

Communications to the Editor

TO THE EDITOR:

Edward Friedman's review of *Democracy and Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives* published in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Volume 53, Number 1, in August, 1994, is an excellent example of an emotional knee-jerk liberal reaction to the debate on democracy and human rights between the United States and some countries in Asia in the post cold-war era. It is precisely this sort of closed-minded thinking which has thwarted the liberal imagination that the Conference, which spawned the book, was seeking to overcome. The Conference sought for a genuine exchange of views on this debate.

Typically, Friedman does not deal with the substance of the arguments but with the motives of the project which he seeks to discredit. The Singapore Conference on "Democracy and Capitalism: Asian and American Perspectives" was organised by The Asia Society (New York), the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, The Institute of Policy Studies, and the Singapore International Foundation in 1993, not, as he alleges, to oppose an American policy to promote democracy, but to critically examine the ideas and the perspectives emerging in the new ideological debate. The organisers recognised that this debate on values was becoming the most important debate of the times. It is in the interest of a genuine dialogue and exchange of views that the Conference included participants of different ideological hues from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the United States.

The fact that Professor Samuel Huntington and Mr. Shijuro Ogata did not share the Singapore position was not at all a surprise. After all that was the reason why they were invited was to share their ideas and argumentation.

My own essay giving one Asian perspective on "Democracy: Evolution and Implementation" gives an interpretation of the evolution of political systems in Asia, and how borrowed and transferred political institutions from Western sources have had to adapt or have modified through history, tradition and culture and the realities of dealing with post-independent problems. The essay argues for the recognition of variants of democracy as a political phenomenon. I believe many thoughtful, less polemical scholars will not have difficulties in accepting this argument.

CHAN HENG CHEE

Institute of Southeast Asian Studies

TO THE EDITOR:

Having recently completed *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences* (Westview, 1994), "a genuine dialogue" on democracy might be good, but Chan prefers name-calling, describing the description of authoritarianism in my JAS review of her book, even when camouflaged as Asian values as still authoritarianism, as a "close-minded" "knee-jerk liberal reaction." Denying the review's statement that a particular perspective was sought from Huntington, Chan insists she only sought his "ideas and argumentation." However, Huntington cites his

invitation "to provide an overview of the American experience highlighting the unique set of motivations and circumstances fueling democratization in the United States, and secondly, emphasizing the distinct aspects of the process which are in contrast to the Asian experience."

But is there an Asian experience or unique and distinct Asian values that are incompatible with liberal democracy? From India and Japan to Mongolia and Taiwan, the peoples of Asia prove the answer is "no." The victor in Burma's democratic elections, Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi notes, "There is nothing new in . . . governments seeking to justify . . . authoritarian rule by denouncing liberal democratic principles as alien" (*Freedom From Fear*, page 168). Korean democratic leader Kim Dae Jong adds, "The biggest obstacle (to democracy) is not its (Asia's) cultural heritage, but the resistance of authoritarian rulers and their apologists" (*Foreign Affairs*, 73.6, p. 194).

EDWARD FRIEDMAN

University of Wisconsin, Madison

TO THE EDITOR:

One would expect that a review of my book *Autocratic Tradition and Chinese Politics* (*JAS*, November, 1994) will discuss its major themes: treating PRC as a revitalized restoration of Chinese traditional autocracy; viewing the Chinese state as the most important factor in determining socio-economic changes; the important role of political culture as an explanatory variable; the emergence of Chinese civil society; the evolution of two thousand years of imperial autocracy and its impact on PRC politics; mechanism of political movements; special features of Chinese legal orders; treating state/society relationship as a structural variable which changes over time; etc. Yet, none of these issues were even cursorily addressed. It is also to be expected that a book which covers a time span of three thousand years and a wide range of diverse issues will engender many controversies and expose the author to attacks from various quarters. But somehow the review seems to have bogged down on the use of the term "totalitarianism."

Anita Andrew and John Rapp fault the term totalitarianism as "oversimplified" because even Mao Zedong and Zhu Yuanzhang were not able "to achieve total control" over their subjects and officials, and the imperial and PRC states had only "limited success" (not failures!) in achieving "total autonomy" (without citing any example). Following this line of argument, the Nazi regime must not be characterized as "totalitarian" because even the mass genocide of six million Jewish people was only a "limited success" since they were not "totally" exterminated and not "all" Germans "totally" obeyed "all" orders of Hitler who was only a great exception; and the very use of violent measure is proof of resilient Jewish opposition and the power of the fascist dictator was not "total." Such "refined" argument would surely deny the use of Weberian ideal type because there is, for example, no pure charismatic type of authority in social reality. By the same token, both Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry should be banished from natural sciences because the real physical world has no counterparts to ideal point and line.

Just because the book uses the tabooed term, the reviewers allege that it utilizes "an unchanging autocracy" thesis despite the fact the book traces the changes of Chinese autocracy in different periods. In support of their misrepresentation, Andrew and Rapp improved the technique of "*duanzhang quyì*" into "*duanju quyì*" (cutting

a sentence to extract meaning out of context). They quote only a portion of a sentence but delete the rest about “modifications and adaptations” (p. 71) and ignore the passage on the previous page about changes to improve state capacity. Using a similar technique of distortion, the original sentence about the post-Mao era, “China’s social order has moved from a totalitarian phase toward a post-totalitarian or authoritarian phase in which the domination of state over society is becoming less total” (p. 350) now becomes transfigured in the reviewers’ words “a ‘less total’ totalitarian regime” and hence “an obvious contradiction in terms.” They fault the book for not taking account of “reduced state capacity,” whereas on the same page no less than five signs of deterioration of the party-state are listed. Are such distortion and misrepresentation worthy of serious scholarship?

By utilizing such a ploy of distortion, the reviewers skillfully circumvent the important issue of whether or not the imperial state had been autocratic for more than two thousand years, and the PRC has been autocratic since 1949.

It is indeed a shame that Andrew and Rapp still cling on to an outdated view and treat any use of the term totalitarianism by simplistically stereotyping it as “unchanging and oversimplified,” like conditioned reflex to a stimulus.

Some “refined” alternatives of the so-called “totalitarian model” predominated during the 1960s and 1970s, and still enjoy influence today. According to these “sophisticated models,” Mao Zedong was a romantic poet who identified himself “with the commoners,” though this “People’s Emperor” created more wretched of the earth than any other Chinese autocrat; the commune was a viable path to utopia, though more than thirty million Chinese died of starvation during communization; the Cultural Revolution was a noble attempt to build an egalitarian society, though the ambition of one man, Mao, plunged hundreds of millions into disaster involving torture and even cannibalism. Now with more information coming out of the PRC, part of which is in this book, isn’t it time for some Western colleagues to update their conception of the Mao era and acknowledge that it was totalitarian?

Contrary to the reviewers’ allegation, it is clear from Chapter 3 that I do not see all Daoist and Confucian thought as proto-Legalism.

Though the reviewers see there is a recent similar trend in Western scholarship, this book is the first one in the English language which explicitly states the thesis “the PRC is a revitalized restoration of Chinese traditional autocracy.”

Limitation of space forbids me from commenting on the review’s other distortions, inconsistencies, contradiction in terms, and unsubstantiated statements.

Despite our differences I am appreciative of the reviewers’ acknowledgement that this book “could still be a starting point for those interested in building a more refined history of the Chinese state.”

ZHENGYUAN FU
Chapman University

TO THE EDITOR:

We stand by our review, which found value in parts of Professor Fu’s book and agreed that a more state-centered analysis is necessary as a corrective to much of Western China scholarship. That is why we found it so unfortunate that his study was seriously marred by an oversimplified view of Chinese history. Far from grinding our own ideological ax, we would agree that imperial dynasties were typically brutal and dictatorial and that Mao’s regime was similarly no kind of populist utopia.

Indeed, in our own work comparing Mao Zedong with Zhu Yuanzhang, we take on scholars of the 1960s and 1970s for their far too rosy view of Mao and his policies, a view based on an ideological blind spot opposite from that of theorists of totalitarianism.

In examining Fu's account of traditional and modern Chinese autocracy, we did focus on the major theme of his book and do not believe that we misrepresented his main argument. To quote the sentence on page 71 in full, "from 221 B.C. to A.D. 1912, the basic structure of the Chinese imperial central administration remained essentially unchanged except for minor modifications and adaptations." Although Fu states on the previous page that over the years there were "changes of details" to improve state capacity, this ignores that in fact the changes were often major and did not always lead to greater state control. His reply, furthermore, fails to deal with our major point that "activist" rulers such as Mao and Zhu were great exceptions in Chinese history, and that the bureaucracy often was able to constrain emperors' actions while maintaining the state's autonomy as a whole, a point that state-centered analysis did not have to miss so completely.

As part of his case for an unchanging autocracy, Fu does indeed in Chapter 3 focus almost entirely on the proto-Legalist aspects of Daoist and Confucian political philosophy. Referring to Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi (page 35), Fu states that "although this school of pre-Qin philosophy is often identified as naturalist and even anarchist, it had a close affinity with the totalitarian Legalists." Nowhere in Chapter 3 is there even a mention of the anti-statist aspects of Daoism nor the many passages in *Daode jing* and the *Zhuang Zi* that are directly critical of Legalism. Likewise, Fu simply notes in passing the Mencian defense of "humane rule" (pp. 32–33) while ignoring the utopian Confucian tradition based on Mencius. Throughout the book Confucianism is treated almost solely as a support for traditional imperial autocracy.

Our point about the totalitarian model was that it is unable to explain when and why Leninist regimes change and diverge. Even if one quotes the full sentence about the post-Mao Chinese state (page 350), this leaves the contradiction unanswered about how a supposedly unchanging totalitarian regime could suddenly transform itself and reduce its own capacity. Although Weberian ideal types never appear in perfect form in social reality, Fu's unrefined model presents readers with a distorted overview of the Chinese state. Again the real shame is that even within the statist paradigm this distortion could have been avoided.

ANITA ANDREW
Northern Illinois University

JOHN A. RAPP
Beloit College

TO THE EDITOR:

The review of Volume 1 of the *Cambridge History of Japan* by Walter Edwards in *JAS* August '94 issue struck me as a representative example of a good intent (that of assessing the work's overall themes and contributions) gone awry. Reviewers owe it to the authors whose work they are analyzing to be fair in their critiques as well as their praise, a task most readily accomplished by citing specific examples from the text at hand to support their opinions. For about half of the review, Edwards provides a helpful overview of the book's historical breadth and themes. He begins, however, by finding problematic the entire Cambridge series' intended

audience, style of presentation, and “dated” syntheses. These aspersions he extends to the present volume as well without really substantiating his claims. Later, where he challenges a particular reading of history (Chapter 2), he supports his charges about the translation of sources or specific interpretations of history with page numbers and his own/alternative readings. This is helpful and interesting. The review turns sour when he then essentially dismisses the chapter under question, as well as editor Brown’s other contributions, by raising the spectre of other “errors like these” (errors the reader can only guess at) that serve to “rob the chapter of its value as an introduction to the period.” He continues by mentioning without any hint of their nature or substance “a number of problems in Okazaki’s chapter” that are “evident” but “appear minor.” He also faults “gaps” in two accounts of the Taika reform, one by Sonoda and the other by Inoue, and thankfully goes on to summarize their views so the reader may at least know the gist of his concern. Yet I wonder how many edited volumes achieve or, for that matter, even attempt a uniformity of presentation among its contributors? I would think that in matters related to history, ethnography, or other social sciences, varying interpretations within a scholarly discourse are to be valued rather than disparaged since they reflect the ongoing dynamism of discovering new data and bringing that information to a wider audience. Edwards may indeed have his preferences as to the causes of the Taika reforms, but why find fault with the format of the debate instead of its content? He ends this discussion by commending Brown’s translation of Sonoda’s chapter, adding that “I hope these observations mean that the doubts mentioned above are unfounded.” What is a reader to do at this point? Dismiss Edward’s earlier critique concerning the location of burial tombs? Doubt his entire assessment of the work at hand as well as the series? He concludes by noting again that revisions are in order for *Ancient Japan* yet believes it will be regarded as “a standard reference for a long time to come.” I urge those who have read his review to enter the world of *Ancient Japan* for themselves and see whether the detailed scholarship of its many authors, their theoretical stances on history and historiography (many extremely helpful in posing central issues and questions for debate), and the wealth of information as well as Brown’s successful editing to make this presentation readable more than compensate for whatever shortcomings it may or may not have. I learned a great deal from this work and hope others will not let a single review rob them of a rare opportunity that will be regarded as a major milestone in scholarship on early Japan.

JOHN NELSON
University of Texas, Austin

TO THE EDITOR:

Mr. Nelson notes that my review begins “by finding problematic the entire Cambridge series’ intended audience, style of presentation, and ‘dated’ syntheses.” His attribution of these opinions to me alone is incorrect, however; in declaring that Volume 1 of the series “bears many qualities already noted in its predecessors,” I was alluding to a number of reviews previously published for Volumes 3–6 in *The Journal of Asian Studies* and *The Journal of Japanese Studies*. Specific citations, omitted due to limitations on length, may be inserted as follows:

As drawbacks, these [qualities] include an uncertainty regarding its audience [Volume 3: JJS 18(2):480; Volume 4: JJS 18(2):493; Volume 6: JAS 49(4):935], a seeming uniformity of presentation often at odds with the diverging viewpoints of the authors

[Volume 3: JJS 18(2):488; Volume 5: JJS 18(2):504], and a tendency for the syntheses to be out of date by a decade or more [Volume 4: JJS 18(2):493, 502; Volume 5: JJS 18(2):513].

The main thrust of Mr. Nelson's complaint, however, is that my review fails to back up its extension of such criticisms to Volume 1 with "specific examples from the text at hand." In particular, he sees me dismissing Delmer Brown's chapter ("The Yamato Kingdom") on the basis of "errors the reader can only guess at." It was indeed my intention to raise a warning about the quality of this chapter. The problem, of course, is how best to do so. Journal editors caution against citing more than a sample of errors, and for good reason: corrigenda make for dull reading, and reviews that resemble them are hardly collegial. The strategy, then, is to give but a few illustrations, and trust the reader to acknowledge the reviewer's authority when he claims there are more.

This is just what I intended to do, by first pointing out with specific examples that Brown (1) misunderstands Japanese archaeological terminology, (2) confounds chronological and cultural contexts by mistaking third and fourth century materials (vertical burial chambers, indigenously developed) for later ones (horizontal chambers, continentally inspired), and (3) cites Japanese authors (Shiraishi, Kondō) as claiming one thing when in fact they say something quite different. These are indeed matters of fact—not "interpretation"—which the reader is free to verify for him or herself. Whether Mr. Nelson has attempted to do so is unclear, but there is no mistaking his lack of faith in my claim that other errors mar the text.

What, indeed, is the reviewer to do? When I choose to speak out on Brown's lapses, Mr. Nelson either ignores my arguments or insinuates that I have none. When I commend Brown's accomplishments, such as Sonoda Kōyū's chapter (which the Preface indicates was largely written by Brown, not "translated" by him), it is suggested that my views are so self-contradictory as to warrant dismissal. Why must it be all one or the other? Mr. Nelson himself observes that a variety of approaches to a complex issue such as the causes of the Taika reform is welcome. His point that such diversity in a single volume should be celebrated, rather than criticized as comprising "gaps" in the presentation, is well taken. By the same token, there are multiple ways to evaluate any single work, especially one as broad in its coverage as *Ancient Japan*. In my review I indeed tried to give, as Mr. Nelson acknowledges, "a helpful overview of the book's historical breadth and themes," while commending its strengths in the ways that I am able to appreciate them. I also felt that it would be entirely appropriate as reviewer to include a *caveat lector* based on my particular perspective—as one who lives and works in the Nara basin, actively engaged in the study of Japanese archaeology—about certain problems of which others are most likely unaware. And I see no cause for censure for having done precisely that.

WALTER EDWARDS
Tenri University

TO THE EDITOR:

As an historian of fashion I was pleased by David K. Wyatt's recognition that clothing styles can be used effectively as evidence in dating pictorial materials ("Five Voices from Southeast Asia's Past," *JAS* 53.4, November 1994). Unfortunately, in this case Dr. Wyatt has over-emphasized and misinterpreted a single item of data, and so has arrived at an incorrect conclusion. Contrary to his assertion (pp. 1086,

1089), a women's fashion of wearing beads in the hair was neither limited to nor typical of the 1890s: it certainly cannot be taken as diagnostic of that era, especially in the face of stronger evidence that suggests a different date.

The Western figures in the detail of the mural from Wat Phumin (Wyatt, Fig. 5) are dressed in typical fashions of the 1860s. The women wear fitted bodices and bell-shaped skirts (worn over a crinoline) with flounces, with a decorative ribbon or sash at the waist. These clothes are utterly unlike the wide shoulders, big sleeves, and straight skirts typical of the 1890s. The men wear informal suits, high-collared and buttoned up in the front, of a sort favored for travel or sporting wear in the mid-19th century. The women's hair is worn in a low bun or chignon, done up in a hair-net and secured with a small, beaded ornamental cap or clasp. Hairstyles of exactly this sort are depicted for the 1860s in Richard Corson, *Fashions in Hair* (London: Peter Owen, 1965), plate 126.

As Dr. Wyatt points out, "conventional scholarship dates the murals to the restoration of Wat Phumin in 1868" (p. 1086). The evidence from fashion depicted in the murals fully supports that date, rather than the later date that Dr. Wyatt favors.

VALERIE STEELE
Fashion Institute of Technology

TO THE EDITOR:

Dr. Steele is much more up-to-date than the sources I used, and I am grateful for her expertise. Nonetheless, I am not completely convinced; mainly because we might both overestimate the proper value of costume as a tool for dating. Unless the artist actually saw the Europeans he depicted, we have to assume that s/he worked from an illustration; and the illustration might be contemporary, twenty years old, or a hundred years old. Such also holds for the steamship he drew at Wat Phumin, and for the French military uniforms. The artist might have seen French missionaries in interior northern Thailand in the 1860s; but he would not have seen French women, even in the 1890s. And I am inclined to believe that an English visitor to Wat Phumin in 1887, who commented on the interior of the temple, would have commented on the murals if they were there then, which he did not.

DAVID K. WYATT
Cornell University