passes up numerous opportunities to take on key issues of a broader, comparative significance—such as the impact of European women in Asia or the patterns of interracial miscegenation that George Fredrickson has recently stressed for the early period of Dutch settlement in South Africa.

The style of the volume is uneven in quality. Taylor often abruptly moves from topic to topic in a manner which suggests rather too obviously her dependence on the scarce sources available for each period. Thus, in different places she surveys the contents of government ordinances, newspapers or novels—at times point by point—rather than mixing these to construct a narrative focused on the larger meanings of these documents in context. Seemingly important topics, like religion and education, are raised early on and then largely neglected, again perhaps reflecting Taylor's dependence on the sources available. In places, she launches into extended, but only marginally relevant, asides, such as her lengthy discussion of Raffles' journeys on Java and his scholarly interests, both of which have been dealt with in detail in earlier works.

Despite its limitations in scope and argument, The Social World of Batavia is an often original and useful volume which is bound to become a standard source of information for those who study the nature of Dutch society overseas. Taylor has advanced our understanding of the dynamics of European-Asian interaction at the highest social levels over a substantial period of time. She has also made a contribution to the history of women in Asia, and provided the richest and most subtly textured portrait to date of Mestizo society on Java. One can only hope that she will continue to make use of the available Dutch language materials to explore the broader, urban history issues that she largely neglects in the study, but which are so much in need of treatment by an able historian.

Rutgers University at New Brunswick
New Brunswick, U.S.A.

MICHAEL ADAS


In accord with the rules of Greek tragedy or the quotation from Mencius which provides the thematic unity as well as moral to the book under review: "a state sows the seeds of its own destruction before others finally destroy it." By mixing the comments of foreign observers with a variety of Chinese-language sources including the reminiscences of Kuomintang officials, Eastman has attempted to recreate a war-torn country. Undoubtedly helped or even inspired by the increasingly self-reflective atmosphere on Taiwan today, he is generally successful—particularly when he is able to show, often with freshness and new detail, those measures which were taken in a futile effort to shore up the endangered regime. Even the best-intentioned moves had a way of backfiring and no stitches came in time to save the social fabric.

Because the period treated is so long and too complex for any single volume, the work adopts a case study approach similar to that employed in Eastman's earlier work on the Nanking decade, The Abortive Revolution: China Under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937 (Cambridge, Mass., 1974). Since this new book is obviously a sequel it invites comparison. Chapter one takes a close look at Chungking's relations with the regional authorities in Yunnan in order to demonstrate the central government's failure to in-

tegrate that province either economically or politically. Bullying proved counter-
productive and only encouraged defection to the Communists. Chapters two and three
assess the lot of peasants and the state's inability to ease their situation. Chapter four
gives a disappointingly brief account of the Youth Corps but is long enough to show the
depths of factional rivalry. Chapter five which relates the folly of the Ko-hsin movement
(a party attempt at rectification) provides yet another example of political infighting.
The next two chapters treat the army first against the Japanese and then its domestic
foes. Chapter eight, which now takes us to pages 176-202, discusses the endemic
economic problems as manifested in the gold yuán monetary reforms of 1947 and
1948. An even shorter Chapter nine admits Chiang Kai-shek's candid but also self-
serving appraisal of where Nationalist China went wrong into evidence, in part to
refute the never quite buried allegations about U.S. abandonment but also to set up
the book's conclusion.

Of course no author ever receives full marks for proving what seems obvious: in
this case that the Kuomintang, beset by factionalism and corruption and faced with
massive socio-economic problems exacerbated by invasion and civil war, never created
a durable political system. The story is not new for every reader of this journal knows
about the "Kuomintang debacle". There are already better accounts of the military
failures, more detailed catalogs of mismanagement and insensitivity, and all those
studies about peasant nationalism, Communist land reform, Maoist strategy or
genius. Nonetheless, to the extent that Eastman shifts our attention away from the vic-
tors, he has made an important and challenging contribution to the historiography of
the period. At issue is more than just the flip side of the coin. Despite the strengths of
leadership, tactics and perhaps vision once shown by the Chinese Communist Party in
its quest for the Mandate of Heaven, that regime has also had to cope with its share of
factions, regionalism, self-interested members, economic mismanagement and
ideological incontience. As the Muses know well, the lessons of history are forever and
those tragic flaws seen in the Kuomintang may yet haunt its successors.

Many reviews will, no doubt, be peppered with criticism. Whole works could be
written on the topics Eastman merely introduces. The acts depicted lead inexoriably to
a foregone conclusion, like dynastic histories of old, and there is more than just a pinch
of modern hindsight. It could also be argued that Yunnan is a special case. Little really
new is said about the army or the condition of peasants. Yet the author is undoubtedly
at his best when it comes to unraveling factional politics. The great strength of the
book, however, is its use, whenever possible, of the Nationalists' own assessments of
the increasing odds against survival. Here the story is tragic, yes, in the most human as
well as political sense. The sympathetic portrayal of Chiang Ching-kuo (no hero in my
stable) is moving but also instructive. That heir apparent, as Seeds of Destruction con-
tends, was determined to do his patriotic duty in Shanghai where he fought corrupt of-
icials and the fear of fear itself to introduce the sort of fiscal stability that might have
saved the day: "There were no real villians, then, in the events surrounding the gold
yuán reform, because at that stage of the revolution all participants were more like vic-
tims in a tragedy than heroes or villians in a melodrama. The villians, if there can be
said to be such in history, were those who, a decade earlier, had failed to devise a
system of government that would have obviated the necessity of a political and social
revolution by the Communists."

Thus Eastman's perceptions of the end of Nationalist China reflect his view of the
Nanking years, those 3,650 odd days when enduring liberal institutions might have
been planted. I, for one, have no wish to quarrel though readers may. But the basic