

BOOK REVIEWS

China's Generation Y

Understanding the Future Leaders of the World's Next Superpower

BY MICHAEL STANAT

NEW JERSEY: HOMA AND SEKEY BOOKS, 2005

222 PAGES, ISBN 1931907250, HARDBACK

REVIEWED BY MARY CINGCADE

Youth under the age of twenty-five make up roughly 39 percent of China's population, yet sources on Chinese children are few and far between. Books like James Watson's *Golden Arches East*, Jun Jing's *Feeding China's Little Emperors*, and Vanessa Fong's *Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One Child Policy*, combined with articles on education, popular culture, and consumerism, have provided a valuable window on the lives of young Chinese. Michael Stanat's book, *China's Generation Y: Understanding the Future Leaders of the World's Next Superpower*, about the 220 million Chinese born in the 80s, aims to add a new perspective to the mix: that of an American Gen-Y teenager writing for a general audience. While some readers might find the young author's perspective intriguing, ultimately Mr. Stanat's book is not one I can recommend for use in the classroom.

At the time of publication, Michael Stanat was a seventeen-year-old high school student at the United Nations International School in New York. He received funding to conduct interviews in Shanghai in February 2004 from SIS International Research, a global marketing company whose founder and president is Ruth Stanat, the author's mother. The author conducted four focus groups of eight Shanghai youth each, and did an additional fifteen individual interviews. In his book, Stanat draws on the interviews and summarizes findings of news sources to address the daily life, aspirations, and consumption habits of urban members of China's Generation Y. Stanat aptly points out the generation gap between urban Gen Yers and their parents, and notes the growing materialism of urban youth. However, the book fails to offer new insights into Generation Y and presents several problems. Among them are difficulties with research methodology, application of data, and citation of sources. I found myself wishing that Mr. Stanat had written instead a personal essay about his experience and profiled the teens he met; the profiles would have provided welcome anecdotal evidence of trends observed in Generation Y.

Certainly, Stanat's initiative in producing this ambitious project earns him an A for effort. We can expect another book from him, according to an interview with New York's *Journal News*; the next will be on Generation Y in India. ■

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China's Political System

Modernization and Tradition

5th edition

BY JUNE TEUFEL DREYER

NEW YORK: LONGMAN PUBLISHING GROUP, 2006

368 PAGES, ISBN 0321355105, PAPERBACK

REVIEWED BY ART BARBEAU

We are indeed fortunate that, with the appearance of the fifth edition of *China's Political System*, June Dreyer brings her long-term examination forward to 2005. Her broad perspective on politics examines its connections with just about every aspect of Chinese culture from industrialization to the arts.

While I would not recommend *China's Political System* for any but the most advanced secondary classes with sophisticated students, it is more than adequate for even an introductory course on China at the undergraduate level. While superior to those works on "politics" that are collections of documents accompanied by brief editorial comments, Dreyer's treatment of history, focusing as it does on politics, would need to be supplemented by other sources.

Dreyer is careful to point out that, in dealing with a society not yet completely open, one must often speculate or make assumptions. When she does so, she is willing to admit it and give us her best opinion. Perhaps her best chapters are those on politics itself and the many changes that have taken place since the establishment of the PRC in 1949. Outstanding, too, are those chapters dealing with the political implications for education, the economy, and quality of life issues.

That is not to say there is no room for improvement. As a "social scientist," Dreyer seems far too concerned with finding the most appropriate paradigm to explain modern China. So many of these are introduced in the first chapter that average students may be turned off before getting to the real substance of her work. She returns to these occasionally and in the conclusion. Yet, she is forced to admit that while each paradigm seems to explain some features, none is entirely satisfactory.

Additionally, I feel that more is needed on the relationship of politics to gender and the position of women in China. Sometimes, too, Dreyer is too cautious in her assessments. To introduce the Red Guard by saying that they "generally made a nuisance of themselves" would seem grossly inadequate. Still, such minor complaints should not detract from an otherwise important work. ■

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