

branches, as they develop beyond its “Composite Trunk” (the *Zhuangzi* and other early texts in Littlejohn’s terminology). There is no doctrinal core that would lead to a natural self-pruning of different schools and practices. They spread out, in the author’s analogy, like the entwining branches of a kudzu plant.¹

While it is beyond the province of this review to discuss the treatment of all of the schools listed here, the influence of Daoism might also be seen in directions, which the author does not explore. These might include Chinese martial arts, especially Tai Chi Chuan, or the poetry of Han Shan, whose hermetic life style might be as reflective of Daoist models as those of Buddhism.

But an introduction has understandable limitations, and this work transcends any legitimate expectations in so many ways. The author is very conversant with other works, and he establishes his own niche with a book that is highly satisfying to a student of The Way. ■

NOTE

1. I am not sure that the analogy is altogether felicitous. While the kudzu plant does branch out voraciously, in the American South it is viewed as biologically malevolent in its invasive and pervasive nature!

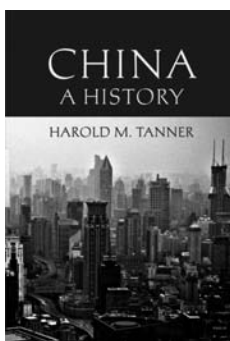
HAL W. FRENCH is retired and teaches part time in the University of South Carolina’s Department of Religious Studies, where he has been since 1972. He has received a number of teaching and service awards, and he has been active in study-abroad courses and service projects. His most recent book, *Zen and the Art of Anything*, has just been published in a third edition.

CHINA *A History*

BY HAROLD M. TANNER

HACKETT PUBLISHING COMPANY, 2009
610 PAGES ISBN 978-0872209152, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by David Kenley



Since the conclusion of the Beijing Olympics, China has been in the international spotlight, and many students across the US now seem to be clamoring for access to Chinese language and history courses. Seeking to capitalize on this excitement, Harold M. Tanner has published a new, cogently written textbook entitled quite simply, *China: A History*.

Encompassing the full breadth of China’s history, from its mythical origins to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, both teachers and students will welcome this ambitious text. It will join the thin ranks of texts that attempt to cover 5,000 years of Chinese history (including Fairbank and Goldman, *China: A New History*; Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*; Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*; and another similarly-titled, recent

entry, Keay, *China: A History*). Instructors who are looking for a single text for both pre-modern and modern China will find this to be an appealing option. Though printed entirely in black and white, it contains numerous attractive and easy-to-read charts, graphs, and illustrations. It is also modestly priced relative to its competitors.

The text opens with a recounting of the Beijing Olympics. “For Chinese audiences,” Tanner writes, “the opening ceremony and the games themselves symbolized a recovery of lost glory.” On the other hand, Tanner points out, “most American spectators approached the Beijing Olympics with a very different idea of China’s history. The American media portrayed the games as China’s ‘coming out party.’” Tanner rejects both of these meta-narratives.

The story of China,” he claims, “goes beyond the simple but misleading narratives of glory to downfall to redemption or of isolation to opening . . . (and includes) heroes and villains . . . women and men, tragedy and comedy, high culture and coarse humor, exquisite art and terrible suffering, feast and famine, extremes of wealth and poverty, philosophies of peace and practices of war . . .

In short, this is an extremely ambitious 600-page text.

Tanner admirably retells many familiar aspects of “the story of China,” while incorporating recent scholarship. His sources are varied and impressive. For instance, his use of recent environmental histories sheds interesting light on the fall of the Eastern Han, making connections and conclusions unavailable in earlier Chinese history textbooks. Not only does Tanner use very current publications, but he also relies on conference presentations and online sources. Furthermore, Tanner should be commended for his balanced chronological coverage. Too frequently, texts of this type focus primarily on the modern period, while skimming over earlier eras. By contrast, Tanner’s date of demarcation is 1366 (the founding of the Ming Dynasty), with half of the text covering the preceding years and the other half covering subsequent years. The work is arranged chronologically, based on China’s political dynastic divisions.

The text consists of an introduction and four main sections, each characterized by a selected hexagram from the *Book of Changes*. These include the hexagrams symbolizing, “biting through,” “possession in great measure,” “abundance,” and “change.” Because of the book’s scope, Tanner must make choices regarding content coverage. Throughout all four sections, his analysis of political and military history is excellent. He helps clarify those politically confusing eras, such as the Warring States, the Eastern Han, and the Six Dynasties periods. His definition of China is broad, allowing him to provide considerable coverage to non-Chinese borderlands including Manchuria, Mongolia, and Xinjiang. This allows Tanner to highlight the cross-cultural interactions that have been so pervasive (and so overlooked) in Chinese history. Visual art, literature, and other aspects of cultural history also receive attention. For example, Tanner’s discussions of the famous calligraphers “Crazy Zhang” and “Drunken Monk” are both entertaining and enlightening. Because of his emphases, other topics receive less attention than perhaps they should. Tanner’s analysis of women in history focuses primarily on powerful women (Empress Wu, Cixi, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, for instance), while his coverage of typical women is far more scant. He also tends to gloss over those topics that are especially interesting to Western audiences, such as the examination system, foot binding, and the Rape of Nanjing. Perhaps Tanner does not want to emphasize the exotic, thereby

“Orientalizing” Chinese history. It would have been helpful, however, if he had clearly explained his guiding principles in selecting the topics he included. Similarly, while some of his hexagram descriptors are self-evident, Tanner could provide more information on why he chose them to represent a particular era in Chinese history.

An associate professor of Chinese history at the University of North Texas, Harold M. Tanner brings a wealth of experience to this topic. The author of *Strike Hard: Anti-Crime Campaigns and Chinese Criminal Justice, 1979–1985* (Cornell East Asia Series), Dr. Tanner is an expert on modern China’s legal, political, and military environment. He also has experience working with secondary school teachers through the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia. Not surprisingly, both high school and undergraduate college instructors will find much to admire in *China: A History*. Nevertheless, the text does not include many of the peripherals—primary documents, sidebars, and guiding questions—some teachers have come to expect. At a minimum, teachers should anticipate assigning additional primary documents to engage students, such as Ebrey’s *Chinese Civilization*, Cheng and Lestz’s *The Search for Modern China: A Documentary Collection*, or deBary’s *Sources of Chinese Tradition*.

China: A History is eminently readable, clearly organized, and balanced in its chronology. For those teaching both pre-modern and modern China, this will be a fine addition to assigned reading lists. ■

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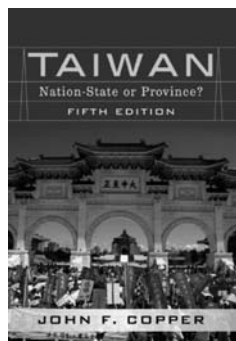
TAIWAN

Nation–State or Province?

BY JOHN F. COPPER

BOULDER, CO: WESTVIEW PRESS, 2008
304 PAGES, ISBN: 978-0813344225, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by Hans Stockton



John F. Copper’s *Taiwan: Nation–State or Province?* remains as insightful, instructive, and relevant in its fifth edition as it was in its first printing in 1990. While the question posed in the title continues to be prone to political “spin,” Copper presents an objective narrative that paints an accurate, rich, and multi-faceted view of Taiwan’s development that has largely been separate from that of mainland China for more than a century. This new edition includes events up to

about 2008, when a sea change in Taipei–Beijing relations began with the return of the Chinese Nationalist Party to the presidency of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

This book is appropriate for university and AP high school survey courses in world politics, East Asian history and politics, and world history, to name a few. A key strength of this work is Copper’s ability to present the complexities of Taiwan’s development in a straightforward manner that is appropriate for undergraduates and advanced high school students, while being attentive to the underlying twists and turns in the telling of history that also make for fruitful discussion at the graduate level.

Within each chapter, Copper establishes the pattern of historical events and personalities that have shaped the island’s modern history. He then allots generous space to illustrate how various perspectives on that history have developed over time, without leading the reader toward a prefabricated conclusion. Copper also provides helpful commentary about the intellectual quality and historical accuracy of various perspectives on the island’s national and cultural identity, sovereignty, and democratic development.

Taiwan’s history has been both a source and a consequence of the strains of European and Japanese colonialism, the Cold War in Asia, US–China relations since World War II, economic integration in the age of globalization, and the expansion of democracy in the twentieth century. As Taiwan’s historical narrative is bound to that of mainland China in many ways, some attention to the key junctures in the mainland’s evolution (such as the Ming–Qing transition, period of unequal treaties, Sino–Japanese War, the Revolution of 1911, and the Chinese Civil War to name a few) is necessary to provide better context. Copper helpfully highlights such junctures in his book.

Taiwan: Nation–State or Province? is composed of stand-alone chapters on Taiwan’s geography, history, politics, economics, and foreign/military policies, and these would be useful as unit readings in a course pack. However, Copper’s ability to carry key threads across each chapter encourages the full use of the text. Such threads attend to the island’s struggle to form a national identity, its place culturally and historically vis-à-vis the mainland and the West, and its place within a globalizing world. Copper does not simply recount a history, but helps the reader understand by whom and how that history has been sculpted over time, and to what ends. Finally, throughout the volume Copper remains attentive, not only to great powers and to political elites, but also to the role that Taiwan’s people have played in forging the Taiwan Miracle.

This book gives students as comprehensive an understanding of Taiwan’s development as one may derive from a single volume, and they will learn about important periods, junctures, and trends in the island’s contemporary history. Copper’s *Taiwan: Nation–State or Province?* enables students to gain a clear understanding of how the telling of Taiwan’s history has been shaped by the battle over political ideas and ideals. ■

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