

## SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

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*Prepared by Purple Kwong*

- Chi, Hsin: *Teng Hsiao-Ping: A Political Biography*. [Hong Kong: Cosmos Books, 1978. iv+274 pp. ISBN not available.]

This four-part volume gives a detailed biography of Teng Hsiao-Ping, perhaps China's most controversial contemporary politician. It is the first work written in English on Teng, and it covers his career up to his fall during the Cultural Revolution.

- Cronin, Vincent: *The Wise Man from the West: Matteo Ricci and His Mission to China*. [London: Fount Paperbacks, 1984. 288 pp. ISBN 0-00-626749-1.]

Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit arrived in China over four centuries ago. He was the first Westerner to penetrate into China, and the first foreign missionary to bring the Christian message to the Chinese since John of Montecorvino in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Ricci was a learned scholar and scientist who won the favor of the emperor. Although Ricci did not encounter any Christians when he arrived in China, he left a rich legacy of converts when he died in 1610. Vincent Cronin writes an exciting story of a remarkable priest and distinguished scholar, who absorbed this whole new world and culture, and brought his knowledge back to the West in an exchange of culture seldom seen before or after.

- Gelder, Stuart and Roma Gelder: *Memories for a Chinese Granddaughter*. [London: Hutchinson & Co. (Publisher), 1967. 286 pp. ISBN not available.]

Stuart Gelder was a senior foreign correspondent during China's war for liberation. He got to know many of China's leading figures and rulers during his many travels in China. Many of his acquaintances later became China's leaders. In 1962, the government permitted Gelder and his wife Roma to travel freely throughout Tibet. In 1966 they returned to China, where they felt the rumblings of Mao's approaching Cultural Revolution. Much of what they saw and heard filled them with apprehension and foreboding. Their story is not a condemnation or an in-depth analysis of this turbulent period in Chinese history; it is rather a factual account of what they personally experienced, and what they heard from the people they met. The Gelders wrote this book for Siu Kwan Ann, who was six years old at the time of the writing. It was a gift for her to read when she was older. Ann, a Chinese girl, was adopted by Stuart Gelder's oldest daughter, Ann, and her husband David.

- Martinson, Barry: *Celestial Dragon: A Life and Selected Writings of Fr. Francis Rouleau*. [Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 1998. xxiii+451 pp. ISBN 957-9185-53-0.]

*Celestial Dragon* is the name the Chinese gave to their beloved Jesuit priest, and missionary, Father Francis Rouleau, S.J. This book gives a picture of an extraordinary man as revealed through his letters, and personal devotional writings. Father Rouleau, seen through the eyes and testimony of those who loved him, was not only a great missionary; he was also a very special counselor, a beloved teacher, a noted historian and a dedicated spiritual master. He had a deep love for China and a deep affection for the Society of Jesus. Father Rouleau died in 1984.

- Phathanothai, Sirin: *The Dragon's Pearl: Growing up among China's Elite*. [London: Pocket Books, 1995. 336 pp. ISBN 0-671-71215-2.]

Sirin Phathanothai was only eight when she and her brother were sent from Thailand to China where they became wards of Premier Zhou Enlai. This was an arrangement between two prominent political families, one in Thailand, and the other in China. The charmed life of the two young people was badly compromised with the Cultural Revolution. Sirin's brother was thrown out of China and Sirin herself, unlike many of her friends, managed to survive by joining the People's Liberation Army and working deep in the countryside. Following the Revolution she even managed to play an important role in China's opening to the West. The book, with its fascinating story, reveals the strong yet gentle character of this intelligent young woman suddenly caught in the vicissitudes of a chaotic period in Communist China's history.

- Witek, John W., S.J. (ed.): *Monumenta Serica Monograph Series XXX: Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688): Jesuit Missionary, Scientist, Engineer and Diplomat*. Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, Leuven: Ferdinand Verbiest Foundation, and Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1994. 627 pp. ISSN 0179-261X, ISBN 3-8050-0328-5.]

In 1988, the Catholic University of Louvain held an international conference to celebrate and commemorate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688). The papers presented for this conference, by more than 25 noted Chinese scholars, form the substance of this book. The papers address various aspects of the life and works of this famous Jesuit, and include his work as a scientist, an engineer, a diplomat and a missionary. The book concludes with papers dealing with the impact of Verbiest's work in China and in Europe.