Enter Pitman Potter's most recent book *China's Legal System,* which seeks to provide the sort of primary introduction to this topic that has, thus far, been sorely lacking. Potter's approach in this volume is to present China's legal system as a historical artefact, constituted through the vagaries of twentieth century statecraft. In the first section, Potter leads us along the legal development from the last days of the Empire through the Republic and on through the People's Republic. He succinctly identifies continuities, such as the reinterpretation of relational justice, and disruptions, paying particular attention to Maoist nihilism and the subsequent restoration of some idea of law as central to contemporary governance.

The next three sections address how law has served efforts to generate political stability, economic prosperity, and social development. Under the heading of political stability, Potter, like China's rulers, lets Party leadership precede a discussion of the renewed formal, constitutionally defined structures of state power, including the National People's Congress, administrative agencies, courts, and legal practice. Lastly, he situates criminal justice and administrative detention in a broader coercive order aimed at deterring behaviour deemed to endanger stability. The section on economic prosperity explains how, after the demise of class struggle as a dominant political concern, the ideological emphasis shifted to the "productive forces" in the process of development. Starting from notions of "corporatism" and "clientelism," Potter from the outset qualifies the extent to which law has been able to provide predictability and certainty for economic actors. Furthermore, by contrasting economic law as a mode of state policy implementation and as a facilitation of autonomous economic interaction, Potter puts his finger precisely on the nub of some of the most conflicting elements in the relationship between law and the market. At a more technical level, this section addresses the fundamental elements of contract and property law, as well as taxation and its relationship to economic growth. Turning to questions of social development, Potter points at the profound conflicts between the single-minded pursuit of economic growth and social concerns, which he divides into traditional and emerging categories. On the traditional side, we find labour relations, healthcare, education, and the rights of women and ethnicities. Emerging concerns include media and the Internet, environmental protection, and corporate social responsibility. Yet, in spite of efforts to create regulatory norms in these fields, Potter acutely draws into question the permanence and consistency of the government's commitment to ensuring implementation in practice.

The last section is dedicated to Chinese interaction with international law and engagement with international regimes. It ably describes the ambivalence with which these matters were approached: during the Mao era, China denounced international law as bourgeois, yet sought to join the UN. After 1989, China was ostracised from international society, yet rapidly expanded its dialogues in areas as diverse as trade and human rights. China's WTO membership has had a profound influence on its domestic legal order, yet in other areas, such as environmental regulation, China has sought to limit its commitments.

This volume is principally directed at students, and must therefore be evaluated as such. Potter's narrative recounts little that isn't known to more experienced observers and scholars of Chinese law, nor does it offer novel theoretical insights. But that is not the point. Rather, this book must be assessed on the contribution it could make to providing the next generation of China law researchers with the initial tools and concepts with which to tackle the issues mentioned earlier in this review. Within these parameters and the approach that Potter has taken, this book succeeds admirably. At all times, Potter avoids unnecessary jargon and abstruseness, and provides useful discussion questions and reading suggestions at the end of every chapter. Substantively, the nuance and sensitivity of his previous works shines through. Perhaps most importantly, Potter shies away from making grand statements on the future of Chinese law, leaving it to the reader to ponder the complex issues he raises.

The answer to the question of whether this reviewer would use this book in an introductory course on Chinese law is unreservedly yes. However, it is also necessary to point out that despite the breadth of the issues tackled in this book, it is not comprehensive. It tells us relatively little about, for instance, the processes of legislation and enforcement, or about black letter law in many areas. This criticism should, nevertheless, not be laid at Potter's feet. Rather, the pithy and incisive insights with which this volume is replete should enable a course organiser to set deeper discussion topics, supplemented with more specialised reading.

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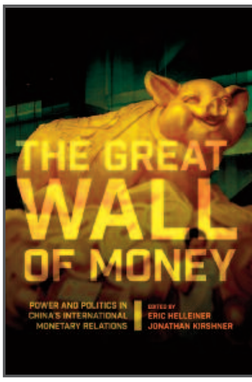

Eric Helleiner and Jonathan Kirshner (eds), The Great Wall of Money: Power and Politics in China's International Monetary Relations, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2014, 288 pp.

ADRIEN FAUDOT

This collection is edited by two experts in international political economy, their association having already produced reference works on international monetary relations, notably *The Future of the Dollar* (2009). The two academics repeat the experience, this time focusing on China's monetary relations and the internationalisation of its currency, the renminbi (RMB). The book seeks to understand the political stakes in China's international monetary relations and the type of power it is acquiring from them (p. 2).

Benjamin Cohen's chapter considers the strategy China is pursuing in internationalising its currency – how far will the RMB go? – bearing in mind the failures of previous competitors to the dollar. The vagueness of the response is due to ignorance of the strategy of Chinese power, knowing that it cannot be integrated into the monetary system dominated by the United States as were West Germany, Japan, and the Euro Zone, as China is not a historical ally of the American hegemon and "it is not at all clear that the Chinese are ready to dance" (p. 40). While strong economic incentives could link China to the current international monetary system by according some rights and admitting it to the "club" of international powers, geopolitical considerations could upset this economic logic and make China adopt a conflictual attitude vis-à-vis the existing monetary order.

Eric Helleiner and Bessma Momani examine China's relations with international organisations, the IMF in particular. They note that Chinese positions have their origins in the early twentieth century. Sun Yat-sen had already formulated the bases of a project for China's international development, defended at Bretton Woods by the Chinese delegation. Helleiner and Momani observe that after 1945, China pursued similar objectives in negotiations with the IMF: reaffirming the Chinese economy's importance in helping balance the global economy; conserving autonomy and sovereignty in capital controls and choice of exchange rate while demanding a macroeconomic surveillance of member states; finally, increasing the importance the institution accords to developing countries, especially in financing. Although the Cold War constituted a major break, as China was kept out of the IMF for 31 years in favour of Taiwan (until 1980), these objectives still largely determine China's attitude within the institution.

David Steinberg's contribution studies the determinants of China's considerable accumulation of foreign exchange reserves (about three trillion dollars in 2014). The two periods of rapid accumulation he distinguishes are 1994-1997 and 2003-2008. Steinberg sees in this accumulation the results of a domestic conflictual force equation between those who view it as a concrete advantage (financial stability and vitality of export industries) and those who consider it a disadvantage (for industries making non-exchangeable products, for example, or even the central bank, which is held responsible for the inflation that this accumulation helps fuel). The succession of periods of more or less rapid accumulation of reserves could have resulted from this balance of force in national policy, in Steinberg's view.

Hongying Wang deals with the global imbalance and China's considerable current account surplus (10.1% of GDP in 2007 and still largely positive, albeit now shrinking). Wang stresses the need to study it, apart from as mere exchange rate, in its growth regime. Characterised by rising inequalities, China is pursuing an export dependent regime due to institutional inertia while the poorest populations, which could impart dynamism to internal demand, have very little political influence. Political determinants are therefore essential. China's nationalism and quest for autonomy if not influence vis-à-vis the rest of the world also explain its zest for accumulating reserves.

Andrew Walter considers policies of macroeconomic surveillance, retracing the evolution of China's current account surplus with the United States and the IMF's reactions as well as those of US leaders. A dialogue that had long been courteous, thanks to numerous American multinationals' dependence on China, turned quite tense in 2007. The 2008 financial crisis doused these tensions by reducing the trade surplus, to the extent that from 2011, Chinese leaders declared the objective of reorienting the growth regime – via an augmentation of household consumption and reduced investments. It is nevertheless difficult to envisage that the Chinese government's new objectives have been influenced by international macroeconomic surveillance, given the role of different interest groups in the country and the political projects pitting them against each other.

Yang Jiang likewise highlights these dissensions, observing that the still very limited internationalisation of the RMB is not a priority for Chinese leaders. In the author's view, internationalisation would require liberalisation and a far-reaching opening of the economy (especially capital account), something the CCP leadership does not seem keen to initiate. This explains why China has so far opted for bilateral partnerships – rather than multilateral – with neighbouring countries and BRICS members and the European Union, which hardly seek to engage China in reform issues.

Gregory Chin is evidently more optimistic. In his view, China has developed a monetary strategy after the Asian crises leading to the twin resolves that the dollar-based monetary system requires reform as do international institutions. Early in the last decade, China sought to engage with international institutions, especially the IMF, but had great difficulty getting a hearing, ignored as it was by Western interlocutors who put forth demands unacceptable to Beijing, such as opening the capital account and making the RMB fully convertible. The 2009 crisis served to unleash a strategy to overcome these obstacles. China mobilised partners (notably the BRICS) agreeing on the principle of diversification of monetary practices: the reserve currency and that for the BRICS' international exchanges would have to be that of the BRICS themselves. In this context and on the strength of its macroeconomic performance, the Chinese currency has emerged as an instrument of monetary diversification, helping international actors expand their range of possible choices – especially in respect of reserve currencies. In this, China has developed a form of structural power and is shaking up that of the United States.

This ability to acquire international monetary might is further developed in the last contribution by Jonathan Kirshner. While the author warns that an economic catastrophe could well overtake China for different reasons (environmental, banking, social, and political), the economy has kept to a growth rate higher than that of the United States, at the same time raising the issue of the RMB's internationalisation, which is seen as a means of insulating the Chinese economy from troubles caused by dollar fluctuations and of building a relationship of strength so as to modify the functioning of institutions of the international monetary system. Chinese leaders thus have ambitions of challenging the "dollar's monopoly." (1) More fundamentally, it is the model driven by the United States that China contests through its monetary strategy. Kirshner's contribution contains a salutary account of the major liberalisation movement of the 1990s. While the Asian crises could have been foreseen in such a framework, they contributed to Asian countries' distrust of financial liberalisation. They became receptive to the Chinese discourse of a need to challenge the international monetary system and constituted a solid base for the RMB's internationalisation, at least regionally.

Overall, the book does not defend just one thesis but contains several. The divergences are to be found essentially in the evaluation of factors that could slow down if not block the RMB's expansion: the nature of the nation's political project, internal political dissensions, integration and adaptation in institutions of the existing monetary order... The theses defended are often contradictory, and it is left to the reader to synthesise them. Add to this the bibliography – 20 pages – which helps interested readers to go deeper into the reflections offered in the book's various contributions. It may be noted that Benjamin Cohen, known for his past demystifying analyses of the internationalising abilities of currencies supposedly competing with the US dollar, is more measured in his contribution this time, leaving open the possibility of an overhaul of the international monetary system, especially in view of the Chinese case.

While it would have been agreeable to find descriptive and analytical elements helping track the RMB's internationalisation both qualitatively – institutions engaged with their technical instruments – and quantitatively – what is the rhythm and geographic extent of this internationalisation? –

1. "'Only by eliminating the U.S. dollar's monopolistic position' can the system be reformed" (Li Ruogu, president of the China Export-Import Bank, quoted by Kirshner, p. 223).

this collection of essays nevertheless constitutes a reference text for the study of international monetary relations. Experts in this field pay special attention to China, understandably: in December 2014, the RMB ranked fifth for payments according to SWIFT, the global operator of international financial messages, thus confirming an extremely rapid growth rate, to the extent that the RMB should catch up with the yen in 2015.

▌Translated by N. Jayaram.

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Han Dongfang (in collaboration with Michaël Sztanke), Mon combat pour les ouvriers chinois (My struggle for Chinese workers), Paris, Michel Lafon, 2014, 290 pp.

CHLOÉ FROISSART

Published in 2014 to mark the 20th anniversary of China Labour Bulletin (CLB), the book is based on interviews that French journalist Michaël Sztanke carried out with Han Dongfang, the prominent Chinese labour activist and founder of the Hong Kong-based CLB. Presented as a first person account organised chronologically as well as thematically, the book is divided into two parts: the personal journey of Han Dongfang (first five chapters), and CLB's activism (the following six).

The first part retraces the formation of a political consciousness right from adolescence, the time when Han joined the army before being employed as a railway worker, his participation in the 1989 Democracy Movement in Beijing and the creation of the first workers' autonomous federation, whose spokesman he became; imprisonment for 22 months, illness, his stay in the United States and the impossibility of returning to China. It lays stress on key figures and events that have informed this consciousness: his peasant mother, who sacrificed her marriage in order to ensure that her children received an urban education in Beijing, and who taught him to care for others; the January 1987 student demonstrations in support of Hu Yaobang and his policies of reform and opening, which were quelled by a police baton charge; and of course, the 1989 events that signalled Han's entry into politics.

Han could have had an altogether different destiny: as a migrant worker dependant on others, had he remained in the countryside with his father; or pursuing the path of the PRC's elites, given that as a great admirer of Lei Feng he was promoted to deputy chief of his regiment and applied to join the Communist Party: "I behaved like a real soldier serving the people," he stresses (p. 21). But his rebellious spirit willed otherwise. His distrust of hierarchy, his awareness of abuses of power within the army, and his wish to "live in truth," [1] so to speak, finally convinced him that the Party needed reform: he resolved to "become an actor for this change" (p. 23). The students who risked their lives to organise his evacuation from Tiananmen Square when the crackdown began sealed his destiny by giving him the mission to become China's Lech Walesa. This independent spirit manifested itself again and again, as when facing violence and humiliation in prison and afflicted with serious tuberculosis, he stubbornly refused to admit to any "crime," or when in the United States for ablation of a lung, he converted to Christianity while resolving not to belong to any church: according to him, faith had to remain in the private and intimate domain. And while in the United States, he grew determined not to join the dissident movement in exile but to return to his country and work for change from within. Turned back twice at the Chinese border he was trying to cross from Hong Kong, Han was stripped of his nationality and found himself stateless until the Hong Kong authorities issued him a passport in 1997.

Part Two of the book opens with his decision – or rather painful acceptance – to stay in Hong Kong and use the place as a base to pursue the struggle on behalf of Chinese workers with the founding of CLB. Han gradually managed to symbolically cross the border with two radio transmissions: China Labour Bulletin, which he has presented thrice weekly via Radio Free Asia since 1997, and Radio Express News, during which he interacts with Chinese workers, gathering and verifying information in order to present the facts on social events in China. Han has also breached the border with the help of colleagues at CLB and partners – lawyers and NGOs – in China who are his "eyes and ears" and help realise his objectives to "put in place a network of supportive workers" (p. 16) and facilitate the emergence of worker leaders.

The second part then turns to militant action, reflecting on this action and the search for strategies, not only to help workers defend their rights but also to promote lasting change. It provides a concrete and detailed description of CLB's action through successive battles: redress for *xiagang* (laid off) workers, justice for the families of workers who died in mine explosions and silicosis victims, and finally, the emergence of collective bargaining. Some of these battles helped advance matters incrementally, especially in terms of public policy: starting in 2002, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (renamed the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in 2008) created its own website for disseminating information on mining accidents and has required local authorities to report them within 24 hours. Meanwhile, Gansu and Sichuan provinces have adopted a system to compensate silicosis victims, now that there is no question regarding the link between the disease and mining activities. CLB's advocacy has also influenced public opinion and has helped to open social space: today the media regularly report injustices against workers, and some local governments let "workers defend their interests without subjecting them to repression and harassment" (p. 168).

The organisation's elaboration of its methods and its positioning are set out through an analysis of exemplary cases, their impact, and what CLB has gleaned from them. This part is presented above all as an effort at defining and defending the organisation's action methods (CLB is not a union, but neither is it an "NGO for aid and advice," p. 109), addressed as much to the Chinese government as to dissidents in exile. To both sides, Han repeats that he is not a dissident but a labour rights activist, and that his work does

1. This expression is taken from Vaclav Havel, who explained it in his 1984 essay "Politics and Conscience," available at www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=clanky&val=73_aj_clanky.html&typ=HTML (accessed on 21 April 2015).