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Peter J. Katzenstein, (Ed.) Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilizational processes beyond East and West. New York: Routledge, 2012.

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Peter J. Katzenstein, (Ed.) *Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilizational processes beyond East and West.* New York: Routledge, 2012.

Sinicization, as a concept, has lately been intimately tied to popular discourses surrounding the so-called “Rise of China,” an event heralded, in both scholarly and public circles, with either celebratory declarations of imminent global change or portents of doom, warning of the destruction of the existing global social/political/economic order. In both scenarios, acceptance of an ideological binary that presupposes the existence of an ill-defined “East” and “West” is implicit. The authors of the essays presented in this book seek to nuance and complicate, through the discussion and analysis of topics that deal with political, economic, and cultural themes, the popular concept of Sinicization, while they simultaneously attempt to challenge the “reification” of simplistic categories that divide the world into spheres dominated by either the “East” or “West” (p. 14). In the case of China, Sinicization, as a system that serves to make “the world suitable to China and the Chinese,” emerges as a powerful, though flexible, ideological tool (p. 9).

Peter J. Katzenstein, as editor, in his introduction provides a basic discussion of Sinicization as a civilizational process that is neither new nor unilateral in nature. He argues that the processes of Sinicization are inherently interactive, involving parties ensconced in both the metropole as well as the periphery. In this way, Sinicization can be employed across multiple geographic, political, economic, and cultural sites. According to Katzenstein, processes of Sinicization have historically served the leaders of the Chinese state as they dealt with both internal conflicts and competing peripheral ideologies and, in later centuries, the arrival of Europeans bearing already-entrenched ideological systems. For him, it was the inherent flexibility and plasticity of Sinicization that made dealing with such challenges (and devising reasonable responses to them) relatively easy. Challenging the arguments of scholars like Andre Gunder Frank, who wrote the seminal *Re-Orient*, Katzenstein indicates that Sinicization will not simply “return” China to a previously-enjoyed state of global hegemony. Neither is Sinicization indicative of a “rupture” in the existent global economic system. Instead, he (correctly) argues that historically, China maintained a state of regional economic superiority through the era of European imperial expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Katzenstein focuses upon analyzing the varied processes of Sinicization in the context of ideological “recombination,” which contextualizes China’s contemporary “rise” within a broader narrative of implicit ideological openness, complexity, and flexibility. In his view, China’s current “rise” is indicative not of a rupture or break with the past; rather, it reflects a “historical [continuity]” (p. 19), as do the myriad ways China has historically dealt with individuals from tributary states. In fact, Katzenstein attributes the relative long-term peace and stability of East Asia to China’s historical willingness to be “remarkably accommodating to the needs and demands of secondary states” (p. 24). For him, the contemporary Chinese government’s dealings with Taiwan provide further evidence of a desire to employ both “new and old elements” when resolving potentially explosive issues (p. 26). The author argues that modern processes of Sinicization are representative of the existence of not one but “multiple civilizational processes” (p. 27). These processes are, to him, “historical and spontaneous,” involving numerous actors hailing both from within China and from regions beyond its contemporary borders (p. 27). The theme of “recombination” introduced by Katzenstein carries over into succeeding chapters, in which

successive case studies are presented that deal with the theme of Sinicization in the context of contemporary geographic, political, economic, and cultural issues.

The six case studies presented in the book are divided into four parts, each with a roughly equivalent theme. Part I, featuring essays by Allen Carlson and Xu Xin, deals thematically with Sinicization in the context of delineating (or breaking down) borders. Carlson posits that historically, China's governments understood the frontier (*bianjiang*) and its inhabitants in relatively fluid terms; this "mutability" was "stifled" with the acceptance, in the mid twentieth century, of Westphalian¹ notions of sovereignty (p. 42). Such rigid modes of thought began to change in the 1970's with the introduction of reforms by Deng Xiaoping. The resulting dialogue served to relieve the "discursive straitjacket" imposed on scholars earlier in the century, thus reinvigorating scholastic discourse on historically-appropriate ways of dealing with frontier regions (p. 47). Similarly, Xu Xin argues that Deng's "one country, two systems" (*yiguo liangzhi*) ideology was representative of the flexibility of Sinicization. While China ("one country") might be conceived of as a "sovereign state" in the vein of Westphalianism, it was generally flexible when engaging with locals whose practices ("two systems") might differ dramatically from the protocols of the central government (p. 66). Similarly, discourses surrounding the issue of Taiwan and reunification are contextualized within a broader system of perpetual negotiations. Such negotiations resulted in the creation of "dialectical Sinicization," a "political dynamic" that encompasses both "Western and Sinic practices" (p. 67).

Part II, including essays by Tianbiao Zhu and Takashi Shiraishi, focuses upon Sinicization in the context of economic growth and change. Zhu argues that China's "rise" can be attributed to the implementation of a program of "compressed development" (p. 99). This occurs in concert with the flexible appropriation of aspects of "multiple traditions," which are themselves the products of "vertical Sinicization," or processes produced "across time and space," rather than adopted from (or produced in opposition to) other groups (p. 99). Contemporary Chinese thinkers, then, can select from and apply ideologies from China's own pool of historical tradition, resulting in dynamic "economic recalibration" (p. 99). Takashi Shiraishi likewise analyzes Sinicization's role in the context of economic relations with Southeast Asian partners. Southeast Asian nations, according to Shiraishi, do not respond to China's "rise" by either "balancing or bandwagoning"; instead, flexibility and dynamism, on the part of both China and the nations they court, serve to delineate the boundaries of constantly changing economic relationships (p. 122). In both chapters, then, economic "recalibration" is central.

In Part III, authors Chih-yu Shih and Caroline S. Hau analyze Sinicization within the context of "China," here functioning as both a subjective and fluid ideal. Shih, focusing upon "cultural Sinicization," discusses the experiences of four "Asian diasporic academics" who study China (p. 153). These individuals, each in their own way, mediate between "China and the world," since they largely produce scholarship published in English (p. 153). The production of their individual views regarding China coincides with Sinicization, understood by Shih as being "composed of processes of increasing mutual self-knowledge as well as increasing knowledge about China" (p. 155). In this way, the scholars profiled become both "producers and consumers

¹ Westphalian sovereignty is the concept of the sovereignty of nation-states on their territory. In the Westphalian system, the national interests and goals of states (and nation-states) are widely assumed to go beyond those of any citizen or any one ruler. States are the primary institutional agents in an interstate system of relations. The Westphalian doctrine of states as independent agents was bolstered by the rise in 19th century thought of nationalism, under which legitimate states were assumed to correspond to nations.

of civilization,” moving within and through the “multi-sited processes” of Sinicization (p. 173). Hau, focusing primarily upon the changing popular conceptualization of “China” in Southeast Asian nations, argues that individuals living in diasporic communities wield a tremendous amount of power in making “China,” a “floating signifier,”² relevant in their daily lives (p. 192). For Hau, China as a metropole has little hegemonic control over how “China,” as an image, is produced and regarded abroad. Sinicization, then, is a multifaceted process of construction that employs “multiple actors,” who each, in forming ideas about “China,” engage in “cultural entrepreneurship” not necessarily sanctioned by the state (p. 193). In this way, the government of the People’s Republic of China has little tangible control over how, why, or when individuals decide to “become” Chinese (p. 199).

In Part IV, Katzenstein returns, arguing that Sinicization exists as a result of “shared understandings” placed atop “a mosaic of local diversity” (p. 209). In a nod to Antonio Gramsci, Katzenstein indicates that Sinicization is, in this case, “harmony” as hegemony, since the power of its processes is “invisible,” and “the existence of that power is taken for granted” (p. 209). While the goal of Sinicization is, seemingly, to create “an international milieu that China and the Chinese find welcoming,” its processes are, perhaps, necessarily hybrid and flexible (p. 210).

Sinicization, then, is indeed made up of a complex set of processes, which are, by degrees, either complementary or existing in apparent opposition to one another. Rather than focusing upon what Samuel Huntington claimed would be “clashes” between “civilizations,” Katzenstein and the other authors in this text attempt to complicate popular conceptions of civilizational interaction by focusing instead upon hybridity and plurality. The result is a cohesive series of chapters which each contribute, more or less, to producing a nuanced dialogue centered on the perceived “rise” of China. The arguments presented are theoretically and historiographically sound and are produced from a prodigious body of both primary and secondary source materials. The authors collectively consulted the works of a diverse group of theorists and scholars ranging from Antonio Gramsci, Rey Chow, and Pierre Bourdieu to Evelyn Rawski, Maya Jasanoff, Philip C.C. Huang, John Fairbank, and Samuel Huntington. This book will undoubtedly help to further complicate debates surrounding both the “rise” of China, and the role that Sinicization plays globally. It will be well received by scholars of China, as well as those who focus upon international relations, and economic and social history.

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² A “floating signifier” denotes signifiers (terms) without concrete referents, such as words that do not point to any actual objects or agreed upon meanings; they may stand for many (or even *any* referents). Floating signifiers may mean whatever their interpreters want them to mean, necessarily resulting in a form of symbolic thought, operating despite any contradiction that might be inherent in it.