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Review

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intersection of informal productive relations of power in everyday life and minute workings of state power in the household operating to make gender aspects still more diffuse and efficacious.

Judd concludes that neither the rural reform programme nor policy change, with their wide ramifications throughout rural society, can be viewed as gender neutral and that the construction and regulation of households is perhaps the dimension of grounded state power in rural China that is most obviously gendered. Although her field study touches on a wide range of topics and themes of great interest to scholars and students, it suggests that there is no differentiating feature in Chinese life that is more profound, continuing or asymmetrical than gender. Interestingly, it was her field findings which not only led her to these conclusions, but to take gender as the focus of her study. As originally formulated, the study was intended to examine the implications of the rural reform programme for rural household composition and division of labour with particular attention to rural women. To concentrate on the potential dangers of decollectivization for the more vulnerable rural residents and especially for women, she had initially proposed to study the practical responses of rural households to the transformations in their communities instigated by national reform. However, during an initial field trip in 1986, it became evident that the most interesting and unexpected findings were those relating to women's activities and agency and to the place of these in the microdynamics of reform-era social structure. Then, as she says in her introduction, the focus of the study shifted decisively to gender. Perhaps there is no greater testimony to the importance of gender as China scholars rethink structures, relations and institutions.

These books, with their emphasis on women, femininity and feminism, between them take gendered studies of structures, relations and institutions to new levels of understanding; now, if the study of gender is taken to embrace the meanings assigned, behaviours expected and senses of self associated with both categories, male and female, then what we are waiting for are complementary studies of men and of the masculine in China.

ELISABETH J. CROLL

*China in Transformation*. Edited by TU WEI-MING. [Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. 253 pp. £11.25, \$16.75. ISBN 0-674-11754-9.]

First published as a special issue in *Daedalus*, this volume of essays reflects upon the transformation of cultural identities following the unprecedented economic vibrancy of the coastal areas and the relative retreat of the state in mainland China. It is suspicious of previous frameworks in Chinese studies, and recognizes that a volatile economic situation renders cultural perspectives indeterminate. Although it contains contributions from a variety of disciplines, there is a good deal of resonance between

the various essays, creating an integrated volume in which the key terms are myth, culture, modernity and identity.

Edward Friedman looks at the unravelling of the myth of China as an indivisible nation of the poor led by the Communists in their fight against the imperialist world, and finds that an entire new range of nationalist identities are emerging, often based on cultural, linguistic, religious and regional factors. Political stagnation, however, has allowed communal identities to grow into more radical resentments, a dangerous trend in which more tolerant or democratic alternatives are often absent. Bitter chauvinism, a taste for tough militarism and a strain of racialism can be detected in popular appeals for law and order. The divisive tensions between northerners and southerners are also highlighted in Friedman's pungent essay. Helen F. Siu's contribution concentrates on South China, a geopolitical region which is increasingly out of Beijing's control. Highlighting the "unique paths" of development of South China, Helen Siu skilfully shows how the emergence of a Guangzhou–Hong Kong nexus further complicates the issue of cultural and national identity, although one wonders whether the myth of "Chinese uniqueness" is not being substituted by a narrative of "regional uniqueness." William P. Alford reconstructs a number of important law cases to explore the interplay between legality and power. Although he recognizes the significance of legal reform in China, he also highlights how the state's law has been invoked by prominent individuals to voice their remonstrations to a wider range of audiences, an approach which is not without resemblance to the older ideal of the virtuous official who stands alone in his confrontation to corrupted power. If the legal system, moreover, can be turned against the regime, there is the danger of people employing it to attack political opponents. A concern with the presence of the past also characterizes Wang Gungwu's probing analysis of the ambiguous meanings ascribed to "revolution" and "reform," and parallels with the struggles between the self-strengtheners and the radical supporters of the Hundred Day Reform (1898) are underlined.

In contrast to the more pessimistic predictions of other contributors, Wang Gungwu points out that a new generation of political leaders might possibly emerge, producing a more accountable system in their alliance with experienced technocrats. Andrew Nathan is also optimistic about the prospects of democracy in his analysis of a national sample survey. Yü Yingshi is interested in the radicalization of intellectuals in China since the turn of the century, charting the discovery of the West from the 1890 reformers to the May Fourth intellectuals, for whom the idea of total demolition of the past became pervasive. One of the inventions of these elite intellectuals was the "peasant," a socially constructed category scrutinized in the excellent contribution of Myron Cohen. Central to the division between city and countryside in modern China, the discursive invention of farmers as alien others, thought to be "backward" and "primitive," has received a powerful reinforcement since the establishment of the Communist government, and legal distinctions between "peasants" and urban residents (a status inherited through the mother) are

still in force in China today. The category of the “peasant” has been crucial throughout the 20th century, although the extent to which negative representations of farmers existed before the late 19th century is not made clear; generally, most contributors to this volume express little interest in late imperial China, somehow perpetuating the Communist myth that everything before 1841 is prehistory. Yan’an as historical myth is precisely the topic of David E. Apter’s dense article, which, together with Myron Cohen’s debunking of the image of the “peasant,” stands out as one of the most incisive pieces in this volume. Perry Link, in resonance with one of the core themes of the book, underlines that prospects for an early transition to a civil society are uneven, while a few final generalizations about “culture” and “modernity” are offered by Benjamin I. Schwartz.

Despite the wealth of insights contained in this volume, one may be left wondering what constitutes “the Chinese national character” alluded to in the introduction. The retreat of the state is claimed to have led to such a multiplication of identities that the general reader may be confused about the underlying meanings ascribed to “Chineseness” in China today. In a footnote near the end of the volume, Perry Link recounts how a Chinese mother asked her overseas daughter who had doubts about her identity to “go look in the mirror”: the importance assigned to physical features and the racialization of identities, unfortunately, is an important topic missing in this book. The volume generally suffers from misspellings in *pinyin* and has no index. *China in Transformation*, however, is a stimulating volume that provides ample evidence of the vigour of cultural studies in the China field. It draws on the theoretical strengths of cultural theory, avoids the intellectual vacuity of postmodernism and is refreshing in the diversity of its approaches. It will be read with great benefit by all students interested in 20th-century China.

FRANK DIKÖTTER

*Landflucht und interprovinzielle Migration in der VR China.* By KARSTEN GIESE. [Hamburg: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, No. 224, 1993. 354 pp. DM34.00. ISBN 3-88910-124-0.]

The main issue discussed in this book is already widely known: the great number of rural people forming a floating population moving into urban areas in China. After a general historical summary describing rural–urban population movements since the founding of the PRC, Giese tries to reconstruct the so-called migration wave or “blind flow” (*mangliu*) of spring 1989 as an example of this new kind of mobility *en masse*. The author’s main findings here are not very surprising. He states that, generally speaking, the places of the migrants’ origins are the poor, less-developed inner provinces, whereas their destinations lie in the coastal regions of the south and east.

More interesting are his arguments concerning how the migratory flow is influenced by the seasonal rhythms of agriculture, as well as by