

“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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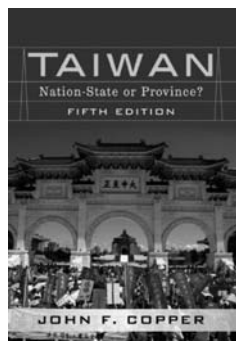
TAIWAN

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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