cause he had proposed and pushed forward. The present book has been an interesting read and worthy salute to the contribution of Francisco Ros. A few pages on the mission experiments in Goa and other parts of India by Jesuits might have helped the reader to see the various experiments being conducted in differing circumstances as one common enterprise, supported finally by the order as a whole.

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Alan Richard Sweeten

China's Old Churches: The History, Architecture, and Legacy of Catholic Sacred Structures in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei Province. Studies in the History of Christianity in East Asia, 2. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. xix + 419. Hb, €138.00 / \$166.00.

When the news of the fire that consumed the roof of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris on April 15, 2019, broke, France and the world reacted with an overwhelming outpouring of grief. It is clear that the old churches like this one was more than a religious structure; they are the keys to understanding history, architecture, and memory of a place and its people. These three major themes are the broadly defined goals of the study by the historian Alan Richard Sweeten, *China's Old Churches: The History, Architecture, and Legacy of Catholic Sacred Structures in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei Province*.

As suggested by the title, the study is a survey of churches from these sites in northern China. Like an enthusiastic tour guide, Sweeten takes his readers on a circuitous journey to visit all the large and small churches in this part of China, meticulously recounting the histories of each. After an overview of early Catholic history in China in Chapter 2, he begins the tour with the four major churches found in the capital Beijing in Chapter 3. Originally founded by the Society of Jesus in the seventeenth to eighteenth century, these were the oldest and largest Catholic structures in China and have borne witness to some of the most significant events in modern Chinese history through their subsequent building, rebuilding, and relocation. Smaller churches in Beijing and the city's immediate vicinity are explored in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 and 6, he moves onto Tianjin and its vicinity. Here, the timeline shifts to the nineteenth century, where the churches were built by Catholic missionaries Vincentians (Congregation of the Mission) under the protection of the French, who have

displaced the earlier Jesuit missionaries in 1785 after that order was dissolved by the pope. As the treaty port closest to the capital, Tianjin was forcibly opened under treaties signed by a weakened and defeated Qing government with foreign imperial powers after the First Opium War in 1844, and by the late 1860s missionaries flooded the city (5–7). In Chapters 6 and 7, the author takes the reader to some of the more remote churches found in rural Hebei province and pieces together what little he could find on these sacred structures in small communities. In the narrative associated with each church the same pattern emerges, swept by the inescapable current of Chinese modern history: the humble construction that marked the beginning of the building would quickly suffered damage or complete destruction by dramatic persecutions from historical movements that consumed the country such as the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1901) and later Cultural Revolution (1966–76), which would be followed by periods of gradual rebuilding and revival.

The author offers several reasons to limit the geographic scope of the study. Though transformed and reconstructed, many of the “older churches,” defined by the author as before the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, in this area are still standing. This narrow focus also means that the author could concentrate on the archival materials of a single Catholic order and the area they had administered until their expulsion in 1950. Finally, this strategy offers “significant historical insights into the spread and state of one religion” and exemplifies “Christianity’s effort to establish itself and the Chinese reaction to this endeavor” (3).

The strength of the author’s scholarship is his careful and unrelenting pursuit of materials related to the history of the churches from archives around the world to site visits. The latter is made evident in the photograph on the dedication page, which shows the author and his grandson standing proudly in front of the Sacred Heart Cathedral in the southern city of Guangzhou. Erected in 1888, the church was built on the former residence of the viceroy of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces, which was destroyed by the British after they held the viceroy captive. Another French Catholic mission, Society of Foreign Missions of Paris obtained the land and built the Gothic-style cathedral as a visibly permanent sign of foreign political and religious domination over the Qing landscape. The history of Guangzhou’s Sacred Heart Cathedral is a reminder that the narrative pattern described by the author is generally applicable in northern China, but it is not universal. As cited by the author (18–19), Pierre Nora’s places of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) did not begin when the churches were erected; for the local community they existed long before the arrival of the missionaries. In another word, the geographic and sectarian restrictions imposed by the author in fact creates a myopic vision for the examination of

these places and people, despite the author's admirable attempt for a comprehensive historical overview that extends to the present-day. The significance of these churches is further diminished without considering any contextual comparisons to other Catholic churches in China or in European colonies in Asia.

Throughout the book, Sweeten enriches his narrative by evoking stories and anecdotes of individual missionaries and Chinese Christians, but they are retold without much commentary or deeper analysis; in another word, the readers are expected to accept them as factual in the same way they were presented in the Catholic publications found in the archives. Despite the author's consultation of local sources, Chinese voices—both Catholic and non-Catholic—are largely muted in these pages.

That is to say that this is a book on Catholic history in China from the perspective of the Catholic missionaries. For readers seeking a book on architectural history they would be disappointed. In fact, the author seems to relish in reproducing accounting numbers pertaining to the “old churches” rather than any significant discussion on their styles. As an art historian, I am partial to the visual appeal of the churches. But as the Notre Dame of Paris and the Sacred Heart Cathedral in Guangzhou would testify, style matters. The neo-Gothic style of the “old churches” overtly manifested their otherness to local communities, often in direct conflict with native traditions and practices such as *feng-shui*. There were attempts, as recorded in the handbook on the construction of missionary churches in China, *Le missionnaire constructeur, conseils-plans* (1935) to make Catholic architectures more palatable to Chinese audience. This is part of the larger call for nativization under Archbishop Celso Costantini (1876–1958). In nineteenth-century France, the Gothic style was revived by the Catholic Church to visibly bolster a nationalistic rhetoric and to combat the increasingly secularizing French society. The neo-Gothic style, according to the historian Anthony E. Clark writing on the same buildings in *China Gothic: The Bishop of Beijing and His Cathedral* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), was an integral part of the Franco-centric civilizing mission (*mission civilisatrice*) embarked by the Vincentians. Nonetheless, with many of the “old churches” and Catholic communities under a new wave of regulations and restrictions from the current regime in China, the value of Sweeten's historical survey takes on an increasing sense of timely urgency.

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