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Hamburg, Institut für Asienkunde, 2002, 433 p.

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## NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translated from the French original by Jonathan Hall

- 1 Günter Schubert's work on China's struggle for nationhood deals with a very pressing contemporary issue and is the outcome of in-depth research within the purview of a *Habilitationsprojekt*. It is a painstaking and thorough piece of work, full of useful references, telling details and precise analyses. It is also informed by a theoretical perspective as indicated by its subtitle: "Dimensions of nationalist thought in the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, at the turn of the millennium". The author develops his own argument in response to the theories, intellectual trends, controversies and established positions which constitute his subject matter, for nationalism here is above all a matter of discourse.
- 2 Günter Schubert's many-sided training, in legal studies, political science and sinology, provides him with the tools necessary for deep reflection, and gives him control over the whole range of his material, in time and space. He does not hesitate to consider bygone times and the present conjuncture together, in all three regions (the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan) which, despite their adjacency, are quite distinct, one from the other. His use of Western and Chinese sources seems to contain very few lacunae.

- 3 The book is divided into five sections. The first, which is particularly cogent, focuses on research into nationalism and national identity, and notes that there is currently no pertinent non-Western theory dealing with the topic. The second, which is short, outlines the development of nationalist thought in China from the end of the Imperial epoch to the present, and draws distinctions between anti-Western, cultural and economic nationalisms. With regard to modern nationalism, the author differentiates political nationalism from neo-conservative statism, and goes on to raise questions about the interplay between authority, power and totalitarianism in building a legal system. This analysis is very original, and is addressed to legal experts, political scientists and sinologists alike.
- 4 His reflections on the debate over nationalism in Taiwan (pp. 277-340) is presented in a precise and instructive manner. He provides us with the keys to understanding the present situation and indicates the trends of its future development. He also puts forward a bold view concerning the emergence of an identity specific to Hong Kong, and he asks the fundamental question: "What is a Hongkong person?" His reply, backed up by references to works in English, German and Chinese, covers fifteen pages.
- 5 His analysis is characterised by great precision, and it leads the reader into his very individual and subtly nuanced theses. He maintains, for example, that Taiwan represents a constraint upon the PRC to reformulate its own understanding of nationalism (p. 340). As for Hong Kong (p. 377), he suggests that its political and social democratisation may contribute towards both a liberal understanding of national identity and an extension of political democracy in the Middle Kingdom.