

**FEDERICO RAMPINI**  
**Il secolo cinese**  
Mondadori, Milan, 2005  
352 pages, €15.00

There's real satisfaction in reading Federico Rampini's book "Il secolo cinese" (the Chinese century), from its very first pages to its very last one. It's the answer to our need of learning about what's happening in China today and, therefore, around us too. Rampini's approach is never a foregone conclusion. We are not faced with the usual list of numbers requiring a further understanding effort, which is always unfair and never completely true. He speaks about China through its people, neatly portraying their experience, catching their tension in the changing effort that the results we all know imply.

His writing is never absolute: his style focuses on relativizing, constantly aiming at benchmarking socio-economical and cultural realities, through short straight-to-the-point stories. It's an efficient technique to cast new light over many contradictions we have often

based our beliefs on. It's like watching Pudongs being built, while also understanding the political and cultural reasons behind the choices involved.

To catch the keys of China's changing, Rampini also goes through the country's historical and political evolution analysing its leader figures from Mao on. With his pragmatic approach, he pictures the country's urban dimension, demographical dynamics, country-town relations, as well as university and research development, offering a complete different picture from what is usually showed by Western media reports, justifying the style chosen by Chinese entrepreneurs and diplomats on visit to foreign countries when simply saying "Come to China and see for yourselves". With as much disillusion, Rampini also reveals the effects, sometimes pernicious, deriving from such tumultuous growth: absence of democracy in a country so big as to be able, with its choices, to affect the destiny of the entire planet. It's unacceptable that decisions impacting on the lives of all men could be made by only a few people,

not democratically elected. Similarly unacceptable is the delay in safeguarding civil rights and protecting the environment that the author exposes through stories and evidence gathered.

It's a book wrongly not having the objective of being a working tool for managers, consultants and economists. Its language and contents can't be compared to the style of essays primarily used by scientists, researchers and opinion leaders. Still, while this may seem a limit, to me it is indeed the real strength of Rampini's work. His book is a real management culture tool providing a multi-discipline approach for the comprehension of a whole society, its people, its life styles. Its contents have been wisely chosen and efficiently developed to stimulate reflections while allowing to catch the key factors behind the Chinese miracle. This is oxygen for those wanting to define their own approach strategy to the Chinese market as well as for those going well beyond mere appearance.

**[Francesco D'Aprile]**

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