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**“Négocier la place de l’islam chinois (de Jérôme Doyon),  
L’Harmattan, 2014”**

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## China Perspectives

2015/3 | 2015

The Garment Industry between Local Configurations  
and Global Flows

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Jérôme Doyon, *Négociier la place de l'islam chinois. Les associations islamiques de Nankin à l'ère des réformes*  
(Negotiating the Place of Chinese Islam: Islamic Associations in Nanjing during the Reform Era)

Paris, L'Harmattan, 2014, 249 pp.

Rémi Castets

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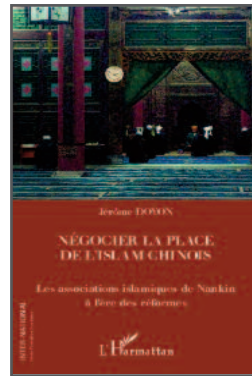
sponsibility and making greater contributions to international society in terms of economic development, as well as culture, science, and ecology. Hu's view of Chinese exceptionalism will no doubt encounter continued scrutiny. However, one more interesting issue regarding this "exceptionalism" is that it represents the view of a significant portion of China's mainstream intellectuals. In contrast to individual scholars with sharp and independent opinions, these mainstream intellectuals serve more as volunteer expounders of China's story to the rest of the world in a pleasing way with persuasive data and up-to-date descriptions of national strategies. Hu's book is a good example of these writings, and provides an opportunity to acquire a more nuanced and balanced understanding of influential Chinese scholars.

It should also be noticed that an insider's view does not necessarily mean lack of criticism. In fact, Hu Angang has raised many frank suggestions and comments that have been effectively adopted by senior government leaders. However, non-Chinese readers may find it difficult to understand this type of criticism. The difficulty does not lie in linguistic translation, but in an adequate understanding of the Chinese system, which again demands an insider's view. Nevertheless, the views of Chinese insiders are receiving increased attention, as evidenced by the 2015 May/June issue of *Foreign Affairs* (entitled *Embracing China's "New Normal": Why the Economy Is Still on Track*), which unprecedentedly published several articles by Chinese scholars, including Hu Angang.

My concern about this book is that Hu's approach takes the perspective of cooperative rather than non-cooperative game theory. Both of his two main views of Chinese optimism and exceptionalism would be more convincing if taking account of a non-cooperative reaction from the rest of the world. As for optimism, whether China can become a superpower will depend not only on China itself but also on how the rest of the world responds to it. Similar logic can be found in the development of trade theory, which already shows that the large country model is very different from the small country model. As for exceptionalism, there is a need for non-cooperative analysis to anticipate how China would respond to non-cooperative actions by other countries against China's development in a dynamic model setting. Furthermore, can China remain exceptional in terms of taking more cooperative action? The answers to these questions are not discussed sufficiently in the book.

The opinions and ideas of Chinese authors have long been inaccessible to non-Chinese speakers. Some Western readers may be tired of outsiders' views and increasingly interested in works by insiders. The Brookings Institution Press, and particularly Dr. Cheng Li, have done a great service in creating the Thornton Center Chinese Thinkers book series. If you would like to learn more about the views of a leading proponent of Chinese optimism and exceptionalism, you should definitely not miss Hu Angang's book, *China in 2020*.

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**Jérôme Doyon,** *Négocier la place de l'islam chinois. Les associations islamiques de Nankin à l'ère des réformes (Negotiating the Place of Chinese Islam: Islamic Associations in Nanjing during the Reform Era)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2014, 249 pp.

## RÉMI CASTETS

This book is the result of research conducted by Jérôme Doyon for his Master's thesis. The young scholar, currently pursuing his doctorate, carried out expert field work in early 2011 in Nanjing municipality.

The author chose to focus on the role, functioning, and interactions of local branches of the Islamic Association of China (IAC) in Nanjing (IAN) and Jiangsu (IAJ). He starts off with the observation that the Chinese state's control over its Muslim populations operates in the special contexts of each region and leads to diverse configurations. This original monograph adopts a "micro" analysis framework, making a break with the top-down approaches often pursued in the study of state control measures relating to religion. The information collected by the author helps reconstitute, based on recontextualised subjectivities, the ways of functioning of the IAC's local branches and the challenges they face.

It is rare to come across Western scholars' work regarding the complex mechanisms of interactions among believers, different strata and compartments of the Chinese administration, and the IAC. This is a sensitive subject especially in areas with Muslim majorities in the northwest of China. The author opportunely explored a much less sensitive context in Nanjing by interviewing academics, clerics, the laity, IAC members, and officials.

The book's interest lies in taking the reader into the lives of the IAC's branches in Jiangsu. Doyon sheds light on the motivations of their officials and interlocutors (the local and central administration, the Communist Party, local laity, and those from other provinces) and presents a broad picture of the constraints and resources they deal with. The finesse of his analysis lies as much in his reliance on solid knowledge of conceptual frameworks of social sciences as of works published in recent years on the oversight of religion in China.

In the first chapter, Doyon notes the IAC's role in the management of religious sites in Nanjing, evaluating to what extent it forms part of the continuities of associations that preceded it, as well as the extent to which it departs from them. He mentions the specificities of the local context: ethnic and sectarian homogeneity, the IAN's financial resources, and absence of political conflict or financial disputes with the administration, etc. This context explains to a great extent the modes of control and financial management adopted by the IAN and IAJ. Given the meagre potential for financing of the small local Muslim community and of funding being linked to income from the IAN property and governmental connections, the IAN has acquired a major degree of control over the finances and activities of local religious sites. It is worth noting that the IAN and IAJ face less pressure from the state and enjoy greater elbow room given the relaxed local political context.

In the second chapter, Doyon deals with the association's internal functioning, the process for the selection of its officials, and the intermingling of personnel in the AIC's different strata. He describes the relations with administrative organs deputed to control them and political entities able to provide a platform for their members. He notes the asymmetry in their relations with the state and raises the issue of their representative character. He describes the circles closely linked to the administration thanks to the process of selecting members, financial dependence, and due to systems of concerted action or decision-making with the Religious Affairs Bureaus and United Front Departments. This state of affairs is meant to instil an inter-nalisation in the IAC of the politico-ideological line of the state and the Party. Moreover, this phenomenon explains the filtering out of believers' "unrealistic" demands in the framework of the process of mediation or representation. The author describes this form of *modus vivendi*, which, while being asymmetrical, is compensated through a satisfactory "give-and-take" for all concerned. The interactions between the IAC's local branches and the administration rest on sharing networks and exchanges of services. The presence of ethnic Hui academics, clerics, political, and administrative personnel in the IAC local branches gives birth to networks and competence pools helping push requests (authorisations and financing of new infrastructures or religious events). Thus, even if IAC local branches are seen by local populations or religious personnel as pro-governmental entities, they draw legitimacy from their ability to collect state funding or obtain authorisation for activities likely to be problematic in other Muslim regions. This covers activities in the "grey area," meaning those on the margins of orthodoxy and legal framework as well as those taking place outside the mosques. In sum, Doyon depicts the associations as pressure groups, mediators, and the state's intermediaries to reach the laity, all rolled into one.

In the last two chapters he envisages, in light of the relationship with the Party-state again, the function of institutionalisation of communities and of definition/control of practices or identities within the Muslim community. He invokes also the role of the IAN and IAJ in the control of religious sites, the curbing of activism in the communities, education of religious personnel, and information of the administration. Citing concrete instances, he stresses the IAC's socio-charitable as well as diplomatic role.

The book contains a few anecdotal imprecisions that Islamologists can pick out (for example, the festival Kaizhajjie or Id al-Fitr is presented as occurring at the start rather than at the end of the month of Ramadan). Nevertheless, this insightful work containing rich information and analysis constitutes a necessary source for those interested in the functioning of the IAC's local branches, the Chinese state's religious policy, or Jiangsu's Hui communities.

■ Translated by N. Jayaram.

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**Victor Nee and Sonja Opper,**  
**Capitalism from Below: Markets and Institutional Change in China,** Cambridge, MA, and London, Harvard University Press, 2012, 431 pp.

## BERNARD GANNE

This work by Victor Nee and Sonja Opper is an important book. Considering that approaches to the Chinese economy and its transition to the private sector remain deeply marked by an analytical system centred on the primacy of the role of the state and how it orchestrates development, this book explores a different facet of this expansion, that of the private economy that has formed "from below." What are the ways in which the private sector has been established? How have entrepreneurs managed to overcome the barriers resulting from socialist organisation centred on the state? Which institutions have enabled private economic actors to cooperate and compete with the dominant state sector of public companies during the transition phase? This is the subject of Chapter 1. Standard economic theory, which focuses primarily on top-down regulation, pays little attention to the fact that economic actors, particularly entrepreneurs, by their very actions gradually create their own operating standards and their own institutional frameworks. It is therefore appropriate to tackle the problem at the base and from the other direction – that is, from the behaviour of entrepreneurs rather than from the standards set by central government institutions – to better see the latent regulations and hidden standards that have marked the construction of the private sector in China (Chapter 2).

The task of the authors has been to observe this phenomenon as close to the field as possible. In an area described as the epicentre of "capitalism from below" – the Yangtze River Delta Region, where the development of private enterprises has been particularly significant – Victor Nee and Sonja Opper established a sizeable investigative procedure aimed at entrepreneurs. More than 700 private companies in business for more than three years were the subject of studies in 2006 and 2009, through a highly comprehensive economic, social, and relational survey. The result is an 84-page annex to the book, which observes how a range of decisions made by entrepreneurs and their attitudes to finance, to other entrepreneurs, to work, to personnel, and to various local or national political players, etc., have led to the emergence of new standards of behaviour, both informal and institutional, in parallel or even in contrast with formal arrangements (Chapter 3). Supplemented by qualitative interviews, the surveys were conducted through the Market Survey Institute of the Shanghai Academy of Sciences. They involved companies located in seven cities: Shanghai, three cities in Jiangsu (Changzhou, Nanjing, and Nantong), and three cities in Zhejiang (Hangzhou, Ningbo, and Wenzhou).

Focusing first on the careers of entrepreneurs and the creation of their businesses, Chapter 4 shows how these new private players initially received little help from the state politico-economic apparatus: in fact, they fended