

international system. A key theme recurring throughout these chapters, and one which has tended to be overlooked in the popular literature on Sino-Japanese relations, is the “principled and pragmatic” (p. 85) approach adopted by both Chinese and Japanese governments in their dealings with one another since 1972. The author is also careful to stress the normality of the Sino-Japanese relationship, and the fact that “Chinese and Japanese were not especially emotional in their negotiations, despite emotional contexts” (ibid.). Chinese and Japanese foreign policy objectives were asymmetrical, but not incompatible in the period 1972–1989. Since 1989, however, China and Japan have come to share similar objectives, and this has brought them into increasing competition. This explains the increase in tension in the political and security spheres since the mid-1990s, and the tactics used by each side to achieve their objectives have tended to alternate between assertiveness and compromise.

The case studies presented in chapters nine to 12 develop some of the themes introduced in the earlier parts of the book and highlight areas in which the Chinese and Japanese governments are attempting to renegotiate the nature of their interaction. To focus on just two of these, the study of Prime Minister Koizumi’s contentious visits to the Yasukuni Shrine shows, for example, the way in which Beijing has managed to keep channels of communication open so as not to harm economic, political and security interests while still sending the message that China expects Japan to adopt what Chinese leaders often refer to as a “correct view of history.” The study of Japan’s reduction of its official development assistance (ODA) budget to China in the last few years shows the ability of both governments to adjust to changing circumstances, and in particular suggests that both sides have been adroit in avoiding the use of ODA reductions as a means of leverage (on the Japanese side) or criticism (on the Chinese side).

The concluding chapter of the book turns to the question of rivalry between China and Japan, and the author contends that although rivalry is emerging, it “is unlikely to be transformed into either friendship or enmity” if the status quo is maintained (p. 331). That said, the remainder of the chapter is given over to a discussion of the possible scenarios that could lead to one or other outcome, and the author argues that enmity would be the more reasonable forecast on the basis of a Taiwan crisis.

The book is rich in detail and provides a comprehensive overview of the key developments in the political, socio-economic and strategic aspects of the relationship since 1989. It provides some useful case studies of some of the more contentious issues, although these are perhaps lacking some concrete, systematic reference to the themes identified in the earlier part of the book. On the whole, this book deserves to be read widely and I would recommend it to anyone wishing to gain a deeper, more nuanced understanding of this important relationship.

CAROLINE ROSE

*The New Sinosphere: China in Africa*

Edited by LENI WILD AND DAVID MEPHAM

London: Institute for Public Policy Research, 2006

72 pp. £9.95.

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In their introduction to *The New Sinosphere: China in Africa*, Leni Wild and David Mepham point out that while 2005 was dubbed the year of Africa, the role of China was nowhere on the horizon. Nevertheless, by 2006, the issue of China and Africa

exploded full force into the mediated landscape of analysts occupied with development, environment, human rights, global trade and foreign policy. Though China has long been involved in Africa, observers began to take notice of facts such as the four-fold increase of China's trade with Africa between 2002 and 2006, and China's replacement of the UK as Africa's third most important trading partner. Hyperbole and fear have permeated many accounts.

Within this mix, this small book, mainly geared towards the policy community but useful to students and scholars, is a welcome read. It is comprised of eight short papers and an introduction, covering a range of topics relevant to the China–Africa nexus. Though it does not provide much of what is sorely needed in this realm, i.e. detailed research grounded linguistically and institutionally in and across specific locations and industries, it does offer a smart and solid overview of the terrain. The authors recommend policy prescriptions and suggest several hypothesis and topics for further research. Moreover, the volume is extremely refreshing in that the collective approach to the China–Africa topic does not cast China as “pernicious” or devolve into alarmism. The authors, who include journalists, policy analysts, industry economists, advocacy workers and academics, do not agree on all points, yet they all approach the relationships (and I stress the plural) between China and Africa as a reality, soberly weighing positive and negative impacts now and projecting them into the future. Between them they cover a range of elements, including the history and politics of the relationships, investment, trade, development, natural resource management, governance, peace, security, the arms trade and human rights. I particularly appreciated their advocacy for reflexivity on the part of western countries and analysts. In many of the pieces, the China–Africa nexus is viewed in comparison to western interactions, specifically the Washington Consensus. Several of the authors note that the West has a less than stellar record in Africa, especially with respect to defending human rights and achieving sustainable, human-centred development. Indeed, one of the final policy prescriptions in the book is that the West should practice what it preaches (pp. 69–71) As Lindsey Hilsum points out, if the West is to avoid irrelevance, it will have to engage China on Africa and Africa on China (p. 10).

Although the authors do challenge the patronizing posturing of the West as guardian of Africa, they are not sanguine about Chinese involvement on the continent. The Chinese model to development is an alternative, and the presence of China can provide African decision-makers leverage vis-a-vis others. Nonetheless, there are real losers, whether in trade (textile manufacturers in Lesotho), human rights (working conditions, support for Mugabe, freedom of the press), the environment (logging and oil) or the arms trade (Darfur). On the economic side, Chinese investments in infrastructure may be lauded, but the extensive use of Chinese labour and goods undermines the economic benefits and goodwill that could come from it. Chinese imports might provide affordable consumer goods, but they can also undercut domestic production. With the Chinese model explicitly offering development without democracy, campaigners for civil liberties, transparency and accountability have cause for worry. Still, China will not be exempt from local outrage as indicated by the recent deaths and kidnappings of Chinese oil workers in Ethiopia at the hands of the separatist Ogaden National Liberation Front.

While Western analysts are urged to engage on these issues, several authors direct policy prescriptions towards Africans in government, business and civil society. Both Raphael Kaplinsky and John Rocha urge regional action on trade, governance and accountability. The role of African civil society is central, as is the global context for both commerce and protest. Ndubisi Obiorah points out that as China seeks a global “brand,” African civil society has leverage through links forged with international

NGOs who have perfected the “naming and shaming” tactic. Indeed, China has shown increased responsiveness to international pressure as suggested by its March 2007 removal of Sudan from its list of nations with preferred trade status.

While it is not possible to comment on each piece here, there are a few points to highlight. Knowing that “Africa” as such does not exist, but is composed of many countries and particularities within countries, I appreciated hearing the voices of people in Sierra Leone in Hilsum’s article. Also, China, though a single country, is not a monolith and welcome was Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong’s discussion of the various entities in China involved in African policy. More work definitely needs to be done in this arena. Indeed, Wild and Mephram advocate for avoiding sweeping generalizations. It is not whether Africa gains or loses from China, “but rather, *which* Africans might gain or lose, in which countries or sectors, and in which circumstances” (p. 4).

*The New Sinosphere* provides a baseline of macro-level details, a sketch of the more detailed specificities and an analytical structure from which policy analysts, students and scholars can work to develop more focused studies that get beyond current facts and look more into the nature of specific relationships and outcomes.

MARTHA SAAVEDRA

*Consuming China: Approaches to Cultural Change in Contemporary China*

Edited by KEVIN LATHAM, STUART THOMPSON AND JAKOB KLEIN

London: Routledge, 2006

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What makes consumption in China distinctively Chinese? And how might scholars compare and integrate the dramatic rise of consumerism in China, or Chinese consumerism, with its better-studied European and American counterparts? The papers collected in this original volume grew out of a seminar held at the School of Oriental and African Studies from 1998 to 1999. Collectively, they identify important continuities and disjunctures in contemporary Chinese “practices of consumption.” The chapters tackle an impressive range of such practices, including new forms of visibility, legal culture, dining experiences, festivals, shopping, tourism, and media.

The book does not shy away from tough questions. In his introduction, co-editor Kevin Latham asks one of the most important: “How revolutionary is China’s ‘consumer revolution’?” And many of the other chapters implicitly raise the same question with references to the pre-1978 era. Yet his answer primarily addresses political changes, including helpful enumerations of continuities that frame consumption in China such as Party rule, the on-going importance of the state-owned sector of the economy, market regulation and media control. The book is at its best when authors explicitly link such political changes to consumerism, as does Harriet Evans in her tracing of the persistence of representations of consumers as female across political epochs (chapter nine).

Latham suggests that contemporary scholarly inquiry has been as preoccupied with consumption as the Chinese themselves, so much so that “the social and cultural changes of the reform era have been almost unknowable outside the frames of reference of markets and consumption” (p. 2). This is a provocative charge. In place of simply reviewing consumer practices, the volume examines how these practices relate to broader changes such as the legal formulation of ‘the consumer’ (chapter four) and the relationship of technological change to the consumption of ethnicity