

as his main contribution: exploring the theological implications raised by the unique situation of the Chinese Catholic Church.

On the positive side, this book provides a great deal of information about a still incompletely understood episode in modern Chinese history. Materials used are not only publications of official government and Church sources, but also underground and dissident groups, foreign observers and visitors, and personal interviews. This impressive array of sources is found nowhere else, and we should be grateful that the author has brought them all together here. He also steers a fairly impartial course between various conflicting parties: the government and the Church, the Chinese Church and the Vatican, the "open Church" and the papal loyalists in the "underground Church," although it is clear that he is basically in sympathy with the moves of the Chinese Church to resist the Vatican's authority and to found an independent and indigenous brand of Catholic Christianity.

On the negative side, as with many dissertations which have essentially been photo-copied for publication, there are a number of typographical and grammatical errors, some neologisms (e.g., split-tist, parentalistic), and much repetitiveness. The lack of an index is compensated for by a long and detailed table of contents. No Chinese characters appear anywhere in the book, and even romanizations are rarely supplied. I suspect that this lacuna is related to a problem with the author's central theological purpose. There is, in fact, as yet no authentic *Chinese* contribution to current ecclesiological discussions. If the meaning of "contextual theology" is an understanding of the nature of the Church which rises out of particular local circumstances, how can there be a contextual theology which is not expressed in Chinese terms and concepts? The author however, recognizes the tentative nature of his task, and is at least posing the right questions.

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*The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law.* By DR MICHAEL C. VAN WALT VAN PRAAG. [London: Wisdom Publications, 1987. 381 pp. £19.95.]

The principal aim of Dr van Praag's book is to scrutinize the validity of China's claims to Tibet in the light of international law and history. Beijing insists that Tibet has been part of China for 700 years, hence its presence there can in no way be interpreted as conquest.

Through a succession of religious teachers Tibetan Buddhism took root among the Mongols who, in the 12th and 13th centuries, incorporated China into their expanding empire. It is from the Tibeto-Mongol priest-patron tie in Kublai Khan's reign that China's claim to Tibet originates. Dr van Praag turns his attention to this relationship, one, which he rightly observes, has no parallel in the

west. The closest European paradigm would possibly be the medieval Papacy and Empire. Also important to note is that the priest-patron link was limited to the Tibetan Dalai Lamas and Mongol dynasts. It did not apply to non-Mongol parts of the Empire or to its other institutions.

A less distilled form of the priest-patron relationship emerged when China fell under the sway of the Manchus. The Manchu rulers needed the spiritual prestige of the Dalai Lamas to pacify rebellious Mongol tribes, while the Tibetan Pontiffs sought protection against marauding Mongols, and the Gurkhas in the south in the earlier and later periods of the 18th century. An amban or imperial commissioner from Beijing was stationed in Lhasa, but real authority rested in Tibetan hands as the British discovered some 100 years afterwards.

Dr van Praag guides us through the main treaties of the British era, from the Chefoo Convention of 1876, Sikkim Convention of 1890, Lhasa Convention of 1904, Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906, Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 to the controversial Simla Convention of 1914. In none of these was Tibet's effective or de facto independence denied, as the country had the basic attributes of an independent polity: settled territory, government, plenipotentiaries, currency, and much else besides.

Nevertheless, British recognition of Tibetan sovereignty was withheld in the wider interests of Whitehall's global diplomacy, including the need to placate Chinese nationalist opinion which regarded Tibet as part of the Middle Kingdom, and a largely fictional Chinese suzerainty over Lhasa substituted instead. Appeasement of China was determined by the desire to protect British commercial interests there. One lamentable consequence of the 1904 Younghusband Mission was to weaken Tibet militarily and leave it exposed to an irredentist court in Beijing.

Looking to the future, Dr van Praag suggests that China in her own long-term interest would be well advised to concede genuine autonomy to the Tibetans, with only foreign affairs and defence under Beijing's control, or else allow Tibet full independence. A settlement modelled on the Austrian Peace Treaty of 1955 could demilitarize Tibet and at the same time safeguard China's security, a view echoed by the Dalai Lama himself. Otherwise, warns the author, a Chinese-occupied Tibet bristling with missiles and nuclear weapons will be a continuing hotbed of instability and tension in the Sino-Indian and Sino-Soviet political and military equations.

Dr van Praag's work is a mine of scholarly information and analysis, a valuable reference for those interested in Tibet primarily, and also for others attracted to the broader arc of modern Asian history and politics.

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