The Academy of Political Science

475 Riverside Drive · Suite 1274 · New York, New York 10115-1274
(212) 870-2500 · FAX: (212) 870-2202 · aps@psqonline.org · http://www.psqonline.org

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offices or gave campaign money got to be better seen as ingredients of the districts, and that, yes, getting better seen paid off in member activities.

I came away with some quibbles. On the empirical side, the question of who a bill is "important to" does not seem to afford an unclouded window into how a district is seen or perceived. "Important to" might cue thoughts about who has been pressing, contacting, or making a fuss about something. Asking directly who or what is seen out there might bring different answers. On the interpretive side, I had trouble buying a judgment about certain of the statistical relationships. Office contacters and campaign donors tend to be "seen" and thus have clout in members' activities; yet, in the statistical analysis, large, less-intrusive district subsets such as "consumers" and "residents" tend to strike out on those fronts. This juxtaposition of results is said to show "weak support for the [familiar] vote-maximizing argument (p. 100)" as an explanation of members' activities, on the grounds that the members seem to ignore their electoral needs by attending to small rather than large groups of voters. But where does this go? In fact, folks who are "active" [the author's term, (p. 10)] contacters and donors can throw around a lot of weight in elections. They need to be especially catered to.

A family of conversations has progressed for a long time on these topics. This book is a skilled and interesting contribution to these conversations. It sets a mark in on-site investigating. There is good sense in a perception-based account of legislators' activities, and it is important to keep developing that account.

DAVID R. MAYHEW
Yale University

East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute *by David C. Kang. New York, Columbia University Press, 2010. 240 pp. $27.50.*

David C. Kang seeks to use history to understand the present, a laudable objective, and to predict the future, a risky venture. After a study of five centuries of commerce and diplomacy in East Asia, he concludes that "Although China may already be…the largest economic and military power in East Asia, it has virtually no cultural or political legitimacy as a leading state" (p. 169) and "there is almost no chance that China will become the unquestioned hegemon in East Asia" (p. 171). Such astonishing speculation is, at the very least, uncertain. Who could have predicted that China in its chaotic 1930s and 1940s or even in the more-stable 1980s would be in such a dominant position in 2010? Even the most astute experts on China cannot ascertain whether the so-called Middle Kingdom will not become the "unquestioned hegemon in East Asia." Speculation about the future is tricky.

Although Kang's predictions are questionable, his survey of Chinese relations with Korea, Vietnam, and Japan is useful. He describes the Chinese tribute system and portrays it as a hierarchical structure in which China's

higher status and hegemony were recognized. Asserting that the tribute system was real, not symbolic or a subterfuge for trade, he argues that it set the stage for an almost uninterrupted five centuries of peace. He contrasts this era in East Asia with the failures of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 to ensure peace in Europe. Is this an apt comparison? Europe consisted of a group of generally evenly matched and consanguineous sovereign states with differing and conflicting territorial and commercial interests. On the other hand, Japan was distant from the Asian mainland; Korea and Vietnam did not match China in territory and power; and the East Asian states scarcely had commercial conflicts. China, in particular, hardly defended the interests of its merchants. Korea, Japan, and Vietnam certainly borrowed and adapted, at various times, China's written language, philosophical and religious views, and governmental institutions. Yet *realpolitik* often dictated their relations with China.

The tribute system, whether real or not, was not the main factor in the generally peaceful relationship among the Confucian-influenced states of the East from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) until the Opium Wars. The most-significant cause was that they did not have clashing economic or political interests, which the European countries did. When China and other tribes or states had different and competing interests, the tribute system could not prevent armed conflicts. Kang's five centuries of peace is not an accurate description of China's relations with tribes and states in bordering regions, which also often abided by the tribute system. The Ming dynasty witnessed repeated and intense campaigns against the Mongols and numerous battles with Central Asian Turkic peoples. The Qing dynasty (1644–1911) enlarged its territory by frequent wars. In 1634, it occupied Inner Mongolia, and by 1697, it had conquered Mongolia. By 1721, its troops laid claim to Tibet, and by 1756, they had crushed resistance in Xinjiang, which constitutes about one sixth of modern China. This violence belies Kang's thesis about peace and an international system based upon hierarchy, status, and hegemony. There were as many wars in an East Asia allegedly dominated by the tribute system as in a Europe unable to implement the Westphalian peace.

In his micro analysis, Kang has offered a provocative thesis, which will stimulate much analysis and discussion of traditional foreign relations in East Asia.

MORRIS ROSSABI
City University of New York

Tales from the Sausage Factory: Making Laws in New York State *by Daniel L. Feldman and Gerald Benjamin. Albany, State University of New York Press, 2010. 374 pp. $24.95.*

Dan Feldman, New York State Assembly member, in collaboration with Gerald Benjamin, an academic authority on the New York state legislature, has written a wonderful account of life in New York's legislature.