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Chinese religion is, to say the least, an exasperating field of study to enter for both specialist and general reader alike. You cannot but be fascinated by the richness of the material, but you cannot help your head spin either at the equal richness of controversy among the experts on the meaning of it all. Be it religion as a whole (was China essentially a religious country?), or one of its many parts, it is difficult to obtain a balanced picture.

In this beautifully written book, aimed at both specialist and general reader (I consider it a “must” for the specialist) Mr. Holmes Welch bravely enters the arena to examine the practice of Chinese Buddhism anew. Many of our readers will recall him as a former member of the Society’s Council and author of an article on Buddhism in Hong Kong (Volume I of the Journal). His focus for attention here is Buddhist institutions in mainland China during the first half of this century, and his objects twofold: to give us new material and new detail, and at the same time correct some misleading statements and impressions which have been “echoed and re-echoed until now they are generally accepted”.

As the author points out: “When modern Buddhism is discussed in almost any Western book about China, we find vivid descriptions of the commercialism, illiterates, and vice, but seldom a word about the piety, scholarship or discipline.” But how to get a true picture? To discover if there is another side? Mr. Welch uses two methods. One is the increasingly popular “oral history” approach: by collecting data in intensive interview with Buddhist monks now living overseas. Here, as his anecdotes show, he came right up against the kind of scholarly prejudice concerning interview of people to obtain religious information known to all contemporary workers in the field. The other approach was documentary, using in some cases rare, or rarely known about, Buddhist monastic materials. Some of his data in the book then, is based on one type of information, some on the other, and he also sometimes combines the two.
One of the areas in which we have particularly interesting and new information is that of Buddhist "kinship": one of the principles for organization used by monks and which copies that of the Chinese kinship system to an astonishing degree. Knowledge of this type of organization throws light in turn on the nature of Buddhist sects. Sects are merely a reflexion of the number of disciples; if disciples proliferate then the "lineage" tends to divide into new sects; if they dwindle, the sect may disappear. As the author remarks, Westerners accustomed to connexions between sects and doctrines, and Buddhist specialists of Japan where sects have remained exclusive and doctrinal differences preserved, will no doubt find this difficult to accept.

The question of lay commitment is also pursued and the relation of recruited laymen to the monastic "kinship" system. Mr. Welch reveals, in fact, the whole complexity of inter-relationships among monks and laymen in this system and shows that a vast network of connexions existed among Buddhists despite the fact that Buddhism itself had no central leadership. Questions of syncretism are also discussed and the study of Confucian Classics by the monks. The author helps to correct the impression that all monks are illiterate also, by quoting figures from some local surveys conducted by the Communists during the first three years after they came to power.

As the author says himself: "we have... a broad gamut of institutions and men, with the good and the bad — "the dragons and the snakes" — side by side. The system had room for both piety and commercialism, scholars and illiterates, vice and discipline — all making up a mixture whose components we know, although we cannot assay the proportions in which they occurred".

Mr. Welch has done much in this work to adjust our perspective on Chinese Buddhist organization. He has already planned a second volume to cover the history of Buddhism. If it is anything like the present work we are in for some refreshing new statements and plenty of surprises.

Hong Kong, 1968.

Marjorie Topley
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According to my encyclopaedia, architecture is concerned with finding practical and aesthetic solutions to the problem of enclosing spaces for living, worship and work. But what sort of limitations are imposed on plans by the needs of the particular activity enclosed; and conversely too, one supposes, what sort of limitations are imposed on the activity itself by the building techniques developed by a culture? Mr. Prip-Møller is a scholar who attempts to answer such questions in perhaps one of the most difficult fields: an oriental, monastically based, religion which although not changing over much during the centuries it has been established in China, makes all sorts of complex demands on the designers of buildings to house its celibate communities.

The knowledge necessary for a study of this kind is of course very special: not only architectural, but cultural and religious as well. The author of this book, first published in Denmark thirty years ago and now here in reprint in Hong Kong, was well-qualified however for the task he set himself. In setting out to see how the plans of Chinese Buddhist monasteries have related to the needs of Buddhism and the way of life, training and spiritual goals of its monks, he was already armed with extensive architectural knowledge and professional experience in China, and a great deal of knowledge also of the Buddhist religion (a study of meditation ritual is among his other publications). He already spoke the language, and travelled extensively, mainly in central China and the Yangtze valley where Buddhism was still in a flourishing condition, in search of his data, and architectural sketches and plans.

The result of this painstaking and lengthy research is a book of considerable value and interest to many kinds of reader. Although personally, I would have liked to see a chapter at the end drawing together the more fundamental points about functional relationships, everything of significance appears to have been covered. There is much information on Buddhist monasticism itself, including the training of novices, descriptions of ordinations, monastic rules and monastic punishments. There are also very plentiful and interesting illustrative materials relating to monasteries and the Chinese monastic way of life.
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The author's collection of photographs and other materials relating to his scholarly works is in fact famous, and now reposes in the Royal Library and the Royal Academy in Copenhagen. It is a pity, perhaps, that the many really excellent photographs from his collection appearing in this work could not have been reproduced on glossy rather than matt paper for the Hong Kong edition (since the book costs $250 anyway). But perhaps there were problems in doing so. This is still, certainly, a very elegant edition. It should add importantly to the libraries of individuals, and both public and private institutions, and it would be an excellent present to grace the coffee table of a civilized friend.

Hong Kong, 1968. Marjorie Topley

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: ESSAYS PRESENTED TO RAYMOND FIRTH, ed. Maurice Freedman, Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1967, pp vii 300. 75/-.

Collections of essays by different specialists in a single field or in related fields of scholarship are becoming very popular, and rightly so. They enable a book to cover a wider range of topics and materials on a selected theme than would normally be possible if undertaken by a single author. This is particularly so today when knowledge in all fields becomes increasingly complex and inter-penetrating.

The thirteen essays in this book deal with matters of Social Anthropology. They are written in honour of Raymond Firth, one of the great contemporary British anthropologists and the authors, some now leading figures in their own specialities, have all studied or worked under him at some time. In order to illustrate Professor Firth's considerable variety of interests the topics discussed have been selected to cover a very wide range of subject matter, problem, and also region and type of society. The book thus gives the non-specialist reader a very good picture of the sort of questions anthropologists set out to study and answer.

A particular interest of this book for members of the Branch lies in the two contributions on Chinese society. One is provided by the editor, Professor Maurice Freedman, the other by Miss Barbara Ward, and many members will be acquainted already with some of their work through lectures they gave the Society during field trips to Hong Kong in recent years.
Dr. Freedman’s essay is concerned with problems in an area to which Professor Firth has made significant contributions. This is the role of the deceased in the organization of the society left behind them (see for example, Firth, Frazer Lecture, 1955). The particular concern here is with the deceased as members of a kinship system.

In “Ancestor Worship: Two Facets of the Chinese Case”, Dr. Freedman discusses first the question of geomancy (fèng-shuǐ) in regard to buildings and to tombs (the yang and yin of geomancy), and differences found in the incidence of the two types in two parts of what he calls the sinicized world. China, Vietnam and Korea all practise both kinds of geomancy, but Japan has only that of buildings. He suggests this situation might be explained in terms of the kinship system of these countries. In Japan we do not find the kind of agnatic descent system which we associate with China and can seen in Korea and Vietnam. He also suggests a relationship between the elaborateness of the geomancy of graves and that of the lineage structure, saying it is probably no accident that in the south-east part of China (principally Fukien and Kwangtung) both lineages and geomancy of tombs have been carried to extreme forms of development.

The principal argument is that where the authority of past generations represented in the cult of ancestors weighs heaviest, there men redress the balance by recourse to the geomancy of the tomb. It is pointed out that geomancy delivers a man’s ancestors into his own hands, so to speak (he may determine fortune by siting one or more graves in a way so that influences of the landscape are channelled through the ancestors’ bones to agnatic descendants); but in ancestor worship, which Dr. Freedman then goes on to discuss, ancestors are beings with rights and duties.

The problem here is why Chinese ancestors are essentially benign. An interesting argument is developed relating this to the connexion between ancestors and the nature of command of those taking over from them in the world of the living. The weight of ethnographical evidence is that ancestors, by being displaced resent their successors, and also endow them with authority to rule in their place. But in the last two millennia in China there has been a situation whereby the family is a property-owning estate dissolving on the death of each senior generation to reform into successor-
estates of which none can be said to have the identity inhering in its predecessor. The so-called joint family has a short life.

Ritual primogeniture is inherent in the worship, but rests on a true primogeniture of a much older phase. No one son can step effectively into his father’s shoes and exercise authority over the same range of people. Married sons are not seen as a threat to the father’s position and the father, also, does not, once in his soul-tablet, support the authority of sons over their juniors. In a nut-shell then, the ancestor is worshipped but cannot be used as a major instrument of domestic discipline.

Miss Ward’s paper is very different in subject matter and theoretical interest to that of Dr. Freedman’s but again is concerned with matters on which Professor Firth has done considerable work: peasant communities, including fishing communities, and their economies. “Chinese Fishermen in Hong Kong: their Post-Peasant Economy” is based particularly on data derived by Miss Ward from the village of Kau Sai which is on the shores of a narrow strait between two small islands in the Port Shelter area of Hong Kong’s waters. It was there, in the early ’fifties, that Miss Ward first began her field work on the boat people.

The essay discusses problems of economic and social change. Miss Ward talks of the rapid technological changes in the fishing industry (whereas in 1952 in Kau Sai all but one boat had been wind-driven, by mid-1963 only one was not mechanized). She argues that this was possible because the economic attitudes of the fishermen and the social structure of fishing communities were already favourable. When the opportunity to adopt useful technical change was offered, it was likely to be seized upon unless blocked by something else. By 1950 the opportunity to mechanize did appear — engines were available. By then the possible educational block had also been partly removed, and government action in freeing the market, injecting money and providing training courses and encouragement was all that was required to set a revolution in action.

The essay deals with the effects of mechanization and change on different kinds of fishermen, and changes in social structure consequent on such developments, highlighting as a factor of general importance the movement of boat-people to land-dwellings. This affects particularly the position of women, changing their opportunities to earn an independent income either by working in
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a factory or in petty trade, or some form of out-work, for example making plastic flowers, extremely popular since about 1960. It also affects the future of young members of the boat community since children, once living on the land, can attend school regularly.

Land people have long regarded the boat people as near barbarians and have myths about their "un-Chinese" activities, but Miss Ward argues movement ashore will change their status generally, and in the long run the cumulative effects of all the developments connected with economic change will be to integrate the fishing folk completely into the rest of the Chinese population. Miss Ward's main work has been with the Cantonese speaking fishing folk. One might wonder, however, whether the rate of integration will be the same for the "Hoklo," speaking a different dialect. Land-dwelling speakers of this dialect have still a long way to go to full integration in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong, 1968. MARJORIE TOPELY


This book, part of a series entitled "History in the Making", is really a collection of short extracts, few of them more than several pages culled from numerous Western works. English, American and, usefully, (the compiler being of that nationality) French sources form the bulk of the publications from which the selection is made. The extracts are linked by a connecting narrative to form a continuous sequence of historical experience extending from the Macartney Embassy in 1793-94 to the débâcle of 1948-49 when the Chinese Communists took over control of all China.

Whilst the narrative is, in places, open to question, this publication deserves to be widely known and read. This is partly because the books from which the extracts are taken are, in most cases, long out of print and sometimes difficult to obtain; but mainly because it provides a superb sweep of modern Chinese history, carefully assembled. The richness of the material is remarkable and the authors are compelling — partly, one suspects, because of the vital nature of what lay before their eyes. The writers are
equally varied. Priests and missionaries; diplomats, consuls, officials and their wives; businessmen; journalists; soldiers and sailors among the foreigners; emperors, Ching officials and literati, Kuomintang and Communist leaders among the Chinese. Chairman Mao has his place (pp 306-308).

It is easy to choose items to illustrate the striking nature of much of the contents, and to dwell on how well they illuminate the scene. One might mention inter alia the Rev. Timothy Richard's account of a journey made during the dreadful Shansi famine of 1876 (pp 179-181) and of his encounter with a man in a Shantung village who persisted in repeating the official version that England was a revolted tributary (p182); the description of the filth of Canton's canals and thoroughfares in 1910 (pp 233-234); a French resident of Peking's comments on the passage through his neighbourhood of a tatterdemalion body of troops from the warlord period (pp 286-287) and the striking eye-witness account of one of the outflanking hill marches of the Red Army against Japanese troops (pp 448-489). The cover given to the thirty year period 1917-49 between pp 261-504 — half the volume — is justified by the material available to the compiler. The chapter of extracts on Red China 1935-45 (pp 413-456), is particularly good. In the midst of such riches it is pointless to recite choice items from one's own reading that might have gone into the work; though no doubt, like this reviewer, readers will be able to suggest alternatives here and there, such is the tremendous outpouring of works on experiences in China up till 1949.

This reviewer recommends the book to a wide range of readers, specialist and general alike: there is something for all in its 500 pages. Its main contribution is to expose the starkness of China's experience and convey some of the misery occasioned for the common people by both natural and man-made disasters over the period. Thereby the essential background to a better understanding of Mao's China and, indeed, of the desperate self-strengthening movement behind the Cultural Revolution is provided in its true perspective and deeper meaning.

Hong Kong, 1968. JAMES HAYES
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THE SENIOR JOHN SAMUEL SWIRE 1825-98: MANAGEMENT IN FAR EASTERN SHIPPING TRADES, Sheila Marriner & F. E. Hyde: (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1967) pp. xiv, 206, appendices, illus. 42/-

This book is the latest product of the Liverpool School of Business History which, under Professor Hyde's direction, has published a number of converging and complementary studies of the Liverpool merchant and ship-owner. Although it is claimed for these studies that "they are collectively an expression of ideas and techniques in the progression towards more sophisticated types of analysis in the handling (sic) of business records", a common feature of all of them is the endorsement of Charles Wilson's credo: in the history of business, biography is a powerful element.

We come to this book, then, with the previous knowledge from these other Liverpool Studies that 'The Senior' was a tenacious, aggressive character, described by a business rival as "a person who lived by and for business alone"; with, as well, a considerable understanding of the part played by Messrs. Butterfield and Swire in the Far Eastern shipping trades and, in particular, of J. S. Swire's role as architect and protagonist of the Eastern Shipping Conferences. The commercial history of Butterfield and Swire, and to a lesser extent of Holt's Blue Funnel Line,* has already been examined from several angles — which means that the reviewer of this present study has had to read three books instead of one! (The third one is K. C. Liu's study of the Anglo-American Steamship Rivalry in China (Harvard, 1962) and which drew, if indirectly, on the Butterfield and Swire records.) This effectively strikes the note of competition arising from the establishment and operation of the China Navigation Company.

What we have new in this latest piece of research, principally, is the story of the 'Great and Ancient' (Taikoo) Sugar Refinery and, later, of the Taikoo Dockyard in Hong Kong. This project stemmed, as the authors make quite clear, as much from the conflict between Swire's and Jardine's — Swire swore to oppose the Princely House at all points — as from a calculation that it might further the shipping interests of the firm. Indeed, one of the most valuable sections for the historian of the China Coast trade is the

documented account of the cut-and-thrust rivalry of the two Hong Kong firms. With the publication of Dr. Le Fevour’s thesis* and the recent acceptance of the principle of scholarly access to the records of Jardine Matheson at Cambridge University, we may expect further dissection of this remarkable commercial network. However, one may reasonably doubt whether the account of the working of this system of finance and trade with Shanghai and Hong Kong as the nuclei and the Treaty Ports as the other vital constituents, will be written for a long time. Until it is, the economic history of Hong Kong cannot be studied.

Butterfield and Swire’s history, of course, does illustrate some of the principal developments which brought this system to its peak: the hemispheric swing of the firm’s trading interests from America to the East (including Australia, about which this study could have been more informative — apparently no reference was made to the history of the White Star Line published in 1964); the ultimate giving-up of trading activities to concentrate on agency services. The career of John Samuel Swire, too, in its insistence on business honour and rectitude, virtues of the Liverpool business man of the last century, which may strike the present day historian as unctuous, also illustrates crucial changes in business attitudes when we compare the original Taipans with their successors. ‘The Senior’ was, I venture to think, not untypical in his scruples.

It is precisely because this is an illuminating study of the character of the business man in relation to his partners, clients and rivals which makes it an important contribution to the study of business history.

University of Hong Kong. ALAN BIRCH

* Western Enterprise in China, 1842-95, to be published shortly as a Harvard Research Monograph.

BOOKS RECEIVED

The Council acknowledges with thanks books received from various publishers during the year, and in particular from the Hong Kong University Press and Oxford in Asia. A list for 1967-1968 will appear in the next issue of the Journal.