Book reviews

Luca Gabbiani,
Pékin à l'ombre du Mandat Céleste. Vie quotidienne et gouvernement urbain sous la dynastie Qing (1644-1911) (Peking in the Shade of the Mandate of Heaven. Daily life and urban government under the Qing Dynasty [1644-1911]), Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS, 2011, 288 pp.

ERLING VON MENDE

The study consists of two parts divided into eight chapters with an introduction and a short appendix sketching the main characters involved in the reforms, especially urban reforms, in the last years of the Qing. The introduction contains some remarks on the uniqueness of Beijing compared with other important traditional Chinese cities by virtue of its being the capital, where more than anywhere else the tension between the central and local authorities becomes tangible, and where in addition to this the non-Chinese Qing dynasty created a division into an inner city, peopled by the mainly non-Chinese members of the banners, and an outer city, where the indigenous Chinese worked and lived, a division that was only experienced – and even then to a much lesser degree – in other cities with a banner garrison. We find the common but important knowledge that Chinese cities lacked the charters of freedom and urban autonomy familiar to medieval European cities.

As many before him have noted, Luca Gabbiani points out that we have problems finding enough sources to gain a genuine grasp of Chinese daily life in history, an exception being Jacques Gernet's admirable and still exciting short study of Hangzhou in the late Song, *La vie quotidienne en Chine à la veille de l'invasion Mongole 1250-1276* (Daily Life in China: On the eve of the mongol invasion, 1250-1276), from 1959, which benefits from exceptional sources and the ingeniousness of the author. Gabbiani mentions the use of the local archives as a potential source for understanding daily life. Until now only those from Baxian in Sichuan, Shuntian in Beijing, and Shexian in Anhui Province have been available to and used by researchers, but they deal predominantly with matters of property, taxes, and lawsuits, and only the rich sources from Shexian, not mentioned by Gabbiani, allow us to learn more about local conditions. But in the main, his complaints concerning the contents of the local archives seem justified. The same holds true for local histories. To fill the lacunae he makes use of archival material from the central government and texts of the *biji* genre, but of course, these normally only give glimpses of special circumstances that are difficult to evaluate quantitatively.

Since the administrative organisation is better documented than anything else, and since Luca Gabbiani previously carried out research on administrative reforms during the period of "new politics" (*xinzheng*), the second part, "Le gouvernement urbain, XVII[e] – XX[e] siècles" (The urban government, 17[th] – 20[th] centuries, pp. 123-232), provides new insights allowing comparisons between the administrative organisation of Beijing at the end of Qing and that of other Chinese cities for which we have earlier studies by Bergère, Buck, Rowe, and others. Among these earlier studies cited by Gabbiani, I missed only James H. Cole's *Shaohsing: Competition and cooperation in nineteenth-century China*, (1) a study that is arguably relevant to Beijing given that Shaoxing craftsmen left their specific imprint on Beijing during the Qing.

The first part, "Portrait historique d'une capitale d'empire" (Historical portrait of an imperial capital), tries to name the presuppositions on which the reorganisation and changes were initiated. It is divided into chapters covering the different imperial acts necessary to found the capital where it is now, the urban space and its inhabitants, the local economy, and glimpses of the metropolitan community. These chapters are based mostly on earlier research, both Chinese and foreign, on traditional local histories and some statistical matter for the latter period. Gabbiani draws such a consistent picture that it is not quite fair to complain of possible lacunae. Even so, I miss a stronger focus on *la vie quotidienne*, the craftsmen from Shaoxing mentioned by Cole, the Zhili and Shandong people, the influx from the fringes of the Chinese empire, the invasion by *juren* and *jinshi* candidates and their examiners every three years (I find the description by Rui Magone (2) very instructive), the members of "tribute missions" – would they perhaps have been received by the people in Beijing as Ronald P. Toby describes it for Edo in his article "Carnival of the Aliens: Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture," (3) which the diaries of members of Korean embassies seem to corroborate to a certain degree? – and last but not least, the ruling Manchus. Of course, it is quite sensible to refer to Mark Elliot's *The Manchu Way* when describing them, but I think other texts may give a more authentic and immediate picture, for example, Shi-Jyuan Huang-Deiwiks, "Die kaiserlichen Wachoffiziere *shiwei* der Qing-Dynastie in der *zidishu*-Literatur" (4) and *Emu tanggû orin sakda-i gisun sarkiyan: Erzählungen der 120 Alten*, (5) though I must admit that the translations and annotations of both are in German, not really an international language.

1. James H. Cole, *Shaohsing: Competition and cooperation in nineteenth-century China*, Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1986 (Monographs of the Association for Asian Studies 44).
2. Rui Magone, *Once Every Three Years: People and Papers at the Metropolitan Examination of 1685*, PhD thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, 2002.
3. Ronald P. Toby, "Carnival of the Aliens: Korean Embassies in Edo-Period Art and Popular Culture," *Monumenta Nipponica*, No. 41, 1986, pp. 415-456.
4. Shi-Jyuan Huang-Deiwiks, "Die kaiserlichen Wachoffiziere *shiwei* der Qing-Dynastie in der *zidishu*-Literatur" (Officers [*shiwei*] of the imperial guard of the Qing as depicted in the *zidishu*), in Lutz Bieg, Erling von Mende and Martina Siebert (eds.), *Ad Seres et Tungusos. Festschrift für Martin Gimm zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 25. Mai 1995*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 2000, pp. 55-85 (opera sinologica 11).
5. *Emu tanggû orin sakda-i gisun sarkiyan. Erzählungen der 120 Alten. Beiträge zur mandschurischen Kulturgeschichte* (Accounts of the 120 elders. Contributions to a Manchu cultural history), Introduced, translated, and annotated by Giovanni Stary, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz 1983 (Asiatische Forschungen 83).

The use of the German language may also be the reason for not consulting Emil Bretschneider's study, [6] still useful at least for historical geography, and Eva Sternfeld's book [7] with a long first chapter on the history of the Beijing water supply, the best description of this problem in a Western language that I know of. But in covering the layout of the city, why not refer to Oswald Sirén's *The Walls and Gates of Peking*, illustrated with 109 photogravures after photographs by the author and 50 architectural drawings made by Chinese artists? [8]

The second part, as briefly mentioned above, is the result of research based on primary sources, both printed and unprinted. It starts with the relevant institutions of the urban administrative system: first the police force, with more than 33,000 members probably the largest unit in any capital in the world at that time, responsible for the protection of public buildings (mainly the granaries), the registration of the population, and judicial affairs; then the censorate, divided into five districts, north, south, east, west, and centre, which seemed to work as a kind of control organ; and the prefectural institutions. Although the police force was urban in its character, quite a few of its officials were appointed in accordance with, for example, the directorate of public works. Maps contributed by Gabbiani are very instructive in depicting the distribution of different institutions throughout the city.

An important task of the administration was the supply of water, drainage, and sewage. Gabbiani seems to describe how this should have been done rather than how it was actually experienced by the inhabitants of Beijing, which was probably not very different from the "great stink of London" during the mid-nineteenth century. A good but perhaps too negative description is given by Eugène Vincent. [9] Of course, some conclusions on which changes were effected can be drawn from the measures subsequently taken during the reform period, 1901-1911.

The administration was also responsible for social welfare, but often relied on private initiatives to alleviate its burden. Gabbiani notices this especially for the late period, after about 1860, but a melange of public and private welfare was in fact evident since at least the Song period. An almost contemporary report on more than 30 private institutions for private welfare in Guangzhou was written by the German missionary Ernst Faber. [10] Food distribution to the needy in Beijing was apparently performed according to established rules, and rather than being intended as a permanent measure it never continued beyond the next harvest. For this, see the classic monograph by Deng Yunte. [11] From soup kitchens – the early Qing *Yangsheng suibi* (Jottings on how to support life) by Cao Tingdong and late Qing *Zhoupu* (A monograph on gruels) by Huang Yunhu both describe the preparation of gruel for famine relief – to selling cheap grain, providing shelter for the homeless, orphanages, and rudimentary hospitals, the full range of welfare measures are listed and described. The needy were sometimes very numerous. During the great flood of 1801, about 70,000 persons in Beijing and its environs depended on public soup kitchens. By way of comparison, Deng Yunte records 34,750 people getting daily meals from soup kitchens in Henan in December 1931/January 1932, with a total of 4,250,000 meals served. [12] In a much earlier example, in 1075 in Yue (today's Shaoxing), 21,900 needy people were fed for five months, consuming more than 52,000 hectolitres (*dan*) of grain, while in 1890 in Beijing about 250,000 *dan* of grain were issued, apparently mainly through the soup kitchens.

The distribution procedure is not mentioned by Gabbiani. It has been reported that in other cases of welfare issued during times of need, crowds trampled each other when grain was distributed. Several measures were taken to reduce the pressure; food was given to men and women on alternating days, or separate groups were formed for old people and children, and enough kitchens were built that service could be limited to 200 persons at a time. Permits for frequenting a special kitchen were issued, and registers were kept to prevent abuse.

This rather traditional world haunted by crises during its last 50 years experienced reforms from the central government down to the local level beginning in the 1890s, and even more so in the last ten years of the Qing dynasty. Chapter Seven, "Réformer le gouvernement urbain" (Reforming the urban administration), notes changes and continuities, and the shifting responsibilities of the different institutions, while Chapter Eight, "Les grands chantiers de la modernisation locale" (The grand sites of local modernisation), describes improvement of the roads, but only documented by illustrations 2 and 3 (before the improvement measures) and 14 (during construction). When we look at photographs in memoirs from the first 20 years of the twentieth century we in fact notice genuine improvements. The demolition of buildings and creation of whole new areas may be compared with the present time, and public facilities, including welfare, seem to have become more "modern" and bureaucratic.

These two last chapters, and in fact the whole second part, make this book an indispensible tool for writing a comprehensive history of Beijing during the late Qing period. Using books of the Arlington-genre, which describe materialised Beijing, and of the Gabbiani-genre, analysing the workings of the urban administrative machinery, we may perhaps at last manage to liberate daily life in late traditional Beijing from the shadowy masses of archival and other sources.

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6. Emil Bretschneider, *Die Pekinger Ebene und das benachbarte Gebirgsland* (The Peking plain and the adjoining mountain areas), Gotha, Perthes, 1876 (Petermann's Geographische Mittheilungen. Ergänzungsheft No. 46).
7. Eva Sternfeld, *Beijing: Stadtentwicklung und Wasserwirtschaft. Sozioökonomische und ökologische Aspekte der Wasserkrise und Handlungsperspektiven* (Beijing: Urban development and water management. Socioeconomic and ecological aspects of the water crisis and possible remedies), Berliner Beiträge zu Umwelt und Entwicklung, Bd.15, TU Berlin, 1997.
8. Oswald Sirén, *The walls and gates of Peking / researches and impressions*, London, John Lane, 1924.
9. Eugène Vincent, *La médecine en Chine au XX^e siècle. La vieille médecine des Chinois, les climats de la Chine, l'hygiène en Chine et l'hygiènie internationale* (Chinese medicine in the twentieth century: Traditional Chinese medicine, the climates of China, and Chinese and international hygiene), Paris, G. Steinheil, 1915, pp. 214-225.
10. Ernst Faber, "Literarische Missionsarbeit in China" (Literary mission work in China), in *Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift, Monatshefte fur geschichtliche und theoretische Missionskunde*, 9, 1882, pp. 49-66 (pp. 63-65).
11. Deng Yunte, *Zhongguo jiuhuangshi* (History of famine relief in China), Taipei, Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1987 [1937].
12. Deng Yunte, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-330.

Séverine Arsène,
Internet et politique en Chine
(Internet and Politics in China),
Paris, Karthala, 2011, 420 pp.

ÉRIC SAUTEDÉ

China has already had for many years the largest population of Internet users (564 million at the end of 2012), way ahead of the United States (245 million) and even farther ahead of India (137 million). Furthermore, the Chinese communist regime represents a polysemous counterpoint to the idea that any modernisation process would inevitably be conducive to a democratic political transformation: the period under the "reform and open door" policy that started in 1978 has gone on longer than the period of repeated tragedies of revolution without leading to any formal proposition on political reform. The Internet in China is thus challenging the effects associated with the unrealistic "technologies of liberation:" [1] If the new electronic means of communication speed up and deeply transform social relations and the individualisation processes, they do not necessarily guarantee the triumph of liberty over the dark forces of an authoritarian Party-state. Does this mean that politics do not exist on the digital highways of information in China? Does the apparent omnipotence of fierce censorship forbid any public display of interest in public affairs? If there is any political expression, can it be freed from its official function as a highly valued tool for technocratic governance? This book by Séverine Arsène addresses all these issues and admirably succeeds in reconstructing the complex expectations of what she calls the "ordinary Internet users."

If the aim is to "analyse the formation of Chinese public opinion online as a product of a dominant ideology in urban China," it is in order to demonstrate that beyond censorship and the self-censorship, "the legitimate methods for speaking out individually and collectively on the Internet" (p. 47) allow original forms of mobilisation that gain a certain autonomy simply because today the regime builds its legitimacy partially on the existence of this public opinion. Beyond the famous causes of virtual mobilisations, from the Sun Zhigang case to the provocative outrage of Ai Weiwei over the disproportionate number of school collapses during the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, or from the pugnacity of the cyber-journalist Zuola to the "discordant" blog of Fu Jianfeng at *Nanfang zhoumo* (南方周末) when the scandal over the melamine-tainted milk began to emerge, Séverine Arsène focuses on the multiplicity of the "small daily actions that the Internet users do online almost incidentally," which represent "such a smooth form of participation that it is almost unconscious" but nevertheless "powerful" (p. 411).

After a very (too) long introduction setting out the political context (an authoritarian state governed by a monopolistic party) and the social one (modernisation through the development of middle classes if not "invented" then at least "patronised"), highlighting the balance of power between the state and society, going beyond the dichotomy liberation/repression and taking the usual precautionary academic steps in explaining her sampling of 50 semi-directed interviews with "ordinary Internet users" (young, educated, and urban… in this case exclusively Beijing dwellers), Séverine Arsène unravels her main findings in three broad sections, closely combining long excerpts of the stories gathered with more high-profile cases. The first section focuses on the issue of modernity and on the form that the affirmation of individualism takes in China, and ends with the sad statement that the standards imposed by the dominant ideology necessarily lead to a distrust of political affairs, which Séverine Arsène skilfully refers to as the "evaporation of politics." Nevertheless, the second section emphasises the "responsibilising" nature of speaking out online, in whatever form it takes, and the necessity to observe the forms of expression in "*chiaroscuro*," which would avoid the constraints that prevent public speech. Finally, the last section highlights the diversity of positions (outrage, involvement, mobilisation, etc.) by insisting on the ambiguities of "the Chinese governance of public opinion," master and slave at the same time. The book ends with a conclusion (unfortunately underdeveloped) on the paradoxical power of online public opinion, which will ultimately prevail at least because of its utilitarian nature.

Needless to say, Séverine Arsène's book is an important and even essential work. It is important because it fills a gap in the landscape of French publications: while publications in English on this subject have mushroomed since 2003, when Shanthi Kalathil's *Open Networks, Closed Regimes: The Impact of the Internet on Authoritarian Rule* was published, only some rare, brief journalistic volumes existed in French, multiplying anecdotes that inevitably led to the emancipation of a thousand Davids from an ultimately out-dated Goliath. It is also important because it offers a sophisticated and shimmering interpretation of the complexity of public expression in China, moreover in a virtual context where the line between public and private spheres is significantly blurred at the same time as the private sphere has enlarged substantially. Beyond this praise, two drawbacks have to be singled out. First of all, on the form, the sequences of the work could have been extensively reworked: 70 pages for the introduction, but only four pages for the conclusion! And several repetitions could have been easily avoided (thus on the "50 Cent Party" [*wumaodang* 五毛党], the specifically Chinese form of astroturfing [2] – an unfortunately absent term – an identical mention appears on p. 34 and p. 42). The three large sections themselves could have been adjusted to offer a panorama more accessible to a non-expert reader: for example, the individual, the client, and the citizen. Here I do not blame the author but rather the editor, who could have contributed to making the text clearer and stronger. Regarding the content, our objection lies in a fascination with the information issuer/recipient that necessarily leads the author to give an over-determined tacit power to Internet users: from an analytical perspective, it prevents the author from taking an interest in the transformations of the nature of the regime and in how the Chinese model(s) represent a genuine challenge to the democratic and liberal ideal; from a theoretical perspective, it would give precedence to Michel de Certeau and Erving Goffman over Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Alain Touraine, and here it appears to be more a question of faith than reason. Of course

1. Eric Sautedé, "Pour en finir avec les 'technologies de la libération': Internet, société civile et politique en Chine" (Down with "technologies of liberation": Internet, civil society and politics in China), *Hermès*, December 2009, No. 55, pp. 133-40.
2. From Wikipedia: "Astroturfing refers to political, advertising, or public relations campaigns that are designed to mask the sponsors of the message to give the appearance of coming from a disinterested, grassroots participant."

these objections do not overshadow the merits of this work, since in the end there is no debate without disagreement, and no open academic life without debate!

Translated by Laetitia Mottet.

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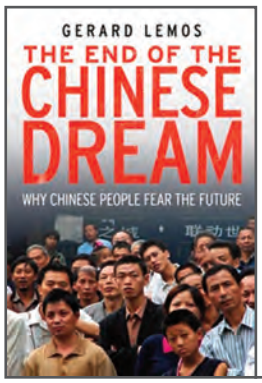

Gerard Lemos, The End of the Chinese Dream: Why Chinese people fear the future, New Haven/ London, Yale University Press, 2012, ix + 301 pp.

PIERRE-HENRY DE BRUYN

China is changing very fast. There is no doubt about that. Nearly 350 million Chinese are expected to migrate to the cities before 2030. To cope with that transformation, China will have to build more than 50,000 new high-rise buildings, and 170 cities will need new mass transit systems. Road network, highways, railways, and airports will have to expand 60 percent by 2030 (p. 185).

Comprehending the desires of the Chinese people facing this rapidly moving future is a tremendous challenge. In this effort, the very original survey presented by Gerard Lemos in this book is surely worth mentioning.

While a visiting professor at a university in Chongqing between 2006 and 2010, Lemos devised an original method to explore, in a scientific fashion, what ordinary people in Chongqing were really thinking and dreaming about. His strategy was to use a traditional object found everywhere in China called the "wish tree," which is used during folk celebrations as a popular expression of devotion by traditional Tibetan Buddhists as well as by Daoists, and not only in China but also in Japan and in Korea. The function of these trees, on which the people are invited to attach papers expressing their wishes, is based on the belief that the wind carries prayers, including wishes written on sheets of paper, from earth to heaven. Lemos prepared his special survey at the beginning of 2007 by asking a graphic artist in the UK to design such a tree and corresponding leaf cards. The tree was printed on posters the size of large advertising boards. The leaf-shaped cards contained only four questions: Who are you? What event changed your life? What is your biggest worry? What do you wish for?

Lemos obtained a kind of official go-ahead through some senior officials in the Chongqing Civil Affairs Bureau that he got interested in his project. In May 2007, his Wish Tree was installed successively in three different locations in Chongqing. The first was in Hemu Lu (Harmony Road), a new housing development for farmers. At this first stop, 311 participants put leaves on the tree. The next day, another wish tree was erected in the community square of Ma'anshan, a village of 1,500 residents located in the northeast corner of Chongqing, and 624 more cards were collected there. In both places a community worker prepared for the event with posters that invited people to the wish tree. Lemos himself delivered a short speech in Mandarin, after which people took cards, thought carefully about their responses, and then put them on the tree. The next day, a third wish tree was erected in Banshanercun in Jiulongpo District, a large community stretching along winding roads and dominated by a long, brick factory where 3,000 people had once worked producing tyres, but in which only 1,000 were still employed at the time of the experiment. Another 492 wish cards were collected there. In this way, a total of 1,427 cards were collected. Gerard Lemos then had them translated and analysed thematically.

What appears from the careful analysis made by Lemos of these very spontaneous expressions of ordinary Chinese people's desires is that "their future expectations are pragmatically limited" (p. 97). All they seem to desire is what we would call an easier life: they are worried about health problems, they wish to have a home, to get a car, to have enough money to feel secure about the future, to be able to travel. In that sense, Chinese peoples' desires are similar to those of all human beings. As in most parts of the world, men were more likely to express financial ambitions and wish for money than women, who tended to seek security and happiness (p. 101), and as elsewhere, government jobs offer so much security that people avidly seek them, even if it is the most humble job imaginable as sewage porter (*tiao fen*) (p. 89).

But the basic problem in contemporary China, according to Lemos, seems to be that these modest ambitions, what could be called "the true Chinese dream," are becoming a kind of utopia for more and more Chinese excluded from the benefits of change. What gives real strength to his analysis is his frequent quoting of the people themselves. The global picture of Chinese society that comes out of this book is quite pessimistic, and Lemos concludes with these words: "The Chinese dream cultivated in the 1980s of prosperity, security, stability and even the beginning of freedom is at an end" (p. 271).

The growing violence of Chinese society is depicted in detail. People's deep worries concerning education are explained carefully with the observation that the educational budget can absorb up to one third of a family's income, the average being about 20 percent, and as much as one half in the countryside (p. 132). The author also analyses in detail how deficiencies in the healthcare system explain why anxieties over health make up the largest group of concerns on the Wish Tree. And in fact, the proportion of personal expenditure devoted to healthcare has risen enormously, from 21.2 percent of the total in 1980 to 49.6 percent in 2006, after reaching 60 percent in 2000. It is not surprising in this context that there appears to be no real solution at hand. If a solution exists, people do not seem to believe it could come from the government. The credibility of those in power is regularly and harshly questioned. During the earthquake in Sichuan of May 2008, 6,898 classrooms collapsed, 4,737 students were killed, and more than 16,000 were injured, but many people observed, "while the schools collapsed, many of the structures that survived largely unscathed were government and Party buildings" (p. 148).

Observed from this perspective, the so-called Chinese future seems quite dark. The glimmering of hope that remains, as Lemos notes in his afterword, is that "recent history is full of examples of unheralded turns of event" (p. 273). The reader finishes this book with the secrete hope that this might eventually happen in China, fearing only, with and for the Chinese people, that it may not.

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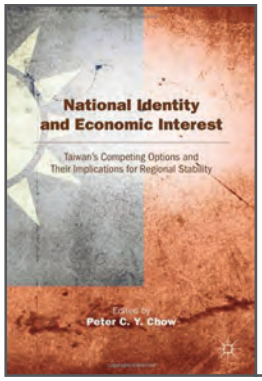

Peter C.Y. Chow (ed.), National Identity and Economic Interest: Taiwan's competing options and their implications for regional stability, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 318 pp.

ANDRÉ BECKERSHOFF

Once again, Peter C.Y. Chow has edited a timely volume on pressing issues concerning Taiwan. This one sets out to provide a comprehensive understanding of the recent *rapprochement* between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. As the title suggests, most of the contributions from Asian, European, and American scholars aim to shed light on the relationship between the dynamism of economic relations across the Taiwan Strait and the consolidating national identity of Taiwan. By weaving together these two threads within the field of Taiwan Studies, the scholars provide a comprehensive picture of this crucial subject matter from political, geopolitical, economic, and social perspectives.

One major puzzle provides the *leitmotif* for most of the chapters: against the often-voiced assumption that economic integration across the Taiwan Strait might lead to a common identity, the Taiwanese identity is actually growing stronger. Is it a matter of measuring identity (unlikely, given the different but complementary sets of data used), was the prediction wrong (as Muyard argues), has the "identity battle" finished and has the issue lost its socio-political importance (Dittmer), or is the scientific concept in need of revision in order to be of value under these new conditions (Chen)? Situated in this broader perspective, the volume is not only about the empirical phenomenon of Taiwan's evolving identity under conditions of economic Cross-Strait integration. It is at the same time an assessment of whether the concept of "identity" has lost its centrality in the field of Taiwan Studies. Is the discipline at a crossroads? Does the empirical observation that pursuit of profit seemingly trumps identity as the driving force of social interactions entail a decline of identity-based explanations in favour of economic explanations at the level of scientific inquiry? In this sense, this book is a thorough examination of identity as the cornerstone of how the discipline approaches Taiwan.

The volume's eleven substantial chapters are grouped in three parts, each of which examines issues of identity and the economy from different angles. The four chapters comprising the first part deal with the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) as the culmination of Cross-Strait *rapprochement*. Jau-Yuan Hwang traces how Taiwan's disputed status has manifested itself in the legal and democratic deficiencies of the ECFA, while Tsai-Long Honigman Hong assesses the agreement's economic impact on Taiwan. Peter C.Y. Chow adds in the social and political costs of economic integration, such as a broadening gap in income distribution. He draws attention to "cultural flows," which already affect Taiwanese media and might facilitate sinicisation, but which, unlike economic interactions, escape current frameworks. Stéphane Corcuff establishes an original historical perspective with a *longue durée* comparison between the end of the Zheng regime in the late seventeenth century and the Kuomintang (KMT)'s U-turn that led to the Cross-Strait *rapprochement*. It not only brings striking similarities to the surface, but also facilitates understanding and assessing the differences. Identity is here not only a discourse, but a process linked to material instances of what the author is hesitant to call re-sinicisation or de-taiwanisation.

The middle part addresses the question of Taiwan's identity more explicitly. Although all authors agree that Taiwan's identity as an independent political entity is growing and deepening, they accentuate different facets of it and grant it a different status in their respective explanations. Michael Danielsen contrasts the efforts by the Ma government to promote a Chinese identity with the actual phenomenon that the Taiwan identity is growing stronger. What bolsters Taiwan's identity is the democratic system, which can accommodate a large spectrum of identities under a common roof. Consequently, Danielsen argues, the biggest threat to Taiwanese identity is a deterioration of democracy and civil liberties. The following chapter by Frank Muyard sets out to relate identity dynamics to economic interaction across the Strait. The empirical data are similar to those used by Danielsen, but Muyard views it from the opposite perspective: while the previous chapter examines the government's efforts to promote a Chinese identity, Muyard is interested in the puzzle that Taiwan's identity is apparently unaffected by increasing economic interaction. Contrary to this common assumption, the author argues that close economic cooperation even consolidates Taiwan's identity. Not only is Taiwan's nationalism driven by export growth and therefore compatible with liberalisation, but social contacts also increase the awareness of difference, while the increasing division of labour between China and Taiwan is bound to create discontents, thereby fuelling nationalism. Naiteh Wu adds yet another perspective. Unlike Danielsen, Wu sees political parties not as promoters of identity, but as affected by the way a growing sense of Taiwan identity and economic integration with China condition party competition. Relying on a different set of data, Wu argues against the other authors that the group of citizens describing themselves as having both a Taiwanese and a Chinese identity is declining. But rather than having a direct influence on identity, closer economic integration structurally favours the KMT and marginalises the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

The first chapter of the third and final part, York W. Chen's contribution, marks the transition from identity to the geopolitical ramifications of closer relations across the Strait. Central to Chen's argument is the concept of strategic paradigms, which encompasses identity narratives linked to national security matters. Distinguishing between three of these historically situated sets of values, beliefs, and methods, he examines how the paradigm shift promoted by Ma Ying-jeou and the KMT has re-defined not only national security interests, but also Taiwan's identity in relation to China, therefore paving the way for the ECFA. In contrast to other contributors who see the current KMT government as promoting a Chinese identity, Lowell Dittmer suggests that Ma Ying-jeou had already conceded defeat on the identity issue before the 2008 presidential elections, and is now focusing on shifting public attention to economic performance. From this perspective, the identity battle is over, and the question has lost its relevance in favour of economic prosperity as a factor of legitimation. Dittmer argues not only that ECFA is a consequence of this shift toward economic issues, but also that it might provide a state of security, albeit a fragile one. The book closes with two chapters on the regional implications of the Cross-Strait *rapprochement*. While John J. Tkacik's pessimistic analysis of Taiwan's

regional geopolitical role makes him conclude that Taiwan's absorption by China is only a matter of time, June Teufel Dreyer reconstructs Japan's assessment of the Cross-Strait *détente*, arguing that Japan is worried about closer relations across the Strait, but is unlikely to risk alienating China to support the island.

This collection of arguments demonstrates the versatility of identity as the concept that has so long structured public and scientific debates in and about Taiwan, as well as the difficultly of its operationalisation. The flexibility of the concept is the reason for the variety of insights that the volume provides: not only does each chapter employ a slightly different notion of identity, the concept also appears as both a dependent and independent variable, as part of qualitative as well as quantitative approaches, and as both a product of and constraint on the KMT, and it is used to structure arguments on political, economic, and geopolitical issues. However, these arguments would be more convincing if specific mechanisms of how identity acts within the various contexts were provided. While Chen, for example, explicitly refers to a process of negotiation of identities through interaction with other groups, it is not clear how the changing patterns of interaction across the Taiwan Strait take effect. How much is identity based on grassroots interaction, and to what extent is it malleable by political elites? How do social interaction and material referents constrain the construction of identities? And even if a combination of elite-driven promotion, material referents, and social interactions are the main factors in identity formation, we are back to square one of the puzzle: why does the Taiwanese identity not crumble under economic and social integration with China? In order to enhance the persuasiveness of identity-based explanations, specific mechanisms have to be provided. This is a weak point of quantitative approaches.

The most successful contributions, consequently, are linked to two research strategies. First, there are the chapters that question the validity of the puzzle in the first place. Muyard, for instance, casts doubts on the conventional wisdom concerning Taiwan's identity, arguing that there is actually little reason to believe that economic integration leads to a common identity. Rather, he highlights the tensions that may result from economic integration. A second set of successful arguments is related to the attempt to reconnect identity to tangible social processes and practices, and not simply understand it as an inter-elite struggle within a purely discursive realm. Chow's first steps to relate the elite-factor of both the KMT and the CCP to producers of discourse, such as media, is a promising path to de-idealising identity, thereby also revealing the crisis-prone nature of these identity negotiations. The changes to school textbooks and teaching guidelines discussed in the chapter by Corcuff provide a similar point of departure. In order to continue this path towards a political economy of identity politics, however, research has to go beyond its reliance on survey data and elite discourses.

Whether or not identity will continue to have a central place in future studies of Cross-Strait relations, this book provides a comprehensive reference point, situating identity in the dynamics of political, geopolitical, and economic developments. And whether or not this volume marks the renaissance or the swan song of the concept within the discipline, it is an eye-opening and informative read and therefore an essential contribution to the debate. All those interested in the dynamism of recent Cross-Strait *rapprochement* will find a valuable benchmark.

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