

beyond memorizing Vietnamese names and fighting the Vietnam War in the classroom and begin to help our students to place the conflict in a wider context.

Short's book is helpful in dealing with this last issue, but it is probably a book that will be neglected in the classroom. His flat writing style coupled to a narrow focus in subject matter and time limits the book's application in many settings. *The Origins of the Vietnam War* is useful, but not completely necessary.

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S.A.M. Adshead. *China in World History*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988. Pp. x, 422. Cloth, \$37.50.

China in World History is a seminal, theoretical work waiting to be absorbed into the developing body of approaches to world history. Not only is China revealed as a much more interactive participant than it is usually regarded but the entire Central Asian arena blooms as much more important than most historians note. Perhaps the current events in the Soviet Union with its Asian minorities receiving mention in the western press will create some greater interest in these fascinating and significant peoples.

The volume is an immense piece of scholarship for its size. If every name of empire and leader mentioned were to be explained a whole set of encyclopedias would be required. Combine the required knowledge and complex vocabulary in this work and it is not a text for the casual reader or student. Acquiring significant understanding from the work requires previous knowledge of much Eurasian history and a well-developed mental map of the world.

Adshead is extremely well organized. His purpose is to present the history of China as part of the world. Although the emerging world system is designed largely by the West, China has made more contributions than generally recognized. He divides history into six periods: Antiquity, Late Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment and Modern (to 1976). In each period he discusses China's place in the world, avenues of contact, interchanges, and world institutions.

Some world historians may be surprised to find world institutions mentioned in antiquity. Although Adshead states that Buddhism is the only phenomenon approaching a world institution, he also explores commodity exchanges of food and energy sources and ecosystems. In late antiquity the T'ang court balancing ideas and elements from many sources is viewed as a world institution. With the Renaissance and a potential "birth of world history through Columbus, Magellan and St. Francis Xavier" two new institutional layers were added: a world economy and the religious internationals based on the Naqshbandiyya dervish order, Tibetan lamaism, and Jesuit Christianity. The Enlightenment added the naval "pax Britannica" and a "republic of letters" or communality of intellectual pursuits. In the modern period the international effort to reduce disease and the "world technological bank" are shared. Yet official secrecy in a polycentric world limits the growth of shared knowledge and institutions.

What were some of the key objects of exchange? Well-known commodities such as silk, porcelain, tea, and spices and the less desirable microbes are supplemented by peaches, apricots, oranges, cotton, sugar, copper, rhubarb, medicine, tobacco, Mexican silver, the chrysanthemum, and dyestuffs. Knowledge spread included nautical techniques, metallurgical techniques, mechanisms in the use of water power, the chemistry of explosives, and an Enlightenment challenge to the prevailing Mediterranean centered European views.

Adshead offers new perspectives such as viewing Europe less through its wars and conflicts and more through conflict resolution and unity. Since Adshead is from New Zealand his perspectives differ from the typical American historian. His sources are extensive, including both English and French, yet he has not had an opportunity to work with more recent relevant U.S. work such as William McNeil's *Plagues and Peoples*. Although he cites Jonathan Spence's early work he would also find useful the more recent works on K'ang Hsi and Matteo Ricci. In exchange this volume should complement McNeil's new interest in China.

The shortcomings of this book are more in the publishing than the writing. It desperately needs a good map or maps. A few sketches, especially of ship types, would help in visualizing some content. The index appears to have been written by a Chinese graduate student - simply a list of names, mostly in Chinese without the use of Pinyin. If one wishes to trace the recurring importance of silk, opium, tea, or the haj it cannot be done via the index.

Adshead at times has interesting and novel ways of expressing his observations. For example, in response to the modern exchange of flora from China to Europe, he summarizes "Szechuan was now in the suburbs, and gardening, the most widespread aesthetic activity perhaps apart from choice of clothes was deeply affected." China under Mao underwent "institutional magnification" so that "During the Great Leap Forward . . . the state practically swallowed society . . . the resultant institutional indigestion led to a partial regurgitation . . ."

In short, this is an exciting book with intellectual challenges but the consumer must necessarily be already among the well-informed.

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