

Through Chinese Eyes Tradition, Revolution, and Transformation, 3rd Edition

BY EDWARD VERNOFF AND PETER J. SEYBOLT
NEW YORK: THE APEX PRESS, 2007
381 PAGES, ISBN: 978-0-938960-51-5, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by Charles Hayford

The first edition of this book, Peter Seybolt's *Through Chinese Eyes* (Praeger, 1974; 2 vols) was conceived just after Nixon went to Peking. This was the period of bipolar disorder in American popular attitudes toward China. Emotions swung from Cold War opposition to romantic obsession, from paranoia to pandas. Seybolt realized that neither extreme was fair or sufficient, and crafted a selection of readings to show both the idealism, which he saw in Mao's model, and the reality that was implemented by human beings. In accordance with the plan of Leon E. Clark, who originated the "Eyes" series, almost all of the pieces were written by Chinese authors, and the greatest number were originally published in the People's Republic. The aim was to present easily comprehensible Chinese per-

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sonal and official viewpoints, not monographic analysis of specialized topics (although Seybolt as a Harvard PhD knew this scholarly literature). The original book went through several revisions and helped many students (and I am sure a good number of adults) to get a "feel" for how people in China wrote about their history and experience.

When Seybolt followed the footsteps of Nixon (as well as those of Marco Polo and Pearl Buck), he found a China that had been denied to Americans. His resulting book, *Throwing the Emperor from His Horse: Portrait of a Village Leader in China, 1923–1995* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996) is still an insightful and readable political biography of a local leader. Seybolt also published some of the earliest articles, debunking the heroic view of Mao's revolution before 1949.

I am happy to report that the new edition of *Through Chinese Eyes*, now with Edward Vernoff as co-editor, preserves the breadth and tone of the original, is nicely illustrated, and sells at a very reasonable price. The 2007 edition is about twice the size of the 1974 book. Most of the new material is devoted to the period of "opening and reform" since the 1980s. Most pieces from earlier editions are retained. This is welcome news to those who appreciated the first edition.

The organization is clear. There are six parts, each containing an introduction followed by documents, firsthand accounts, poems, or extracts from fiction. Part One, "Revolution: A Nation Stands Up," contains excerpts from Jack Belden's classic *China Shakes the World* that describe village revolution. Parts II and III ("The Seeds of Revo-

lution" and "The Confucian Tradition") contain selections from Confucian texts and descriptions that emphasize the restrictive and corrupt side, then very briefly describe defeats and disintegration from the Opium Wars to the May Fourth Movement. These set the stage for the heroic story of Mao's revolution in Part IV, "The Era of Mao Zedong." In this section, nearly one hundred pages of vivid and well chosen pieces form a mosaic of Mao's revolution from the 1927 report on peasant revolution in Hunan, down through the Cultural Revolution, to Mao's death in 1976. I suspect that most Chinese today would not put this great an emphasis on Mao in their self-presentation of China. Most teachers will want some further background reading as a supporting narrative, but it is hard to find a better selection of documents at this length.

"The Era of Reform" (Part V) introduces more criticism and controversy. The aim is not to present technical or multi-sided scholarship, but to represent important voices inside China, with an emphasis on official views. Although the successes of Deng Xiaoping's "opening and reform" are clearly presented, other sections include the "Tiananmen Crisis," "Crime and Corruption," "Environmental Issues," and "Human Rights." The final part, "China and the World," is the topic most difficult to present briefly. Sections from Qianlong's 1793 letter to George III and Teddy Roosevelt's views on China are followed by an insightful report on how contemporary villagers view foreigners, then bits on Nixon's 1972 visit, then documents on China's foreign policy.

In sum, secondary high school or survey-level college instructors will find the selections useful and the introductions helpful. The tone is that of critical sympathy, not advocacy, so there is plenty of room for additional readings. Teachers can ask students to contrast the picture of revolution in Parts I and IV with the problems reported in Part V—were the problems inevitable, given China's size and nature, or would they have been avoidable under different leadership? ■

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Through Japanese Eyes

4th Edition

BY RICHARD H. MINEAR
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Reviewed by Robert Fish

The new edition of *Through Japanese Eyes* offers source readings that present Japan through the eyes of a diverse set of Japanese people. Editor Richard Minear examines specific themes through (mostly) aptly selected short, and often contradictory, source readings, along with brief and pedagogically valuable introductions. The book successfully achieves the stated "dual goal" of "offering great readings about Japan that also stimulate thinking about the United States. (2) While the specific readings selected are always open to sub-