Anthony E. Clark, ed.

China's Christianity: From Missionary to Indigenous Church. Studies in Christian Mission, volume 50. Leiden: Brill, 2017. Pp. xvi + 300. Hb, \$147.

From the editor's introduction it appears that this volume arose out of an academic meeting and it bears the marks of its origin in its diversity. The contributions are mainly on "China's Christianity" (a nice way around the the linguistic trap of "Chinese") in the twentieth century, and cover a remarkable range of Christian denominations and geographic regions. This is both a positive and a negative: it illustrates well the complexities, but almost forbids generalization about not only "China" but also "Christianity."

Anthony Clark makes a heroic attempt in his introduction to deal with the terminological and historical dilemmas raised by this heterogeneity, but is wisely satisfied with a range of reflections rather than any firm conclusions on issues such as missionary "invasion." He raises one question that has long bothered me: the attachment of Chinese Christians to Western forms of architecture and forms of worship. In my view, his tentative solution of a Chinese Christian "Way" that is "aesthetically and culturally largely Western" (6) creates more problems than it solves. Is Christianity in its historical origins and essence "Western" at all? The first Christian missionaries to China were Eastern Christians. Early Catholic church architecture in China was Iberian and strongly influenced by Islamic, rather than Roman, forms. Indeed, there were and are many varieties of "Western" Christianity. Perhaps the answer lies in the defensiveness and somewhat desperate clinging to orthodoxy, as they perceive it, of persecuted and "underground" Catholics described so vividly by Jean-Paul Wiest in his contribution. Or is it a proud display of an assumed modernity?

I hope I am not showing my bias in beginning with the one contribution on the Jesuits of the pre-modern period, Audrey Seah's study of the 1670 Chinese Catholic Missal (Chapter Three). A scholarly examination of Ludovico Buglio's Chinese translations of the liturgical books, and even more his thirty volume translation of Aquinas' *Summa theologiae* is long overdue, and this is a good beginning. There are a few problems over dates and identifications—surely the romanization for St. Sylvester, clumsy though it be, is purely phonetic—and I disagree with the translation of a key phrase in the offertory as an overt reference to the Rites Controversy: "rather than to relatives." I would read it inclusively not exclusively as a direct translation of the Latin *suisque omnibus*, "as well as for all our families and friends" (111): it is in classical Chinese not *baihua*. Furthermore, 1670 was a time of truce in the Rites Controversy after Rome's gnomic judgment in 1669, that both contradictory decrees on Chinese Rites still held "according to the questions, circumstances and doubts raised." I am looking forward to more from this author on this topic.

Another study of translation as “indigenization” is Christie Chui-Shun Chow’s chapter on the Chinese translation of Ellen White’s writings and its role in Chinese Adventism. This concentrates on the role of the translators in preserving denominational coherence under governmental pressure, but has nothing to say about the translations themselves, their language, and terminology wherein lie the important questions of indigenization.

Many of the contributors, appropriately, focus on the lives of Christians rather than an abstract doctrinal and organizational Christianity insofar as these lives can be reconstructed from missionary reports, including the much-neglected visual records (Chapter Two), interviews with contemporary Christians (Chapter Nine), and local records (Chapter Ten). It is the Chinese voices which have, with some notable exceptions, been missing from this history. The personal papers of missionaries such as Leonard Amrhein, C.P., discussed by Robert Carbonneau and Charles McCarthy, S.J., by Amanda Clark well illustrate the “conversion of missionaries” to Chinese attitudes. The failure of missiological schemes, however well intentioned, is brilliantly demonstrated in Lydia Gerber’s study of the quiet subversion of Richard Wilhelm’s doctrinaire program for his Weimar mission schools by female teachers and girl students (Chapter Five).

Two chapters deal with the political ambience of modern Chinese Christianity: Joseph Tse-hei Lee’s study of the anti-Christian student movement in Hantou in 1925, and Anthony Clark’s study of French missionary policy. Both subjects have been well rehearsed, although the latter mostly in French rather than English publications. Both too make interesting, if not provocative, observations. For example, Lee’s comments on the “sacramental” aspects of funerals of revolutionary martyrs and Anthony Clark’s analysis of the Jesuit Bishop Jin Luxian’s self-promotion, which does not match my own experience of meeting him on several occasions. Clark fails, moreover, to note that his exemplars Vincent Lebbe and Lu Zhengxiang had Belgian rather than French connections, Lebbe being born in Ghent of a Flemish father and Lu dying as the abbot of a Belgian monastery. It is worth noting that the Belgian missionaries to China from the early Jesuits such as Philippe Couplet, Ferdinand Verbiest, Antoine Thomas, and François Noël, to the Vincentian Vincent Lebbe and the Scheut Fathers seem to have had less problems with cultural adaptation than their French confreres.

This is a collection that raises questions rather than prescribing answers to some urgent problems in interpreting China’s Christianity, and is all the more valuable for that.

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DOI:10.1163/22141332-00503007-04