

Primary Source Inc.. *China in the World: A History since 1644*. Boston: Cheng & Tsui Company, 2009. xvii + 391 pp. \$49.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-88727-621-7.



Reviewed by Andreas Steen

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Commissioned by Eva M. Stolberg (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany)

China in the World comes as a very useful book designed for teachers of modern Chinese history, arranged and edited by the nonprofit educational resource center Primary Source. Similar to a volume published by the same center in 2006 (*The Enduring Legacy of Ancient China*), this book encourages the use of primary sources in the classroom in order to go beyond the common use of textbooks as the only source of information. The book is considered to be a "starting point for understanding the complex, vibrant and sometimes violent recent history of a people with the longest continuous civilization in the world" (p. xv)—in fact, it is much more. As W. C. Kirby underlines in his introduction, the title already reflects the latest trend in scholarship on China, namely the growing awareness that China cannot be studied in isolation. In this respect it is important to note that the editors understand the term "source" in a broad sense and included different sorts of material, e.g., maps, photographs, letters, archival documents, newspaper reports, short stories, poems, excerpts from novels and memories,

and film clips. The Chinese material is translated into English, and all sources are at least mentioned in the book, yet the larger part—and full texts—is accessible via the accompanying CD-Rom. In addition, both the book and the CD direct the reader to various Web sites where plenty of other sources regarding China's history are to be found. Thus, the book offers a systematically organized, highly up-to-date approach to a wide range of sources and thereby provides helpful assistance for the integration of primary sources into the teaching of Chinese history.

The book is divided into five units which basically follow the historical chronology. "A Sense of Place and People" (Unit 1) first introduces China's geography and political division; in a second chapter this unit sets the stage for a closer understanding of China's historical, social, and cultural situation in the sixteenth century. The remaining units separate China's history into four larger periods: The Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Struggles to Create a Unified China (1911-1949), The People's Republic of China (1949-2000), and Contemporary

China. Each unit can be explored separately and is subdivided into four to five chapters that summarize and analyze the main development, and introduce important people, trends, conflicts, and characteristics of the particular period. The chapters are systematically structured, each consisting of eight parts which reflect the didactical logic of this volume: "The Organizing Idea," "Key Questions," "Key Terms," "An Introductory Essay," "Primary Sources," "Activities" (related to the primary sources), "Suggested Resources," and "A Closer Look." In general, the parts 1-3 usually take up one page, while the essay summarizes the important issues on two to three pages; "Primary Sources" and "Activities" take up most of the space.

This convenient eight-part structure is at the core of the book and it surely contributes to its pedagogical strength and usefulness. Given the multiplicity of topics from which one can choose to analyze the four hundred years of Chinese history, one can assume that the authors and editors were heavily pressed to decide on the most relevant issues, developments, subjects, people, and even terms to be included. The selections are well made and correspond with the key words, key questions, and the summarizing essays. With little shortcomings the same can be said for the documents/sources, which altogether cover a wide range of topics from different perspectives, including the influence of modern media technology and the transformations of the public and private sphere in China. Of most practical value for the history teacher, however, is the experience-based "Activities" section. The reader finds carefully worded questions related to the documents, suggestions for group work in the classroom, and further reflections on issues that link Chinese history to students' experiences, situations, and historical developments in their own country. The book is, in other words, a warmly recommended source of inspiration for teaching, enriched by

book, Web site, and film suggestions to be included in classroom discussions.

From the perspective of international history, however, "China in the World" might be criticized as a somewhat misleading title. The book covers a time span that stretches from early Jesuit activities in China to Chinese membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO, 2001) and includes sources until 2007. It surely documents and reflects on China's growing importance in and interaction with the world. It is, nevertheless, foremost about China, secondly about China and the United States, and then about her relations with Japan--Europe and the rest of the world are hardly visible. Problematic in another sense is the selection of documents and sources because no criteria for in- or exclusion are mentioned in the book. One may ask, e.g., why "An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century China" has to start with three excerpts from Matteo Ricci. And if so, why is no Chinese material included that reflects on the Chinese perception of his (or the Jesuit) activities in China? For later periods, one may miss the China-related paragraphs of the Versailles Treaty or ask why no official response to the 1989 demonstrations on Tiananmen Square has found its way into the book. The list of questions can be extended: the words "imperialism," "anti-imperialism," "colonialism," and "semi-colonialism" do not even appear in the index, not to speak of the foreign (European) powers' main strategy of establishing an "informal empire" in China until the 1930s. Confucianism seems to have ended in the 1960s--the social, economic, and political importance of (New) Confucianism since the 1990s is left out. The same goes for nationalism in China: The index only mentions the communists' revolutionary nationalism of the 1930s; the editors did not take notice of China's new nationalism. Should one not have included a few pages of the highly influential book *China Can Say No!* (1996)? Altogether, the book is written in a rather moderate style and presents an optimistic look into the future--it ends with a short summary entitled "China as a Super-

power," in which a harmonious and peaceful integration of China in world economics and politics is envisioned.

In sum, *China in the World* is a highly welcomed contribution for teachers of Chinese history. Notwithstanding the above criticism, its wide range of different sources, the "Activities" section attached to each chapter, and its suggestions for classroom discussion not only provide a broad introduction for beginners, they also give inspiration to the experienced teacher. Sometimes the latter may wish to have equally easy access to the Chinese sources and texts, but--alas--how can one not be happy to find so many sources, translations, and experience-based advice collected in one volume?

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