

Rnying ma, 1717–1720”; Nikolay Tsyrempilov, “Dge lugs pa divided: some aspects of the political role of Tibetan Buddhism in the expansion of the Qing dynasty”; Gray Tuttle, “A Tibetan Buddhist mission to the east: the Fifth Dalai Lama’s journey to Beijing, 1652–1653”; Jake Dalton, “Recreating the Rnying ma school: the *Mdo dbang* tradition of Smin grol gling”; Georgios Halkias, “Pure-lands and other visions in seventeenth-century Tibet: a *Gnam chos sādhana* for the Pure-land Sukhāvātī revealed in 1658 by Gnam chos Mi ‘gyur rdo rje (1645–1667)”; Derek Maher, “The lives and times of ‘Jam dbyangs bzhad pa”; Guilaine Mala, “A Mahāyānist rewriting of the history of China by Mgon po skyabs in the *Rgya nag chos ‘byung*”; Jann Ronis, “Bdud ‘dul rdo rje (1615–1672) and Rnying ma adaptations to the era of the Fifth Dalai Lama”; Kurtis R. Schaeffer, “Ritual, festival and authority under the Fifth Dalai Lama”; Simon Wickham-Smith, “*Ban de skya min ser min*: Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho’s complex, confused, and confusing relationship with Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho as portrayed in the *Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho ‘i mgul glu*”.

Collectively, as the title suggests, the articles centre on what Hobsbawn termed “invented tradition”. Authority in the Tibetan tradition is commonly rooted in the understanding of unbroken lineages of transmission from a historical founder of the teaching (often the historical Buddha). Fractures in transmission thus require explanatory strategies and in this period the struggles for power in Tibet between Chinese, Mongols and Tibetans, along with the centralizing and systemizing strategies of the Fifth Dalai Lama, provided a complex framework for the refashioning of doctrines and practices in the face of changing circumstances.

A number of chapters deal with particular individuals involved in this process. Of widest interest is likely to be Gray Tuttle’s examination of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s journey to Beijing in 1652–53, the political implications of which have been much debated, but here located in the context of Tibetan Buddhist missionary impulses. Tuttle draws comparisons with contemporary Jesuit missions, which were equally unsuccessful in terms of their impact on the Chinese population, albeit the Dalai Lama’s mission brought not only immense prestige but also military and financial support. Indeed the enormous number of animals, precious stones and other gifts he received in the course of his mission, and their subsequent redistribution, must have had significant economic and social effects in the regions he traversed. We await further studies in this field with interest.

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EAST ASIA

LARS PETER LAAMANN:

Christian Heretics in Late Imperial China. Christian Inculturation and State Control, 1720–1850.

(Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia.) xiv, 204 pp.

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In recent years, scholars have offered increasingly sophisticated and archival-based examinations of the history of Christianity in late imperial times,

covering both the Catholic and Protestant stories. These new interpretations have partly changed the way we look at Christianity in Chinese history. Rather than being simply interlopers and imperialist agents in local societies, missionaries and Chinese Christians emerge as participants, albeit often marginal, in the internal mechanisms of power and culture that shaped China between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. Christianity is thus increasingly perceived as a global religion, interacting with the local and becoming local. What scholars are exploring now are the concrete forms that this process took, both before and after the Opium Wars. In particular, scholarly attention has been focusing on two areas related to native agency: the role of Chinese Christian intellectuals in shaping the Christian socio-religious message; and the ways in which common people experienced Christian practices and values in their lives and in local contexts, either accepting and transforming them, or rejecting them.

Lars Peter Laamann's book participates in this new wave of scholarship by analysing a period customarily considered to be one of decline for Christian communities, spanning from the Yongzheng reign's prohibition of Christianity in the 1720s to the forced opening of the empire to foreign missionaries in the 1860s. Laamann's work, focusing on Catholicism, has two aims: to analyse Christianity as a form of popular religion in northern China; and to reassess the Qing state's understanding of Christianity as heterodoxy. The book is divided in three parts: the first, very short, part defines the research parameters; the second considers the popular dimension of late imperial Christianity; and the third surveys official perceptions of and policies towards Christianity within the framework of larger anti-heterodoxy campaigns. Almost one-hundred pages out of a total of 204 are devoted to appendixes, endnotes, bibliography and index.

The theoretical framework Laamann adopts is "inculturation", a term coined in Catholic theological circles to describe the process undergone by Christianity to adapt to, and absorb, features of local cultures. As Pope John Paul II put it in 1985, inculturation is "the incarnation of the Gospel in native cultures and also the introduction of these cultures into the life of the Church". To use this specific approach requires explanation of the intellectual and theological genealogies of the concept, and how it is going to be used. However, Laamann simply tells us that "inculturation is at present accepted as a desirable, at least inevitable, process in the global dissemination of religions" (p. 9). An endnote refers for explanations to his dissertation and a short article by a Chinese scholar, hardly a solution to satisfy readers of his book, who will not find a coherent definition of the term as applied to the Chinese case. What inculturation means to Laamann intermittently emerges from the pages of his work, where he mentions, for example, that "successful inculturation of Christianity into rural China" meant that "Christian doctrine had to be reconciled with the fundamental principle of filial respect for both parents and ancestors" (p. 20).

In Part II, his attention moves to popular practices among local Christians in several locales of northern China, interactions of Christians with local heterodox "sects", the congruence or clash between Chinese and native values and practices, and some sociological considerations on Christian communities. These pages paint a composite if somewhat confusing picture of communities mixing Christian and native heterodox teachings, symbols and practices, thus creating a new type of Chinese "inculturated" Christianity. One wonders, however, if Laamann's emphasis on Qing government memorials here, rather than Christian materials in Chinese and Western languages, influences him to

read standard Chinese-language Christian terms indicating Catholic sacraments, prayers and symbols as “syncretistic” or “heterodox” concepts and practices. The term for “reciting prayers” among Catholics, for example, was *nian jing* or *song jing*, identical to the Buddhist expressions for “chanting the scriptures”. However, among Christians these terms did not have the same meaning nor did they indicate the same practices of Buddhists and sectarians. It is also true that eighteenth-century Christian communities were often in the hands of lay leaders, due to the dearth of priests, both foreign and native, and that syncretistic practices initiated by these leaders are indeed occasionally recorded in missionary sources. But Laamann’s reliance mostly on Qing extorted confession, usually recorded by yamen clerks totally ignorant of Christian practices, risks reflecting the official categories of religious activities in a Buddhist–Daoist framework, rather than the self-perception and the specific practices of Chinese Christians. This kind of reading, moreover, might also reinforce the undue impression that we are facing what Laamann calls an “increasingly unfettered inculturation created by the relative absence of foreign clerics” (p. 100), when in fact Christian lay activities were mostly within the boundaries of orthodox Catholic practice, albeit adapted to China.

State attitude to Christianity is a dimension that Laamann explores in Part III, in three short chapters entitled “The perplexed official: Christianity as heterodox mystery”, “Christianity as internal menace” and “Christianity as alien intrusion”, a more solid part of the book. Here we learn about relatively little-known cases of suppression of Christian communities, and find a contextualization of anti-Christian Qing policies within the wider anti-heterodoxy campaigns well known to scholars of late imperial China. The extensive references to little-used European and Chinese manuscript sources in the Propaganda Fide Archives in Rome and in the First Historical Archives of China in Beijing (the latter now published) partly offset the conceptual weaknesses of Laamann’s book. If read with care and critical awareness, the book yields interesting materials, and paves the way for further research into areas that the author only briefly explores in this rather short work.

Eugenio Menegon

LILY XIAO HONG LEE and A. D. STEFANOWSKA (eds):

Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Antiquity through Sui, 1600 B.C.E.–618 C.E.

xxx, 410 pp. Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2007. \$99.95. ISBN 978 0 7656 1750 7.

Following two previous volumes devoted to women under the Qing and in the twentieth century, *Antiquity through Sui, 1600 B.C.E.–618 C.E.* is the third part of the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women*, a commendable project aimed at providing comprehensive coverage of the lives of Chinese women significant enough to be recorded. Given the length of the period under analysis, the editors have chosen to divide the book into three sections, covering Antiquity through Zhou, Qin through Han, and Three Kingdoms through Sui respectively. While official histories and canonical works account for the majority of sources used, the authors have also exploited archaeological findings, literary and religious texts, and compendia, thus widening the range