

Book reviews/Discussions

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H. Kupś, M. Szatkowski, M. Dahl (red.), 70 lat Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej w ujęciu interdyscyplinarnym, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warszawa 2021, ss. 309.

In 2021 on the Polish publishing market, a multi-authored monograph on the Chinese state was published by the Dialog Academic Publishing House [Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog] in Warsaw. For years, China has attracted numerous experts and readers who are willing to learn more about the rising superpower while acquiring specialized literature regarding on its politics, economy, culture, and society. The reviewed monograph, entitled *70 lat Chińskiej Republiki Ludowej w ujęciu interdyscyplinarnym* [*70 Years of People's Republic of China in an Interdisciplinary Perspective*] can also be considered a valuable resource on China. The content of the work appears as informative and inspiring for further research. Noteworthy is the fact that the consecutive chapters have been written by outstanding experts on China.

The monograph has been prepared under editorship of Hanna Kupś, Maciej Szatkowski, and Michał Dahl. They have invited respected scholars representing various disciplines for cooperation in this project, thus they have achieved 'interdisciplinary' character of the book, as mentioned in its title. The work was divided into three categories: politics, economics, and culture. The first category of opens with the chapter on *Chinese political system – sui genesis* [orig. *Chiński system polityczny – sui generis*], prepared by Bogdan Góralczyk. It focuses on presentation and brief analysis of the evolution of China's political system. As the author rightly put it: "the Chinese system of a political formation called 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' is difficult to define unambiguously" (p. 27). As the past seven decades have shown, China is one flourishing socialist state, where the effects of an ideology are combined with pragmatism.

In the next part of this category, readers can get familiar with reflections of Marek Tytkowski on *The renaissance of Confucianism in mainland China during the period of reforms* [orig. *O renesansie konfucjanizmu w Chinach kontynentalnych w okresie reform*]. The author begins his deliberations with the death of Mao Zedong and the seizure of power in the Communist Party of China (CPC) by Deng Xiaoping. According to Tytkowski, this was a turning point for the country, since economic reforms and a policy of opening China to the world began. Of course, it sounded like a grand experiment.

On the one hand, there are the CPC policies, and on the other, there are free-market concepts of foreign trade. As the following decades have shown, this experiment has succeeded and made the Chinese economy and economic system one of the most prosperous and competitive in the world in recent years. The penultimate text of this category is the article written by Antonina Łuszczkiewicz on *China and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in political and cultural discourse* [orig. *Chiny a Pięć Zasad Pokojowego Współistnienia w dyskursie polityczno-kulturowym*], where the historical and current aspects of Chinese international relations were discussed. It mainly focused on Sino-Indian ties from 1950 to 2014, when Xi Jinping mentioned the five principles.

Marek Świstak, on the other hand, is the author of the last text in the political section: *On the primacy of politics over economics and the importance of market mechanisms over political ones. The role of the state in China's regional development policy* [orig. *O wyższości polityki nad gospodarką i pierwszeństwie mechanizmów rynkowych przed politycznymi. Rola państwa w chińskiej polityce rozwoju regionalnego*]. The text also addresses not only political but also economic as-

pects. For example, there are numerous references to figures, e.g. Chinese investments in coastal regions (pp. 77–78). The author points out that it was impossible to avoid the significant phenomenon of increasing structural development disparities in almost every economy during China's economic growth. Here one can point to the area concentrated around, for example, Beijing and Xinjiang. On the one hand, the wealth of Beijing and its enormous potential should be considered. This chapter is the conclusion of an important and exciting category proposed by the editors of the monograph.

With the chapter entitled *Imitation to innovation – the development of the Chinese market in the 21st century* [orig. *Od imitacji do innowacji – rozwój rynku chińskiego w XXI wieku*] Magdalena Rybicka opens another category: economics. She focuses on the growth of the Chinese market in several stages, including times during the Deng Xiaoping period, where reforms were gradually introduced, and under Jiang Zemin, when market-driven policies resulted in the adjustment of the state-owned economic sector to the new conditions (p. 92). Another meaningful aspect of the chapter are conclusions proposed by Rybicka in the context of 'Made in China 2025'. This is the industrial policy strategy announced in 2015. As the author points out, it aims to achieve by 2025 China's position as a leader in high-tech sectors (e.g., renewable energy and transport). One can risk saying that China is not yet a leader, for instance, in the category of renewable energy. When it comes to renewable energy, the counterbalance is the Japanese state, which is committed to development and has made great strides in this direction and cooperated with Saudi Arabia. It can also be said that in the long-term process on this level, a rivalry is brewing between Japan and China. It is worth mentioning that the map (p. 99) presented in the context of this topic indicates that the previously mentioned Xinjiang is not an area associated with innovation. However, when trying to analyse this map, it should be added that, in general, the western part of the Chinese state is not an area with significant amounts of innovation.

The second article placed in economic section is *The economic transformation of the PRC-foreign trade* [orig. *Przeobrażenia gospodarcze ChRL – handel zagraniczny*], proposed by Kamil Waligóra. At the outset, the author rightly points out that in the first decades of the PRC's existence, the size, structure and direction of trade were limited by ideological factors (p. 105). It was not until 1978 and the following years that the development gap narrowed (as cited in the data from the World Bank, United Nations, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). For the first 30 years, China could not boast a developed foreign trade network and fruitful negotiations with other countries, such as Western European countries. To give some example, with Saudi Arabia, China to the 1990s did not make any contact, both of a political and economic nature. This case supports the statement proposed by Waligóra regarding weak activity in China's foreign trade at certain periods.

The subsequent text (*Regional variation of disposable income in China*; orig. *Regionalne zróżnicowanie dochodu dyspozycyjnego w Chinach*) by Kamil Kotliński addresses the regional economic aspects and society. It has been indicated that income stratification has occurred from a certain point (data from 2018 is considered), thus the phenomenon of social inequality has become apparent. The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of an interesting research. Among other issues, readers can learn that five regions belonging to China are the poorest (e.g. Tibet or Gansu). Interestingly, the previously mentioned Xinjiang has a higher average income than Tibet – 2018: 76,17 percentage points (p.p.) vs. 61,24 p.p. (p. 128). In turn, a rich place in China is Shanghai – 227.37 p.p.

Furthermore, Joanna Wardęga focused on the *Importance of tourism for the international position of China* [orig. *Znaczenie turystyki dla międzynarodowej pozycji Chin*]. Wardęga indicated that the beginning of the Chinese tourism sector dates back in 1978 when the modernisation of the Chinese state took place. It has rightly been noted that tourism inbound and outbound from China is a significant *soft power* tool of the Chinese authorities. The author argues, and rightly so, that outbound tourism can play a role in shaping international policy (p. 137).

Michał Zaremba in *Chinese development aid. State of play and prospects* [orig. *Chińska pomoc rozwojowa. Stan i perspektywy*] attempts to analyze and present the Chinese state's aid history. Zaremba listed other 'donors', including the United States, the United Kingdom and France, but it is worth adding to this small group countries such as Saudi Arabia. Such a gesture is nothing new because Saudi Arabia has provided aid (mainly financial aid) to different and often poorer countries for many decades. The difference between China and Saudi Arabia is that the first recipients of Chinese aid were other communist countries, i.e. Vietnam and North Korea.

Another chapter, entitled *Globalisation of trade and synchronisation of cycles of economic flows between China, the USA, and the European Union* [orig. *Globalizacja handlu a synchronizacja cykli przepływów gospodarczych między Chinami, USA i Unią Europejską*] by Adam Chlebisz and Mateusz Mierzejewski, deals with various aspects of globalisation. The authors have made references to the price indices of consumer goods and services from 1997 to 2019. The history and contemporaneity of the external debt (gross) have been also included, which in the period mentioned before the 'euro area' and the US domination, assumed values much higher than those of China (p. 183).

The third section of the book, devoted to culture, has been opened by Natalia Lubińska and Monika Paliszewska-Mojsiuk's reflections on *Education reforms in China* [orig. *Reformy edukacji w Chinach*]. The authors presented educational issues in modern times based on historical aspects. It was mentioned that until the 19th century, Chinese education was focused exclusively on calligraphy, recitation, the ability to create essays, and knowledge of classical works (mainly the humanities). Unfortunately, the benefits of the sciences, i.e. chemistry, physics and mathematics, were not considered. Only since 1949 there have been considerable changes in many areas, including education. Initially, the Soviet educational system was chosen as a model, based on which Chinese authorities began to educate students in terms of technical majors.

Maciej Gaca focused on *The process of sinicisation of ethnic groups in the PRC (and Taiwan) after 1949 in ethnolinguistic and political discourse – glossary review with commentary* [orig. *Proces sinizacji grup etnicznych w ChRL (i na Tajwanie) po 1949 roku w dyskursie etnolingwistycznym i politycznym – przegląd glosariusza z komentarzem*]. It was aptly observed that there was a 'civilisation' and integration of people living on the periphery of China during the Yuan dynasty. Indeed, it was not an easy challenge, since – as the author further points out – it was necessary to consolidate and make those groups a Chinese national unity, including e.g. Han, Manchurians, Tibetans and Chinese Muslims. It was recalled that most of the problems lay in culture, language, customs, and religion.

Marek Piszczek is the author of *The development of calligraphy in the PRC. The educational aspect* [orig. *Rozwój kaligrafii w ChRL. Aspekt oświatowy*]. Before pointing out the effect of calligraphy in China, a retrospective was made in this area. Piszczek recalls that calligraphy was highly regarded in China (p. 235). At the beginning of the 20th century, this trend changed, and calligraphy rapidly lost its high position within the culture.

The penultimate article in this part has been prepared by one of the editors of the monograph. In the chapter entitled *In search of music sources: the development of musical archaeology in China in the 20th and 21st centuries* [orig. *W poszukiwaniu źródeł muzyki: rozwój archeologii muzycznej w Chinach w XX i XXI wieku*] Hanna Kupś presented the history and the present of Chinese musical archaeology. This text has been devoted to a specialized branch of historical sciences. Kupś divided the chapter into periods such as: antiquity, the 1920s and 1930s, from 1940 to 1970, and from the 1980s onwards. It is worth noting that the text was based mainly on the English-language literature on the subject. In the context of the discussed topic, it is an invaluable source of knowledge and information.

Joanna Kucharzewska, on the other hand, is the author of the closing chapter: *In continuity and variability – the architecture of Beijing in the previous 70 years* [orig. *Trwanie i zmienność – architektura Pekinu w ciągu ostatnich 70 lat*]. Kucharzewska focused on showing the changes

that have taken place in the architecture of Beijing in the last seven decades. The reader can learn that the centre of government administration until 1954 was constantly consulted and relied on the fact that the building's structure had preserved references to the history and traditions of China. It was also noted that architecture has strong links with the current political and social situation. The value of the text is strengthened by the usage of author's photos taken during her stay in Beijing in 2009.

It is worth pointing out that the interdisciplinary nature of the work under the editorship of Hanna Kupś, Maciej Szatkowski and Michał Dahl makes the work innovative. It has a considerable contribution to the Polish literature of the subject, since it can serve as a valuable source of knowledge on China for researchers and experts in such scientific fields as, for example, economics, cultural studies, political science, sociology, or sinology. In conclusion, it should be mentioned that this monograph appeared at the right time of the 70th anniversary of the proclamation of the People's Republic of China. Generally anniversaries are suitable for attempting some evaluations, as the authors did by proposing another interesting monograph, entitled *Balancing Changes. Seventy Years of People's Republic of China* (co-edited also with Dawid Rogacz, published by Nicolaus Copernicus University Press in 2021). I warmly encourage the editors of both monographs to put greater emphasis on aspects categorized within foreign policy (e.g. relations with Poland, Russia, or Saudi Arabia), religious studies (the situation of Christians in China) and minorities living in this country (e.g. Poles), or sports (e.g. casus of league matches in football).

Bibliography

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