are not given, for example on p. 237, discussing the link between cursive calligraphy and inebriation, Peter Sturman's article, "Wine and cursive: the limits of individualism in Northern Song calligraphy" in *Character and Context in Chinese Calligraphy* (Princeton: The Princeton Art Museum, 1999), 200–31, should have been cited.

For the layperson, there might be a fair bit of name-dropping, whereas the specialist in the field would like to hear further details. The Sinicized Uighur painter and member of the *Hall of the Stars of Literature,* Sadula, is mentioned twice in the book (pp. 150 and 193), introduced as "the well-known figure of Sadula (1300–1348?), a jinshi graduate of the examination system in 1327" (p. 150). He reappears briefly (p. 193) with regard to the question of whether it is possible to tell non-Han painters apart by their styles, simply stating: "Sadula may be one such, having painted in an eccentric, loose manner, **if** the extant painting ascribed to him is reliable". This is neither fish nor fowl. Even the entry on Sadula in the Metropolitan exhibition catalogue is more illuminating (pp. 228, 229), albeit cleverly avoiding the vexing problem of the authenticity of the painting ascribed to him by not talking about it at all. Perhaps the sheer wealth of material simply does not allow a monograph on the "Visual Cultures of Yuan China", but would be better served by a multi-volume publication, jointly written by several specialists in the field.

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GEORGE L. ISRAEL:
Doing Good and Ridding Evil in Ming China: The Political Career of Wang Yangming.
(Sinica Leidensia 116.) vi, 343 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2014. ISBN 978 90 04 28008 3.
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Given Wang Yangming's virtually peerless military successes as a civil official in Ming China (1368–1644), a full study of his political career, especially one that helps elucidate his impactful philosophy of knowledge and action, is as justified as it is needed. George L. Israel's *Doing Good and Ridding Evil in Ming China* is the first English work since Chang Yu-chuan's *Wang Shou-jen as a Statesman*, published in 1940, to study Wang Yangming's career as a high government official. Analysing Wang's words and undertakings from "a background horizon of cultural assumptions, historical circumstances, and social imaginary", (p. 11) and presenting them in a lucid narrative, the book is a stimulating read that provides glimpses of what conditioned and resulted from Wang's thought and action. Students of Ming

history, Neo-Confucianism as well as Chinese bureaucratic and military culture will find it useful.

Apart from an introduction and a conclusion that set out the book's missions and findings, and an epilogue that tells the vicissitudes of Wang's posthumous reputation rendered by contemporary politics, the book's six core chapters chronologically account for the political and military encounters of Wang as a man of action. These begin with his early career, which included an exile to the remote Guizhou province where he was self-enlightened to a way of learning that would lead to his famous doctrines for acquiring wisdom – the unity of knowledge and action, which emphasizes the supremacy of action in the confirmation of knowledge, and the extension of innate knowledge of the good, which enables one to recognize right and wrong and to do good and get rid of evil in accordance with one's conscience.

The rest concern mainly Wang's military engagements in the last twelve years of his life which distinguished him as "the master of deception" (p. 92) and a truly practically minded Confucian statesman. As governor of southern Jiangxi and governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, his successes include: eradicating local "bandits" and pacifying the She minority in areas that border the provinces of Jiangxi, Guangdong and Fujian; capturing a rebel prince in the provincial capital of Jiangxi; and dealing with the emperor and his favourites who wanted to convert his successes into theirs; and securing the surrender of two rebel Man native headmen in Guangxi but wiping out the disobeying ethnic Yao in surprise attacks in the same province.

The chapters also touch on the control institutions Wang set up to stabilize local society and civilize the outlawry after the campaign; discuss the military strategies Wang adopted for dealing with ethnic people in southern China and the military culture they revealed in comparison of strategies used to deal with non-Han people in the northern frontier; and analyse Wang's internal struggle for punishing some rebels but appeasing others.

In conclusion, Israel considers Wang's actions to be genuine manifestations of his moral knowledge or knowledge of the good, which was shaped by the era in which he lived and his personal experience. He rightly notes that the moral autonomy of the individual Wang emphasized was strongly communal (p. 319). At the end, Wang was more frustrated than not in getting populations at the margins of law and in frontier areas of the empire to conform to his vision of a Confucian social and political order.

This sympathetic account of Wang's career draws mainly on official documents Wang prepared for his targeted audiences, in particular his memorials to the court and other official communications, and is thus inadvertently tilted towards Wang's advantage. Relevant information from his associates and students and contemporary critics, now rather accessible, would have revealed more complexities for a thorough analysis of Wang's decisions and actions.

A case in point is his adopting an appeasement policy to deal with the native headmen in Tianzhou but annihilating attacks on the ethnic Yao in the Chopped Rattan Gorge and Eight Stockades areas, all in Guangxi. Contemporaries did not view these acts positively. Wang was criticized for failing to settle the threats of the native headmen properly, but used the suppression of the Yao to balance it out, and was later said to have felt uncomfortable about these events.

According to Tian Rucheng, who observed the effects of Wang's policy in Tianzhou about thirty years later, before his death Wang told a fellow official, Weng Wanda, that "The affair in Tianzhou was not what I had originally intended. [Who will understand me in posterity?]" Israel considers this quote as circumstantial evidence and Tang Kwok-leong, who studied this issue at length, to be mistaken in

suggesting that Wang favoured his predecessor Yao Mo's strategy of a punitive campaign against the rebel native headmen because this runs contrary to "most of what Wang's letters and communications say, as recounted in this chapter [Chapter 5]" (p. 275, for the quote; pp. 275–6, n. 149; p. 291, n. 36; p. 324, n. 9).

But Tang's evidence is based on Wang Yangming himself. Tang quoted Wang's letter to his son telling him the reason for his proceeding slowly to his assignment in Guangxi was that "[I] intend to wait for Yao Mo's success [in suppressing the revolt in Tianzhou and Sien] and then go there to handle the aftermath with him officially." (初到江西, 因聞姚公已在賓州進兵. . . . . 意欲俟彼成功, 然後往彼, 公同與之一處; quoted in Tang's paper in *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, 40/2 2010, p. 278.) This is no "circumstantial evidence". The pattern of Wang's strategic practice and the sources for this matter would suggest that Wang was wishing to suppress the rebel headmen head on before launching his civilizing measures for long-term effective control of the area for the Ming. Only he would prefer his predecessor to finish the first part of the task. It was when that became impossible but with full understanding that the court desired no bloodbath in the aftermath of Yao Mo's earlier campaigns that Wang resorted to an appeasement strategy that resulted in a compromised restructure of the Tianzhou prefectural government as he proposed. This indeed ran contrary to his usual practice in dealing with mass armed resistance to the government: straight military suppression before reinstallation of control institutions. He was dismayed by a predictably undesired future in Tianzhou for what he had done there expediently.

The book is also marred by editorial carelessness in many places. Irritating mix up of traditional and simplified Chinese characters in expressions and names and titles appear in many forms, in some cases even in a single line of Chinese words. There are numerous wrong characters from words of the same pronunciation. Standard practice of presenting Chinese names is not consistently observed. A couple of factual errors need to be corrected: p. 46, "Chongyi in [Shao]zhou Prefecture"; note that Chongyi was in Nan'an Prefecture in southern Jiangxi not in Shaozhou Prefecture in northern Guangdong; p. 287, "In the 1450s, Grand Secretary Yu Qian (1398–1457) received a memorial. . ."; note that Yu Qian's official height was Minister of War.

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PETER D. SHAPINSKY:
Lords of the Sea: Pirates, Violence, and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan.
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doi:10.1017/S0041977X16000410

One largely unexplored area of the past is what one might call "illegal history", the world of secret leagues and of trade that circumvented international prohibitions. It is also the story of pirates, the criminals of the high seas whose supposedly romantic activities received acclaim that would eclipse the exploits of the real heroes who sought to make the world safe from them. Medieval Japan had its own pirates in the shape of the wakō, gangs of whom, often equivalent in number to a substantial army, plundered and terrorized the coastal areas of China and Korea for centuries. It