Lu’s most original contribution comes in part II, in which she examines the family dynamics and the emotional and psychological factors in suicides by faithful maidens, and in the decisions of some to maintain lifelong chastity, sometimes after performing spirit marriages with their deceased fiancés. Here we have detailed examples of young women who defied their parents, and in some cases their in-laws, in committing suicide or maintaining lifelong chastity. Lu argues that they took such extreme actions of their own accord, although such behavior far exceeded the demands of propriety, and that they could have easily found a suitable marriage match. I think “virgin widows” were not necessarily desirable marriage partners, but Lu demonstrates that most parents and in-laws saw suicide as extreme and unnecessary. Faithful maidens who chose lifelong chastity were seen as morally powerful, and they had legal rights to represent their fiancé’s family and to inherit property. Some adopted sons who protected them in their old age. Others were supported by funds established by sympathetic local literati. Some faithful maidens maintained close ties with their natal families, and some remained with them or moved back to their natal families after their parents-in-law passed away.

In part III, Lu reviews the ideological debates among male Confucian scholars in the Ming and (mostly) Qing period, and she illuminates the profound ambivalence of Confucian literati toward the cult. Significantly, even those who condemned the extreme action of suicide as unnecessary at best, and a violation of ritual propriety at worst, felt moved to honor the strength of will, character, and determination of the young women in question.

Weijing Lu has written an admirably engaging and illuminating study of the chaste maiden cult in Ming-Qing China. She convincingly demonstrates that the young women subjects of this cult helped shape late imperial Chinese culture in profound ways.

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Most China historians have tended to dismiss the nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries as allies of Western imperialism who disparaged Chinese culture. Although much of this criticism is well deserved, there were several notable exceptions. James Legge and W. H. Medhurst acquired a knowledge of Chinese culture that enabled them to translate exceptionally difficult texts. Jessie Lutz’s book Opening China makes a strong case for adding Karl Gützlaff (1803–51) to this select group.
Unlike most nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries, who criticized the Chinese language, Gützlaff was ecstatic in praising it. In 1827 he wrote, “God formed my mouth so that I could speak the wonderful Chinese language, and I look on this as His gift of grace” (p. 41). Gützlaff was a complex man filled with contradictions. In the fall of 1832, the merchant William Jardine enticed him to serve as Chinese interpreter on the opium clipper *Sylph* with the following words: “[T]he more profitable the expedition the better we shall be able to place at your disposal a sum that may hereafter be usefully employed in furthering the grand object you have in view” (p. 80). That “grand object” was the Christian evangelization of China, and Jardine remained true to his word in supporting it.

Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff was born into the Prussian lower middle class, the son of a tailor. His mother died early, subjecting him to the cruelty of a mean stepmother, which created a personal insecurity that he sublimated into an intense drive to succeed. He learned how to impress people, although he always had trouble maintaining long-term relationships. He attracted the attention of the king of Prussia, Frederick William III, who financed his education. Disillusioned by the Enlightenment-influenced Lutheran Church, Gützlaff underwent a conversion experience (pp. 24–27) and became a Pietist. Later, his Pietism and individualism alienated him from the denominational affiliations of most other Protestant missionaries.

Gützlaff studied for three years (1823–26) at the Dutch Missionary Society in Rotterdam and traveled to London to meet the returned Protestant missionary Robert Morrison, whose Chinese translation of the Bible inspired him. He sailed for the Dutch East Indies in 1826 and worked as a missionary in Thailand for three years before traveling to China in 1831 in the clothes of a Fujian sailor. His remarkable linguistic skills enabled him to work as an interpreter in Fujianese, Cantonese, Hakka, and Malay. He took his Chinese name, Koet Sit-lap (Guo Shili), from a Fujianese clan name (p. 41). He acquired an appreciation for China’s historical culture and argued that the morality of the ancient Chinese sages was superior to that of the Greek and Roman philosophers. He regarded the Chinese, albeit heathens, as the most civilized people in Asia. However, he felt that Christianity could improve China, not only spiritually but also socially in raising the status of women (p. 133). His translation of the Bible had a significant impact through its use by the Taipings, and he was convinced that Chinese, not foreigners, had to bring Christianity to China (p. 222).

Lutz’s list of Gützlaff’s publications includes sixty-six Chinese books, pamphlets, tracts and translations, in addition to works in English, German, and Dutch. Most works deal with Christianity, but some treat Chinese history, such as his biography of the Daoguang emperor (r. 1821–50), published in both English and German editions. Lutz describes Gützlaff’s writings as a mixture of merits and flaws (p. 148). He read voraciously in all aspects of Chinese life and culture. However, he worked at great speed and failed to check his sources, relying instead on memory. He rarely revised his work and frequently recycled used material. The editor of the periodical *Chinese Repository*, Elijah Bridgman, faulted Gützlaff’s contributions as being mere drafts, which required extensive editorial effort before they were publishable.
Because of his lack of institutional affiliation or denominational ties, he had to combine evangelizing with employment as an interpreter (initially on opium vessels and later with the Hong Kong government) to pay his living expenses. His major institutional effort, the Chinese Union, collapsed because of criticism of its Chinese evangelists as opium-smoking profit seekers who rarely left Hong Kong to evangelize (p. 241). Gützlaff died exhausted at the age of forty-eight.

Aside from some repetition that could have been eliminated by better editing, Lutz’s book is a fitting culmination to her long and productive career in modern Chinese history in the areas of Christian colleges, Protestant missionaries, and women.

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There is something about Hunan. For most of late imperial Chinese history, Hunanese played marginal roles in national politics. Candidates from the south-central province sitting for the Confucian civil service imperial examinations were among the worst performers for centuries. But this changed in the mid-nineteenth century, when Hunan began to produce more than its share of reform and revolutionary leaders, including, most famously, the Great Helmsman himself. Hunanese took the lead in virtually every major reform and revolutionary movement, from the suppression of the Taiping Rebellion to the launching of the Self-Strengthening Movement, from the revolution of 1911 to the rise and ultimate success of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.

That so many leaders hailed from Hunan is not a coincidence. Steven R. Platt painstakingly shows how Hunan went from a sleepy province to a leader in political reform and revolution. At the heart of his analysis lies the untangling of a complex web of personal ties connecting teachers and students, fathers and sons, officers and soldiers, fellow classmates, and their descendants across Hunanese time and space as part of a conscious tradition. For nearly a hundred years, Hunanese leaders rallied around the writings, interpretations, and reinterpretations of the great seventeenth-century Ming loyalist hermit scholar Wang Fuzhi (1619–92). Platt traces the rediscovery and uses of the figure and work of Wang to the mid-nineteenth century. In 1839, Wang’s descendants, who had preserved his writings for 150 years, approached Deng Xianhe, who had written about the glorious history of the province. A coterie of scholars, which bridged generations and locations and included the statecraft scholars Zuo Zongtang and Zeng Guofan, formed around the editorial work of preparing Wang’s work for publication.