

ambivalence” (“conflicting official [or quasi-official] signals, defined as observable indications of official preferences, regarding the desirability of state action” p. 4). As a result, the lion’s share of her descriptions and discussions are about the behaviour of various state-, non-state and quasi-state actors in response to this ambivalence. But this is arguably an interactive process, not simply a reactive one.

Although her prognosis is not terribly heartening – over the past decade, things on the litigation front in China have changed relatively little – Stern does offer some important glimmers of hope. First, the entire legal professional profession appears to be much better trained than it was just a decade ago. Second, there appear to be a growing number of professional institutions – formal associations, merit-based designations and rigorous professional requirements – that allow legal actors to use their professionalism as a way of securing some autonomy from state demands. Thus they can carve out the legal “policy space” that is key to more effective governance, including the legal realm. Finally, the processes she has documented have provided an increasingly “sticky” and hospitable environment for “an elite conversation over public interest law” (p. 211).

In addition to the thoughtful narrative choices she makes (the book is replete with vivid anecdotes and examples), Stern writes in an extremely approachable manner. Her prose is precise, yet extremely engaging. She admirably avoids jargon. This makes *Environmental Litigation in China* far more accessible than most books on Chinese law. It will not only be stimulating for graduate students, but appropriate for upper-level undergraduates as well. It will appeal equally to legal scholars, China watchers in academic and in policy circles, and to those interested in law and society more generally.

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*The Devouring Dragon: How China’s Rise Threatens Our Natural World*

CRAIG SIMONS

New York: St Martins Press, 2013

viii + 289 pp. \$27.99

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*China and the Environment: The Green Revolution* Edited by SAM GEALL

London and New York: Zed Books, 2013

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China’s environmental problems and their impact upon the country’s economic expansion has been a major concern for over three decades. During this period the scale of China’s economic and environmental impact upon the globe has expanded exponentially. At the same time, globalization has impacted how China addresses issues of environment and development. Both of these books address socio-economic impacts of the environment from very different angles. They do not contradict each other but rather amplify one’s understanding of how and why the Chinese are continuing to degrade the environment and yet showing some signs of hopeful change. American journalist Craig Simons’s book is focused on how China’s economic growth is impacting the globe as well as the domestic environment. His prologue does a good job of setting the scene for those Americans who have not thought much about China’s growth in the context of world degradation: for example, the rebirth of mining for the Chinese

market in Colorado and the discovery of Chinese pollutants in the peaks of Oregon. Simons demonstrates that it is not only the poorest of countries that feel the impact of resource extraction and pollution by foreign companies.

Despite the pessimistic title, Simons is not trying specifically to castigate China for a looming global environmental crisis. Rather, this is a critique of the voracious world appetite for consumption that is rising in the world's most populous country with one of the fastest growing economies. To understand China's role in this degradation, he also examines the worrying impacts of the Chinese surge upon other countries as diverse as Papua New Guinea, India, Brazil, small island states and highly developed nations. The problems are diverse but Simons feels forestry, biodiversity, and climate change are arguably the most crucial.

At the same time, Simons does not neglect to point out China's internal environmental woes although these are well documented elsewhere. He cites the demise of the Yangtze sturgeon and the Chang River in general. Simons beautifully captures a sense of uselessness about trying to save animals amidst a feast of greed by humanity and rightly paints a picture of how this is not uniquely a Chinese problem by including examples of sturgeon exploitation from an earlier time in the USA. The book also documents how the particularly strong Chinese appetite for wildlife and the use of rare flora and fauna for food, medicine and exotic luxuries is contributing to devastation of tigers, rhinos and turtles.

Simons attempts the difficult task of presenting ways for China to reduce its environmental impact. He notes that China (and the USA) should cap greenhouse gas emissions no matter what the rest of the world is doing. He rightly is aware that other countries can step in, increase emissions, undoing any improvement that China might create by actively controlling its emissions of SO<sub>2</sub> or other gases.

This is not a scholarly rendition but a very readable tale told from the heart with considerable documentation from interviews and visits around the world. The people Simons describes in China and elsewhere along with his discussions of global climate negotiations give the reader a good idea of our current environmental dilemma. Arguably this book will have more impact upon a wider range of readers than more scholarly works. It is an excellent book for supplementary course reading on contemporary China and just the book to recommend for those with an interest in China's role in our world's environmental condition.

In contrast, Sam Geall's *China and the Environment* is a collection of activist essays by environmental journalists looking specifically at issues in China. One sees how new technologies and foreign involvement helped some local activists move environmental matters up the Chinese political agenda. The Introduction by Isabel Hilton mentions her failed attempt to set up a student organization in China in the early 1970s and how far civil society had come by the time she set up the *chinadialogue* website in 2006. She traces the gradual opening of Chinese civil society from the late 1980s that allowed this to happen despite the Tiananmen massacre and fears of a government overthrow in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the so-called colour revolutions. While the environmental movement has been a crucial part of China's societal opening, environmental groups continue to see problems on the horizon.

Geall's own contribution analyses the role of journalists in pursuing environment regulatory justice. He introduces the reader to some of the most famous journalists-turned-activists including Wang Yongfeng, Liu Detian and Ma Jun just to name a few. We follow the tortured evolution of environmental reportage from a totally controlled media to one in which a few journalists, with some help from progressive government officials, have been able to make a limited space available for informing the general population.

Olivia Boyd covers various campaigns that have helped grow China's environmental movement since the 1990s. These include classic nature conservation cases such as bird protection, Tibetan yak slaughter, the plight of the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey, the Tibetan antelope, and the Baiji or Yangtze dolphin. She also covers controversial dam building including an obligatory Three Gorges discussion and the Nu river staircase of dams, along with the growth of activism represented by the 'blue skies' pollution debate and animal welfare issues. Boyd references the ties to growth of other aspects of civil society that are not directly environmental such as women's rights. Major methods for advancing environmental causes include attempts to gather information within this closed system as well as cooperation of NGOs with those sympathetic to environmental causes within the government. Boyd points out that while animal rights movements are only partially an environmental cause, their growth in recent years shows a growing sophistication of green movements. She also notes how the opposition uses "values" as a counter attack. The summary makes the poignant comment that the green movement's progress has not been linear, nor even always successful, but citizen voices are growing.

Adam Mosher uses the Yangzonghai pollution case in Yunnan to demonstrate progress and the remaining weaknesses in the Chinese legal system with regard to environmental cases. First he takes us through examples of lead emissions in China and how the law has dealt with them. The picture is one of continuing struggle to get tort cases of an environmental nature through the courts given that the executive organs of government are stronger than the judicial branch. Environmental impact assessment requirements remain mostly unenforced and local protectionism of polluting industries remains all too common. Mosher reviews eight cases that people told him really mattered. Some of these were against foreign entities and thus easier to prosecute within the Chinese system. Other cases did come up against the government or state run industries and succeeded in getting some fines paid. The Yangzonghai case, however, never came to trial. In that example it proved easier to fine a pig farm for the pollution than the large power company.

Jonathan Ansfield's contribution is a most detailed and intimate study of the protest against the planned Xiamen PX plant. It details the life of Taiwanese entrepreneur Chen Yu-hao who tried to develop the project. The study traces the protest that led to the project's move down the coast to Zhangzhou and other PX plant location squabbles that have arisen in China. Ansfield demonstrates how the authorities move on issues as little as possible and try to back track when they can.

The final contribution by Liu Jianqiang relates his effort to work with local activists at the Leaping Tiger Gorge (Hutiaoxia) on the Jinsha River in Yunnan. The story is very personal to Liu who had written critiques of the Three Gorges Dam in the past. The writing demonstrates how he was able to develop a deep relationship with some of the strong-willed local people. A combination of journalism, intellectual support and local activism was able to halt this dam despite the ability of companies to launch other dams on the Jinsha River.

These books show how complicated environmental matters in China have become. While the picture in China remains grim, we see areas of hope that the country is bringing aspects of its domestic pollution under control. As with so many other powerful nations, however, there are signs that the problems are being foisted on other peoples. The need for worldwide solutions and institutions to deal with this problem is now more critical than ever.

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