Theme Issue

From “Tribute System” to “Peaceful Rise”: American Historians, Political Scientists, and Policy Analysts Discuss China’s Foreign Relations

Edited by John E. Wills, Jr.

As we try to understand China’s important place in today’s world we sometimes want to draw insights from its millennial history of relations with foreign peoples, which sometimes took the form of a “tribute system.” Does this heritage make China's talk of a "peaceful rise" less convincing, its policy-makers more inclined to seek “hegemony,” less inclined to the give and take of diplomacy among equals? This is a unique collection of papers by historians, political scientists, and policy analysts who have made important contributions to this range of issues. The variety of approaches and intellectual styles is wide, but the papers converge and interact with each other in illuminating ways. This collection will offer food for thought for anyone interested in these issues, including students in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses on Chinese foreign relations.

John E. Wills, Jr., “Introduction”

Michael D. Swaine, “The Policy Analyst and Historical Perspectives: Notes of a Practitioner”

John E. Wills, Jr., “How Many Asymmetries?: Continuities, Transformations, and Puzzles in the Study of Chinese Foreign Relations”

Alice Lyman Miller, “Some Things We Used to Know about China’s Past and Present (But Now, Not So Much)”

James L. Hevia, “Tribute, Asymmetry, and Imperial Formations: Rethinking Relations of Power in East Asia”

Peter C. Perdue, “China and Other Colonial Empires”

Brantly Womack, “Recognition, Deference, and Respect: Generalizing the Lessons of an Asymmetric Asian Order”

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