Foreword

China is the dominant business power of the twenty-first century and already the second largest economy in the world in terms of purchasing parity power (Bryant, 2008). Based on these facts the *Biographical Dictionary of New Chinese Entrepreneurs and Business Leaders* is a necessary handbook at a time when Chinese enterprises are becoming increasingly global at an ever faster pace (Alon, 2008). Most of us only know the names of a few Chinese business leaders and if we were asked to describe these leaders we would not be able to say much. One reason could be, as stated by the editors Professor Wenxian Zhang and Professor Ilan Ilon in their call for contributions, that China's business elite is such a recent phenomenon.

Despite the novelty of the globalization of Chinese firms, a book like this has been needed for several years, because foreign direct investments, both outward and inward, have been skyrocketing, and the trend in investments continues to grow in both directions ('Market Profile on Chinese Mainland', 2008).

The result is a very informative book with 200 entries, each of which consists of 400–1000 words. The definition of business leaders in this handbook is broad, comprising important politicians, researchers, and overseas Chinese business leaders as well as leaders from different periods of China's recent development from the 1980s and 1990s to the present. This broad definition fits well with Chinese practice as it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate the different investment entities and their impact on Chinese development. For example, Chinese state-owned sovereign funds are becoming increasingly active investors in Western companies (Anderlini, 2008). With such a broad approach to Chinese entrepreneurs, obviously everybody cannot be included, but the editorial team has managed to collect descriptions of a broad spectrum of business leaders. The profiles not only describe the individuals but frequently also touch upon their companies and other relevant activities. The names of the writers accompany each entry and references to the sources used are also given. This enhances the transparency of the handbook, which is something other handbooks often lack.

An interesting observation is that the richest and most entrepreneurial people in China are predominantly older than 50. IT people tend to be younger, but the Chinese economy is not dominated by young fund managers as is becoming the trend in the West.

This volume is a good and necessary complement to other handbooks, such as the official *Who's Who – Current Chinese Leaders* (2006), which focuses on political leaders in a more narrow sense and *Who's Who of Chinese Origin Worldwide*, which is only available in Chinese and in an electronic version (www.whoswhochinese.com). Therefore I will not hesitate to recommend this book to libraries and other institutions as well as to individuals interested in the development and globalization of Chinese business.

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