

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

teach students to become competent readers by assigning topical glossary essays and proverb-like aphorisms that include hints on how to detect the text's polemics, such as what *ren* really means ("code word for Confucianism"). As other authors do, LaFargue points out the text's political dimensions.

Some of these themes are also found in Eva Wong's "The *Daode Jing* in Practice" and Gary D. DeAngelis' "Mysticism in the *Daode Jing*." In the latter essay, DeAngelis offers a standard definition of mysticism as direct experience of union that is often perceived as "transcendent, the sacred, the holy, the divine" (64). Transcendence is taken issue by David L. Hall's "The *Daode Jing* and Comparative Philosophy" (49). Hall argues against this vertical dimension by asserting it's been responsible for thinking about *dao* in metaphysical terms. Hall counterposes this move with the *wu* forms: *wuwei* (nonassertive action), *wuzhi* (knowing without principles), and *wuyu* (objectless desire). For DeAngelis, teaching the *Daode Jing* as a mystical text provides him the opportunity to discuss epistemological issues. His essay is valuable because of its teaching focus. Another beneficial essay is Eva Wong's "The *Daode Jing* in Practice," which is a more practical way of reaching the experience DeAngelis and others outline. Wong reminds readers that Daoist texts are not merely intellectual exercises but are guidelines for practice (78). Engaging in practice and accepting Daoism as a practice is "to learn to accept the natural course of things," and the value of a text lies in its use (88).

All authors use this timeless text in their own ways and provide a number of ways to walk the way.

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CHINA'S RISE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

EDITED BY BRANTLEY WOMACK

LANHAM: ROWMAN AND LITTLEFIELD, 2010

286 PAGES, 978-0-7425-6722-1, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by Richard L. Wilson

Although *China's Rise in Historical Perspective*, edited by Brantley Womack, may be too advanced for secondary schools or lower-level undergraduate classes, it is an important book meriting serious attention from teachers at all levels for deepening their understanding of how China has come to challenge the economic primacy of the United States in such a short time. Discussion of China's rise has been either nonhistori-

cal or based on such a short historical timeframe that a serious examination of the historical roots of China's recent rise is in order.

This book has a rare—one is tempted to say unique—origin and format. The University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs sponsored a set of five forums in the spring of 2009. The authors of the various chapters were invited to present papers that were discussed at each conference. Based on comments at the forums, the final chapters were prepared for publication. The success of this technique is evident in the quality of the chapters in the book.

Each forum paired a historian with a contemporary China expert discussing an important topic. The synergy created by the use of the historian and nonhistorian was another technique that improved the analysis. The first conference paired historian Joseph W. Esherick with contemporary observer Lowell Dittmer in what they choose to call an examination of the "dilemmas of identity for the Chinese (an examination that can only fully be understood when read with the concluding essay by Qin Yaqing).

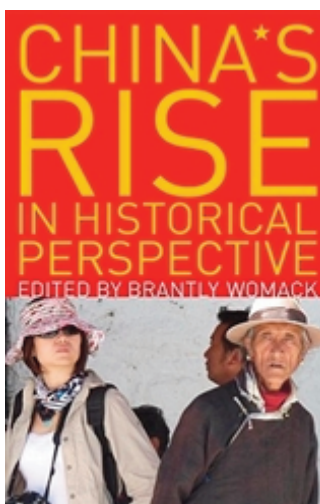
Evelyn S. Rawski provided the more distant historical information on China's security issues and strategy, while Michael D.

Swaine provided an account of these issues in the post-Cold War period. Dwight H. Perkins offered a global perspective on China's pre-reform economy, and then Barry Naughton addressed the dynamics of China's current reform-era economy. Environmental issues were addressed under the heading of "Ecological and Resource Interaction." Mark Elvin looked at the history of the environmental impasse of the latter days of the Imperial period, while Erica S.

Downs discussed contemporary issues in China's current energy rise. Political and governmental issues were discussed under the heading of "Political Creativity and Political Development." R. Keith Schoppa offered the more historical view, and Joseph Fewsmith provided the contemporary analysis. Each of these paired essays deserves greater attention to give each full credit, but space does not permit a more detailed examination. The five paired essays culminate in a superb essay by Qin Yaqing.

Collectively, these eleven essays focus research and scholarship on at least one area that needs additional attention. Qin Yaqing does not mention Confucianism except in a few references that directly or indirectly suggest it was abandoned a century ago. He examines China's political psychology without directly mentioning that the current Chinese system is still Confucian at its core, albeit with the transformations that occurred in the belief system between the fifth century BCE and the present.

Even though Qin Yaqing barely mentions Confucius, evolved Confucian-centered Chinese traditional thinking abounds in his



essay. More than once, he refers to China's 5,000-year, continuous cultural history, but he can only refer to 5,000-year, continuous cultural history if he makes Confucian assumptions. Confucius said the ideas he espoused were not really his own but were distilled from China's ancient past. This past was already ancient when Confucius wrote about it 2,500 years ago.

Qin Yaqing cites Hu Jintao's proposal at the 2005 UN Summit to "Strive to build a harmonious world with long peace and common prosperity." This sounds quaint to Western ears, but it is fully understandable as a twenty-first century restatement of Confucian relationships applied internationally. Qin Yaqing correctly asserts that China does not intend to recreate the old "tribute" system in which Chinese "vassals" gave gifts to the Chinese emperor, and he gave gifts of greater value in return. The "tribute" system of international trade—such as it was—is clearly dated, but it is possible that some current Chinese practices could be traced to it. China has undervalued its currency, thereby giving their trading partners more in value than they receive in return. This could be justified as stimulating economic activity for everyone (using the Keynesian logic that justified the US Marshall Plan for postwar Europe). Still, is it possible that, subconsciously, the Chinese find this policy agreeable because it resembles a Chinese idea of a tribute system?

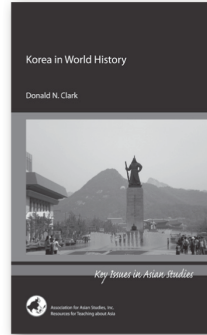
For the past six decades, Beijing's Tiananmen Square has been a shrine to the icons of Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong thought. Those who purveyed this worldview were unapologetically anti-Confucian. Yet a careful examination of the Maoist period revealed a great deal of Confucianism. This reviewer must be included among those who struggled to find much Karl Marx in Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong thought, but never had any trouble finding evidence of Confucius. It is therefore refreshingly honest that the government of the People's Republic has erected a statue of Confucius in Tiananmen Square alongside his Maoist critics.

That the new statue is of Confucius, and not of a Westerner such as Milton Friedman, may tell us something. Perhaps future Chinese studies should move in the direction of considering whether evolved, Confucian-centered Chinese traditional thought is also a factor in China's rise to greatness. Chinese traditional thought has always recognized the importance, if not the inevitability, of dynastic cycles. Perhaps it would be more accurate to talk about evolved, Confucian-centered Chinese traditional thought as a cause of China's return to greatness.

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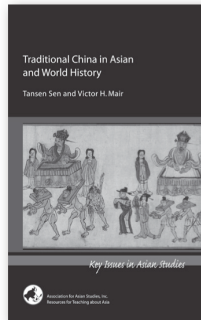
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