The Making of Modern Tibet. By A. TOM GRUNFELD. [London: Zed Books Ltd., 1987. 277pp. Hardcover £22·50; paperback £7·95.]

The mere mention of Tibet, in or out of a scholarly context, frequently leads to heated, partisan exchanges, and often a point of view is determined more by political sentiment than by logic or objective evidence. This state of affairs prompted Tom Grunfeld to sit down a number of years ago and begin sifting through and evaluating virtually every English source ever published on Tibet in order to produce this long, critical essay on the subject.

Well-written, often stimulating discussion runs the gamut from medieval Central Asian diplomacy to questions of social class in the pre-modern period; from early foreign contacts in Tibet to contemporary Great Power involvement; and from "Liberation" by China to an assessment of the lives of those Tibetans exiled as a direct result of that liberation. By and large these chapters do not introduce a great deal of new material, but they do succeed in clearly defining the contentious issues and catagorizing disparate viewpoints. Grunfeld's vow that he will provide, "disinterested and dispassionate history... interpreted without political, religious, economic, or emotional commitments to either side," is a tall order and constitutes the key catalyst keeping reader interest and attention right up to the last page.

In addressing questions such as the feudal nature of old Tibetan society, the independent or dependent status of its territory, the quality of present day Chinese military administration, or the near universal appeal to all Tibetans of the person and institution of the Dalai Lama, the author does not equivocate. Blunt, sometimes even harsh critical assessments are made of some of the best-known authorities on Tibet, such as Mary Taring, Hugh Richardson and Thubten Norbu (in fact the whole family of the 14th Dalai Lama comes in for considerable criticism). More comfortable common ground is found with the scholarship of a counter pantheon of experts and commentators such as Melvyn Goldstein, George Patterson and Neville Maxwell, to name only a few.

Possibly the most interesting and potentially enduring section of the essay deals with what the author refers to as foreign intrigues in Tibet. From the files of the U.S. Government, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, new evidence is presented further corroborating how deeply the Americans and Indians were involved in the anti-Chinese political activities of Tibet roughly between 1952 and 1974. Deserving close attention and scrutiny as well are two useful appendices, one of which deals with the maze of conflicting population figures for Tibet and the other which itemizes for and against opinion about the independent status of Tibet. Since Grunfeld was painstakingly exhaustive in his research, a fact reflected by nearly 800 footnotes each containing up to a dozen citations, it is a shame that his publishers did not see fit to include a bibliography.

The Making of Modern Tibet is not a history of China–Tibet

relations in the conventional sense. It rather is an extensive critique of the controversies which have surrounded and continue to entangle that relationship. Even if we conclude that Grunfeld's self-proclaimed even-handedness leaves something to be desired, his study remains unique and well worth a prominent place on our bookshelves. By the very nature of its subject matter, however, it cannot and will not be the last word.

JOHN DOLFIN

Hong Kong under Imperial Rule 1912–1941. By NORMAN MINERS. [Oxford and Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988 and 1987. 330 pp. £18·50.]

Dr Miners wrote one specialized study which was shrewd enough to earn the threat of a Third World leader's libel action. His 1975 depiction of *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong* reached four editions. Now he has turned his attention to the manner in which Hong Kong, just one of the three score dependencies in the last days of true empire, was managed at arms length by Westminster and Whitehall when there were telegraphs but virtually no aeroplanes – and when "the men on the spot" did govern.

He gives us a valuable summary of public events during that generation, a perception of the machinery in both Whitehall and Garden Road, and thorough examinations of three of the running sores that plagued a succession of those governors whose names now identify roads, rides, launches and colleges. He "discovered a surprising number of incidents and crises which closely paralleled events in the post-war period, but ... refrained from ... comparisons." Many readers will be happy to draw those comparisons for themselves, and be glad that as a scholarly historian Miners has scrupulously refrained from passing moral judgments on pre-war motives as they are now seen through today's distorting spectacles. The post-war generation of overseas civil servants and businessmen had to wait till 1964 for George Endacott's somewhat pedestrian histories of the Crown Colony to supplement their seniors' folk memories and journalists' romance; but Endacott did not have the advantage which Miners had enjoyed of the British Public Record Office at Kew, where the Whitehall end of much correspondence has survived that the Japanese occupation destroyed in Garden Road. Miners has made it easier with hindsight to account for what at the time were not always self-evidently the most logical or desirable decisions for mandarins and taipans to have made in response to Star Ferry boycotts, continuing rent controls, seamen's strikes, water shortages or foreign trade discrimination: they were only repeating what their own seniors had done all those years before – this made it self-evident to those in the know, who saw no need to justify it to the inquisitive young who were not.