

CORRESPONDENCE

The *American Journal of International Law* welcomes short communications from its readers. It reserves the right to determine which letters shall be published and to edit any letters printed.

TO THE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF:

January 2, 1981

I read with interest the article by Hurst Hannum and Richard B. Lillich entitled *The Concept of Autonomy in International Law* (74 AJIL 858). Granting that the term "autonomy" is not one "that has a generally accepted definition in international law" (p. 858), the authors nevertheless note that it "is very much in vogue today" (*ibid.*), and thus "ripe for review" (p. 859). Autonomy for the inhabitants of the West Bank, for example, may well be the linchpin of the Camp David framework for bringing peace to the Middle East.

To gather data for their article, the authors made 22 case studies of autonomous territories, including such idiocratic and/or obscure ones as the International Settlement of Shanghai, Tokelau, and the Ottoman millets, as well as the stillborn proposal for a "Free Territory of Trieste." Although recognizing that no two such lists will ever be identical, given the authors' stated objective of importance and variety, this reader would like to suggest a fascinating additional example, which might serve as a partial model for the holy places in Jerusalem: Mt. Athos.

A small, isolated peninsula in northeastern Greece, the 1000-year-old autonomy of this virtually independent monastic state was established in Byzantine times and maintained under the Ottomans. It thus antedates the very creation of the modern state system. Since 1927, Mt. Athos has been recognized as a theocratic republic under ultimate Greek suzerainty, and is today a self-governing community of some 20 Orthodox monasteries. The present observer paid a visit to this almost timeless land in early 1979, and can readily testify to its continuing vigor and functionality.

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CORRECTION

The opening sentence of *The Belgrade Minimal Rules of Procedure for International Human Rights Fact-finding Missions*, which appeared on page 163 of the January 1981 issue of the *Journal*, should have read in pertinent part as follows: "[T]he 59th Conference of the International Law Association . . . approved by consensus a set of minimal procedures to protect the integrity of human rights fact-finding by intergovernmental organizations."