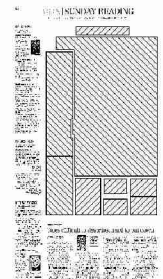


Ready to roar



Author foresees China emerging as technological powerhouse

By Bill Eichenberger

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

When Rebecca Fannin left Lancaster for the bright lights of New York, she found, to her amazement, that those lights weren't quite bright enough to satisfy her.

After graduating from Ohio University with a journalism degree, she spent almost a decade in Manhattan, working for publications such as *Advertising Age, Inc.*, *Worth* and *The Deal*.

But the larger world beckoned.

"It was while I was editing a monthly magazine called *International Business* during the early 1990s that I was sent on a reporting trip to Hong Kong," Fannin said in a recent e-mail to *The Dispatch*.

"There, I met the publisher of an Asian finance publication in Hong Kong. By the mid-'90s, I had joined the Hong Kong team of the *Asian Venture Capital Journal*.

"From there, I got to cover and report on (business) conferences and see firsthand the transformation occurring in key Asian countries such as China and India."

She quickly caught the Asian travel bug.

"I've always liked to write, and international-business journalism combines my natural curiosity with my love for travel," said the author of the new book *Silicon Dragon: How China Is Winning the Tech Race*.

Q: What do you love about Asia in general and China in particular?

A: I am drawn to the people, their hard work, their passion for what they do, the energy level there. Shanghai and Beijing are both bustling and make Manhattan seem stale by comparison.

Q: Is your subtitle, *How China Is Winning the Tech Race*, hyperbolic?

A: Well, it doesn't say "has won." The trends are clearly that China is

getting ahead quickly, and tech is just one of the key areas of progress.

Q: In *Silicon Dragon*, you remind readers how Japanese automakers began to dominate the U.S. market in the 1970s with their compact cars. Would you characterize China's tech ascent as a threat to Western technological hegemony?

A: Yes, I do see China's tech development as a wake-up call for the U.S. We cannot become complacent, or we risk seeing another Detroit develop.

But I do see opportunities for collaboration between East and West as well. I've seen R&D teams on both sides of the Pacific working together on breakthrough research, for instance, in semiconductors and software. And I see Silicon Valley bringing its culture of innovation to China.

Q: Do you foresee a time when those little red books of Mao sayings sold on every street corner in China are replaced by the sayings of Internet billionaire Jack Ma?

A: It's interesting that you ask that, because one of my sources just described Ma as having the leadership abilities of Chairman Mao.

He does have natural leadership abilities. Not only does he have the gift of telling a story well, but I have seen him mesmerize entire audiences at leading industry events. He can light up a room.

It might not be too much of an exaggeration to say that Ma has the charisma of Bill Clinton, the chutzpah of Richard Branson, the marketing genius of Steve Jobs and the fortune of Bill Gates. Ma is one of the few Chinese entrepreneurs with global impact.

Q: Ma's story is fascinating, isn't it?

A: Yes. He rose from a social outcast during Mao's China (because of his family's bourgeois background) to become an English-language schoolteacher and later a rich and famous Internet entrepreneur.

Q: Chinese domination of technology is still years away, isn't it, if it ever happens at all?

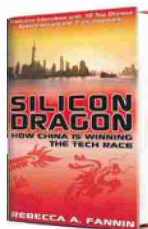
A: This is a leading-edge trend. I believe — and most of my sources agree — that it will take a decade or two before China begins to dominate the tech world.

But numerous venture investors

I know in the (Silicon) Valley are leaving the U.S. to invest directly in China. This is a major shift.

Just this week, I reported on two high-profile venture capitalists who are departing from Sand Hill Road (in Menlo Park, Calif.) — the center of venture activity in the U.S. — for Beijing and Shanghai.

beichenberger@dispatch.com



► ***Silicon Dragon:***
How China Is
Winning the Tech
Race (McGraw-
Hill, \$24.95) by
Rebecca Fannin