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Rural Scene in 19th Century China: Rural China

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allegiance, to the U.S. and Israel? Is the Zionist movement morally innocuous, or a Jewish version of an accommodated Nazi ideology? Without wishing to appear a prophet, the reviewer feels that the pros and cons surrounding the state of Israel ought to be publicly aired lest the situation again lead to further pretexts for renewed anti-Judaism. And the present volume would have been an ideal place for such an airing.

The Jewish community in the Philippines is extremely small. And from the viewpoint of the Philippine scene, this book along with the area of Jewish-Christian relations in general seems to be quite irrelevant. Whether it should be irrelevant or not could be an area of inner Christian or Jewish-Christian dialogue right here. That it is irrelevant might be borne out by the lack of Filipino sensitivity to the plight of the few Jews here during the Japanese occupation. Then, too, the nature of Filipino Catholic Christianity might further add to the irrelevance. Most Filipinos who call themselves Christian certainly do not realize that to be a Christian is to be a member of a Jewish sect rooted in the Old Testament, and in Palestine; a Jewish sect whose founder claimed to offer a new interpretation of Torah in word and deed. So long as this awareness is absent or denied by Christians, both here and in the rest of the world, these Christians will find it hard to understand why there should be a Jewish-Christian dialogue at all.

By way of conclusion, we might note a couple of significant typographical errors: p. 59, the name of the eminent Jewish scholar should read: Kaufmann Kohler (no separating comma); and p. 125, note 18: Professor Flüßer (not Flüsse).

BRUCE J. MALINA, O.F.M.

RURAL SCENE IN 19TH CENTURY CHINA

RURAL CHINA: Imperial Control in the Nineteenth Century, by Hsiao Kung-chuan. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1960. First paperback edition, 1967. xiv, 783 pp.

The demand for a paperback reprint of this 800 page book is a sign of growing world-interest in Chinese political science and history. The new book is a bargain at about 20 pesos, for the 1960 hard-back first-edition was worth more than its 40 peso sales-price.

The work is a study of the rationale, methods, and effects of the system of control which the Manchu government tried to exercise over rural China in the last century.

Under the term "control", Professor Hsiao places all the activities reaching down from the central authority to the villages, markets and towns. Police surveillance and the *pao-chia* system aimed at prevention, detection, and punishment of disordered behavior. State-revenue and labor services were protected by the *li-chia* and tax collection systems. Measures like flood protection, grain storage and famine-relief were set up against natural and man-made disasters. The state ideology was kept pure by periodic homilies (*hsiang-yüeh*) on select imperial maxims, by the screening of scholars through official examinations on a prescribed syllabus of Confucianist classics, by honors paid to conservative elders at banquets from which "depraved" non-conformists were ostracized, and by "liturgical" sacrifices that in some way canonized local luminaries who had lived as docile, patient, and exemplary citizens etc. These structures and their underlying ideas are well explained.

Hsiao's sources comprise a vast fund of Ch'ing government compendia, gazetteers, and bureaucratic correspondence; he likewise quotes widely and appositely from contemporary Western observers. His bibliography lists 350 Chinese works and more than 200 in English. Almost all of these enter the text as illustrative citations or are among the 2,187 clear notes for reference. Such numbers are large, but the author's selection has nonetheless been judicious.

After Hsiao presents a structure and its high-sounding imperial purposes, he compares these with the village reality. Pointing out this wide gap between central theory and local practice, he shows how among the peasantry and the gentry the plan was often quite poorly implemented. In his seventh chapter, *The Effects of Control in the Village*, he debunks the idea that the Chinese village of imperial times was a self-governing, communalistic democracy. About the only factor which tempered centralization was incompetence, of which there was plentiful supply. It is true that apart from the officials set up through formal procedures, the lay leaders (village elders and school-teachers) exercised decisive influence in settling village affairs. They achieved and held position through family and clan prestige or through personal merits. In reality the bulk of the villagers was passive, with little power to make or unmake their official or lay leaders. In the areas of village life which the centralized autocracy of Peking failed in fact to dominate, an oligarchy ruled, or an administrative vacuum prevailed. This was not democracy.

The eighth chapter on *The Clan and Rural Control* might reward careful reading by Chinese in the Philippines, and by friends who wish to understand some of their social responses. The clan structure was particularly strong in Fukien and south China, from which most Chinese residing in the Islands came, and many social patterns of the

Chinese community here were set during the 19th century. Vestiges of the clan structure survive here today. However, the kinship ties of a clan were better preserved in villages than in cities. The city pattern of guilds and 'civic' associations has an affinity to the clan system, but has basic differences, too. Generally, as Hsiao points out, the heyday of the clan passed with the passing of the turbulent mid-19th century. The clans were envisaged as the instrument of central control, but were often obstructed or defeated, because clan interests simply did not coincide with imperial purposes.

In the latter chapters, Professor Hsiao surveys the general deterioration of the rural scene in 19th century China, under the impact of population growth, the decline of rural handicraft because of Western industrial competition (and factories in Bombay, Japan, and colonial Shanghai), regional riots and rebellion, and the dry-rot affecting the leadership in Peking.

Hsiao's general analysis tends to accentuate the negative nature of the control system, which had come to aim at leading the people to a passive acceptance of the regime. The Ch'ing dynasty under the emperor K'ang Hsi (1662-1722) is credited with attaining a peak point in the art of government. Here we see the dynasty tiring and uninspired, content to obtain dull acquiescence and an absence of revolt.

Even though over-dependence made both the rural populace and the gentry less hopefully willing and less technically able to change the sorry situation into which they were sinking, still the government in times of crisis found its control system cracking and unreliable. The bulk of scholar officials were stagnating intellectually and even morally under long-continued ideological control, a fact which helps explain why the death-throes of imperial rule were so long protracted. The people were apathetic about national interests, for they were treated as subjects far removed from the autocracy, which with defensive fear suspected them. There was no solid foundation for positive and responsible obedience.

"Whenever a choice had to be made, the emperors invariably allowed imperial security to overrule administrative efficiency. As a result, public functionaries were rarely given an opportunity to show initiative, independent judgment, or satisfactory performance of tasks through the exercising of adequate authority. On the contrary, officials were subjected to a tight net of regulations, restrictions and checks, and were threatened with punishment for derelictions or offenses even in matters beyond their individual control. A situation eventually prevailed in which the most prudent thing for the average official to do was to assume as little responsibility as possible—to pay greater attention to formal compliance with written

rules than to undertake things that were useful to the sovereign and beneficial to the people.

Such an imperial policy, while fully consistent with the nature of autocratic rule, was hardly conducive to efficient government. The Ch'ing emperors succeeded so well in rendering officialdom politically innocuous that, except during the first and closing years of the dynasty, no official was known to have harbored treasonous designs against their regime. At the same time, however, they enervated its administrators, and many of them were willing to leave vital tasks of government largely undone. This basic administrative defect was aggravated by a number of unfortunate imperial practices. The official salary and remuneration scale, which was ridiculously low to begin with, did not adjust itself to the rising cost of living and thereby rendered "squeeze," bribery, and extortion inevitable and increasingly necessary. The large-scale selling of official posts, especially extensive in the second half of the 19th century, constituted another invitation to corruption.... Inadequacy and inefficient administration was the high price that the Ch'ing emperors paid for the uncertain political stability which they laboriously tried to maintain by means of an otherwise ingenious system of control." (pp. 504-505).

We paint a dark picture. A brief review, of course, lends itself to over-simplification, and our review may give its readers an overly one-sided impression. One great merit of Professor Hsiao's fine work is his loyal refusal to oversimplify. To appreciate that fact, however, one must read this long book in full. It is a work which opens up many avenues of research; it seems deservedly established as a guide-book for the research students it will awaken. It merits a place on the Sinology shelves of every college library.

CHARLES J. MCCARTHY

TODAY'S CATHOLIC: HIS DOUBTS AND BELIEFS

BEYOND QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS, *The Creed for Today's Catholics*, by Timothy S. McDermott. New York: Herder and Herder, 1968. 173 pp.

Catholics still believe that the answers by and large in the question-and-answer catechism of one's childhood are true and will always be true. The problem is that these answers which are provided in black and white categories are not quite enlightening anymore. If