

The volume is of particular interest to the scholar of Burmese history, as it covers the period of the first Anglo–Burmese War (1824–26). The Burmese had for centuries reclaimed suzerainty over Manipur, and since the second half of the eighteenth century, especially since the time of king Bodawpaya (1782–1819), Manipur seems to have accepted this status as a tributary state. However, before the hostilities broke out, the English entered into a treaty with the king of Manipur to make sure that they would not be attacked in the rear of the deployment area against the Burmese. The chronicle does not mention this treaty with the English; what it does record instead are the various attempts by Burmese officials and envoys to restore the former relationship, both openly and clandestinely, during the years immediately after the war. However, by then a British resident had been appointed to the Manipuri court, who thwarted any of these advances by the Burmese. Here, the chronicle offers a valuable third-party account for this precarious relationship phase of Anglo–British relations.

Tragically, the author passed away recently, having just fully completed her editorial work. The third volume, which is expected to be published in the near future, will thus be her legacy to Asian studies. Already now it can be stated that this edition of the Manipur chronicles is a valuable addition to the still small body of edited and translated chronicles (and other historical sources) from Asia.

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Growth and decline: Essays on Philippine church history

By JOHN N. SCHUMACHER, S.J.

Manila: Ateneo de Manila Press, 2009. Pp. 291. Abbreviations, References, Index.
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The book traces the history of the Catholic Church in the Philippines from the sixteenth up to the twentieth century as it weaves through the conflicts and challenges besetting the clergy – internally and externally – with the religious–cultural evolution of the Filipino laity as a backdrop.

The meticulous historian and Jesuit, John Schumacher, succeeds in clarifying in his two-decade work how the Catholic Church, founded on the sweat and blood of Spanish friars, has been at loggerheads with the *conquistadores* whether to colonise the Philippines with the sword or the cross that actually resulted in both.

His book has brought to light the growing nationalism of the Filipino priests with direct proportion to the growing influence of Catholicism to the ordinary churchgoers and eventually to those who can hear the tolling of the bells from afar and outside of the *reducción*.

Schumacher's passion and commitment in digging and unearthing historical bases are beyond question. He takes the readers by the hand as he expounds how the Catholic orders waded through various governor-generals' political stance, with incidents of violence and suspected murder, to make Catholicism a 'liberating force

rather than an instrument for subjection to Spanish rule' (p. viii). He gives a human face to his thesis.

One proof of this sublime evangelisation was the use of the native languages in celebrating church masses, quite differently from South America where a royal decree ordered the use of the Spanish language in 1555. He explains, however, that the Spanish language remained to be the exclusive use of the religious orders; use of the Tagalog language was forbidden in convents, religious schools and *beatas*.

The historian priest also exposes the exploitation and thievery of Spanish officials and *encomenderos* as they implemented forced labour and exacted tributes beyond the requirement of Spain's law. Representing the Filipino elite, the *principalia* had not only been blind to the injustices committed against the *Indios* but even aided the Spanish officials in maintaining the status quo.

Trying to rise from these visible flaws, however, the Catholic hierarchy obtained a decree from King Philip II to return the unjust tributes to the pagans; punish Governor Francisco de Sande for waging an 'unjust war' (p. 8) against a Muslim sultan; and also found Governor Diego Ronquillo guilty for not punishing the erring *alcaldes* and government officials.

Slowly from 1700 up to 1768, Schumacher sees the Philippine Church in its 'Golden Age' (p. 23), extending its evangelisation to far-flung areas of the country as it called on the *remontados*, *infielos*, *cimarrones* and *monteses* to return to lowlands and church centres, be baptised and memorise the *Doctrina Christiana*. He admits, however, that Spanish priests were horrified to discover that people remained practising paganism secretly.

Women of Spanish blood and later a Chinese *mestiza* spearheaded the *beaterio* movement with the help of educated *Indias*. While the women were slowly inching their way through Catholic religiosity, the racial divide between Spanish and the Filipino was likewise dissolving, leading to the rise of the Filipino clergy.

Strong opposition to the entry of native priests to the religious orders failed not only because the Crown and the Holy See would want 'to curb the independence of the religious orders' (p. 55) but also because Filipino priests like Father Jose Burgos had started defending the rights of the Filipino clergy.

Schumacher likewise investigates thoroughly – by making use of the primary sources – the authenticity of the Burgos manifesto (p. 125) and follows the paper trail to find out who was its genuine author. He includes in this book the Spanish version with the English translation on its opposite pages for the readers to see.

Describing the period roughly from 1770 up to 1830 as the 'decline of the Church' (p. 111), the author narrates how the native population, particularly in the Visayan region, slid back to their pagan, animistic beliefs or, at best, 'syncretic folk Catholicism' (p. 116) when the religious orders, particularly the Jesuits, were recalled and expelled from the Spanish dominion. From where he stands, Schumacher sees the Filipino laity as mere recipients and benefactors of the Catholic faith.

Also for the author, anyone who was not as educated as Jose Rizal or Emilio Jacinto was bound to fail; this happened to Andres Bonifacio who was not ready to lead the Filipino people toward independence because he had 'defects in his personality and education' (p. 221). This claim has been the subject of ongoing debate for years.

Schumacher succeeds in describing the Filipino priest as ‘Hispanized clergy in an Americanized country’ (p. 247) in the twentieth century, posing to the Filipino diocesan clergy the challenge as to the direction where they are heading now.

Schumacher establishes his niche in this book that is a must-read for those interested in Church history and Philippine society.

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Evolution of a revolution: Forty years of the Singapore constitution

Edited by LI-ANN THIO and KEVIN Y.L. TAN

London and New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2009. Pp. xxxi, 369. List of cited cases, Table of statutes, Index.

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I must confess that I opened this book with some trepidation. As a historian-cum-political scientist who has sometimes been referred to as a sociologist, I have a fairly broad disciplinary base, but none of these led me to expect that I would enjoy reading a book on constitutional history. Suffice to say that I was wrong.

This must be one of the most readable and informative books on constitutional history ever written. It tells the linear story of the foundation of the Singapore constitution in the aftermath of Singapore’s brief sojourn in Malaysia, and the hundreds of constitutional changes that followed. It also finds space and context for side trips and reflections from diverse perspectives. And it does it all so well.

In this project the two editors are joined by five Singapore-based co-contributors – Tan Seow How, Arun K. Thiruvengadam, Jaclyn Ling-Chien Neo, Yvonne C. L. Lee and Michael Hor – to produce a remarkable piece of scholarship.

Insofar as the book has a theme and for an edited collection the theme is remarkably strong and consistent — it is about the utter subordination of the Singapore constitution to the Singapore parliament. The constitution was born as the bastard child of the Malaysian constitution and the Singapore parliament, resulting in what former Chief Minister David Marshall once called ‘the untidiest and most confusing constitution that any country has started life with’ (p. 8). In fact the Singapore parliament existed before the Singapore constitution and brought it into being, determining the power relationship between the two in much the same way that the pre-existence of the Indonesian army before the Indonesian government affected Indonesia’s political evolution for two generations.

The constitution can be changed effectively at the whim of the executive through a submissive parliament, and it is changed so routinely that it is a moot point to say that it plays the role of the constitution. In fact the authors cite several instances of the courts – especially former Chief Justice Yong Pung Howe – bringing down judgments that overrode the constitution in favour of individual pieces of legislation, thus reversing the normal order (pp. 177–9, 339). They go further and cite instances