

Book Reviews

Building Local States: China during the Republican and Post-Mao Eras. By ELIZABETH J. REMICK. [Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004. 318 pp. \$49.50. ISBN 0-674-01398-0.]

It is commonplace in China studies to declare that China is too large and too diverse to be fully understood as one entity. Whether in historical or contemporary terms, a complete understanding of China can only be attempted if one looks at the diversity within. Too often, the analysis stops there, without pursuing the details of regional variation needed to develop a more sophisticated analysis.

Elizabeth Remick's *Building Local States* is a much-needed antidote to this tendency. In her carefully researched comparative monograph, Remick details how two very different regions – Hebei and Guangdong – developed local and regional government institutions in the context of central government upheaval and redefinition. Using local gazetteers, interviews with officials, published statistical records and archives, the book demonstrates how and why these two regions diverged in their approach to taxation and public finance. Faced with her own findings that show very little commonality between the two regions, Remick still manages to make an important, general conclusion: for the Chinese state to survive in the 21st century, it must allow regional adaptation to circumstance, or else the central regime will face increasing resistance to its interference, even to the point of tax revolts.

The book's subtitle, in particular, marks the book as exceptional: "China during the Republican and Post-Mao Eras." While both of these periods are popular topics, it is rare to compare them. On the face of it, the reasons for the comparison are unclear. Remick, though, effectively demonstrates that the Nanjing Decade (1927–1937) and the post-Mao reform era (1980–1992) were both times of local state-building, spurred by a need to reassert government control in the wake of periods of great chaos (the warlord era of the 1920s and the Cultural Revolution, respectively).

The level of detail in her analysis defies summation, particularly because much of her conclusion is that the four different points of comparison (Republican Guangdong, Republican Hebei; post-Mao Guangdong, post-Mao Hebei) all varied greatly. In general, she demonstrates that: in Republican Guangdong, the state successfully expanded its reach as "new tax and public finance bureaucracies [were] set up, and new sub-county institutions [were] established" (p. 41); in Republican Hebei, by contrast, any financial innovation was achieved by extra-bureaucratic means. Remick attributes this difference primarily to the fact that weaker, less-concentrated patterns of landholding in Hebei made it more difficult to implement bureaucratic reforms.

In the post-Mao era, Remick describes how Guangdong officials were able to innovate and expand governmental institutions by re-negotiating

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relations with both central government and sub-county agencies. In Hebei, and particularly in Tianjin municipality, the ability of the local government agencies to prosper depended in large part on their willingness to co-operate with central government directives. In this case, the differences between the two regions seem to derive from their different proximities to the central government. In Hebei and Tianjin, close central government supervision made local autonomy difficult to achieve. Remick concludes that if the Chinese state is to thrive in the future, it needs to permit local variation and initiative in order to adapt to local conditions.

The study is very carefully organized, beginning with a review of the literature and a theoretical framing of the topic. The author then devotes one chapter to each of the four cases under analysis. This structure makes the book very useful for teachers looking for sources for lectures on local government, and for scholars eager for some actual data to illustrate the “regional variation” mantra. The sheer volume of the data, however, can be overwhelming, and would probably not make this an effective text at a survey level. The book’s roots as a dissertation are reflected in very clear organization, but at times difficult reading.

Despite its sub-title, the book actually focuses quite narrowly, and explicitly, on taxation and public finance (see, for instance, the section introductions on pp. 39 and 150, respectively), and will satisfy those interested in those areas, but the suggestion that the book addresses “China during the Republican and Post-Mao Era” is an overstatement.

It is, nevertheless, a careful, thorough study comparing the development of local taxation and public finance apparatus in two important regions, in two surprisingly similar eras. It is remarkable among the literature for its attention to detail, and its ability to make a larger argument from four, seemingly disparate cases. It should be read by all scholars interested in the development of local government institutions, and also by those seeking guidance as to China’s future development.

JAMES CARTER

The Emergence of Greater China: The Economic Integration of Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. By YUNG-WING SUNG. [Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. xvi + 236 pp. ISBN 0-333-62599-4.]

This is a highly readable book about the emerging economic complex of “Greater China.” The author, based at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, is the foremost authority on the subject matter. The book, which culminates from well over a decade of painstaking research and publication, traces the process and pattern of economic integration among the Chinese trio – the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan – over the past two decades or so. The analysis is set against the broader background of Chinese economic reforms and opening to the West, as well as the

changing political context in East Asia that has facilitated increased economic interaction in the region.

The book starts with a broad description of the economic structure and relative economic strengths of the Chinese trio, and furnishes a useful conceptual framework for understanding the evolving economic relationships. Chapter two shows how FDI (foreign direct investment) from Hong Kong and Taiwan has triggered an accelerated process of integration with the mainland, and as a result led to the drastic expansion of China's external trade. Chapter three examines the particular characteristics of economic integration between Hong Kong and the mainland on the one hand, and between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait on the other hand. It reveals how cultural (affinity) and geographical (proximity) factors have played a role, and what policy readjustments have been made in the three constituent parts of the "China circle" to bring about a "new brand of 'new-style' economic integration," which is unique in the global context of trade and investment liberalization.

Chapters four and five analyse in great detail both trade (commodity and services) and investment flows between Hong Kong and the mainland, and chapter six extends the analysis to Taiwan with respect to its relations with the mainland, as well as Hong Kong. In all of these three chapters, a great effort is made to reconcile the statistical discrepancies among the official sources of the Chinese trio, involving their trading partners, the US in particular. The "discrepancy" in trade statistics arises largely from the international statistical practice of classifying exports by region of consignment and imports by region of origin. Given the crucial role played by Hong Kong in channelling the bulk of Chinese exports to third countries and re-exporting a substantial amount of imports from the US and Taiwan to the Chinese mainland, and given that Hong Kong's re-exports of Chinese origin consist overwhelmingly of manufactured goods made by Hong Kong firms based in Guangdong and other parts of China (viz. outward-processing trade), Hong Kong-based Professor Sung is highly tempted to net out all "intervening factors" in order to reconstruct the true picture of Hong Kong–China trade relations. The result is a highly original contribution with far-reaching global implications for interpreting China's trade statistics.

Similar readjustments are also made for the investment figures, given that the Chinese statistical practice is to classify FDI country origin according to site of foreign company registration and that many Hong Kong and Taiwanese investors indeed prefer to register, for various reasons, in the "tax haven economies." Strangely enough, however, in his analysis, Professor Sung refers to the British Virgin Islands only, and omits Samoa – the remote, small south Pacific island state, which has, in recent years, also become a significant source of China's FDI intake.

Chapter seven gives an overall view of investment and trade flows between Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China by summarizing the adjusted statistics in matrix form. Chapter eight highlights a number of policy issues for the trio, arising from China's accession to the WTO in 2001 and the signing of the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement

(CEPA) between Hong Kong and the mainland in summer 2003. Chapter nine concludes with an evaluation of the problems and prospects of the China circle. Brief as the discussions in chapters eight and nine may be, taken together they provide a clear conceptual and analytical framework for pursuing further research into a number of critical areas. These include, for example, the long-term impact of China abolishing the “foreign exchange balance” requirements under WTO. That is, the long-established requirements (intact since 1979) that obliged foreign investors to export the overwhelming proportion (at least 70 per cent as a rule) of their output in order to earn foreign exchange to balance their own foreign exchange expenditure on imports of semi-manufactured goods, raw materials and processing machinery and equipment. This touches clearly on the very modus operandi of the highly export-oriented Hong Kong and Taiwan investors, who have long been keen on expanding sales into the Chinese domestic market as well.

Another major area of interest concerns the implications of increased renminbi convertibility, with or without CEPA. As the author aptly highlights, the limited offshore renminbi business made available since November 2003 will bear significantly on Hong Kong as an international financial centre. But logically one would also ponder whether or in what way the currency systems in the China circle should be mutually readjusted when renminbi is made fully convertible. The author argues that the Hong Kong dollar should then remain pegged to the US dollar, and that only when renminbi becomes a major international currency should the HK dollar be pegged to the Chinese currency. Would he rule out entirely the possibility of the emergence of a *yuan* bloc, incorporating Hong Kong, and eventually Taiwan as well, given the enormous size of the Chinese trio taken as a whole, and the ever increasing intensity of the regional economic integration?

This book is required reading for anyone who is interested in knowing how the Chinese mainland has become increasingly integrated into the global economy, and how Hong Kong has played an absolutely crucial role in facilitating the process of integration. Likewise, it is indispensable for anyone interested in knowing something about Hong Kong, because it shows how Hong Kong has to fall back on the support from the Chinese mainland to sustain its export business, and with it the entire services-based economic growth. As such the book is highly recommended for academia, businessmen, industrialists and bankers, as well as government officials.

Y. Y. KUEH

China's Scientific Elite. By CONG CAO. [London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004. 256 pp. £60.00; \$95.00. ISBN 0-415-32757-1.]

Since the completion of his doctoral dissertation in sociology at Columbia University in 1997, Cong Cao has published a number of very insightful

articles on various aspects of China's scientific elite. He has now taken the next step and, incorporating some material from these earlier publications, given us the most systematic effort to examine this important social group. His agenda is certainly ambitious. Inspired by one of his mentors, the late, great sociologist Robert K. Merton, Cao employs the Mertonian sociology of science framework, using the norm of universalism and the theory of social stratification in science to determine the basis for the formation of this elite group. Using membership in the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) as the indicator of elite status, Cao sets himself four primary tasks. The first – and the major focus of the book – is to examine the various factors that might have played a role in one's selection to this Academy, including social origins, the influence of mentors, the quality of research, political party membership, and personal relations. Secondly, he examines the impact of major historical changes on the development of science and the formation of this elite. Thirdly, he seeks to put the Chinese case into a comparative perspective, often citing the work of another of his mentors, Harriet Zuckerman, a leading scholar of the American scientific elite, among other sources. Finally, he addresses the role this elite has played in influencing the nation's policy making and urging autonomy and democracy in scientific research and societal life.

To accomplish these goals, Cao draws extensively from two basic data sources. He imaginatively mines the available biographical information on Chinese scientists but, given the limitations of this source, supplements these materials by conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 79 CAS members, seeking as best he can for a representative sample in terms of age, geographical location, academic discipline and date of appointment or election. To his credit, Cao provides a detailed appendix (pp. 204–214) in which he refreshingly discusses the difficulties of sampling, particularly since few scientists replied to his interview request. In the end, he adopted a combination of mail solicitation, personal referrals and snowball sampling to recruit elite scientists. However, Cao is clearly not completely comfortable with his methodological decisions. While he tells us early on that the interview data is more important than the biographical data (p. 21), his appendix reminds us that “the data obtained from the interviews represent only a part of the materials used” (p. 214) and that “the degree of dependency on the interview data is in inverse proportion to the degree of my expertise about and insight of Chinese society and its elites” (p. 214). While it is indeed rare to find such candour and soul-searching in an academic treatise, Cao need not be so apologetic. The interview data does provide valuable information unavailable from any other source, and his methodology is certainly acceptable since “scientific sampling” under these conditions would not have worked. The interviews are especially helpful in the chapters on the intrusion of politics into science (“Red’ or ‘Expert’”) and the elections of scientists into the elite group.

Cao's sympathies are clear at various points, as when he notes in discussing the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, how “most [intellectuals] showed their loyalty to the party and the cause they loved” (p. 44), but the

“kindhearted” Chinese intelligentsia were “too naïve” to realize that their attempts at assisting the CCP would result in their personal suffering (p. 62). The articulation of these sympathies should not be seen as a negative. By giving voice to these intellectuals Cao has performed a valuable service.

His findings suggest that the formation of China’s scientific elite has followed a rather similar pattern to that found in democratic or more liberal social systems. In other words, despite the obvious intrusion of politics at various times and the massive political and social changes that have marked post-1949 China, “political criteria have played a surprisingly insignificant role” in forming this elite (p. 160). The recognition and promotion of scientists has generally been quite independent of political, cultural and historical fluctuations. Chinese scientists have been given academic honours because of their scientific credentials and achievements, not because of political loyalty. Indeed, some of the most fascinating sections of the book – and here the interview data are invaluable – reveal the manner in which Chinese scientists have resisted political pressure in electing CAS members since the election system began in 1980. By contrast, social origins such as family background and educational attainment, the influence of elite mentors, and the types of research conducted have all played a role in the formation of this elite.

Intriguingly, he closes the volume by suggesting some reasons why, despite the relative autonomy of Chinese scientists during different political climates, Chinese science has continued to lag behind that in developed countries. The villain is Chinese culture. Indeed, his last sentence notes that “the renaissance of Chinese science may depend on the change of Chinese culture” (p. 203). Perhaps that large topic will be the subject of his next volume on Chinese science.

STANLEY ROSEN

China Along the Yellow River: Reflections on Rural Society. By CAO JINQING, translated by NICKY HARMAN and HUANG RUHUA. [London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005. 254 pp. \$65.00. ISBN 0-415-34113-2.]

Periodically, Chinese leaders have ventured out on inspection tours directly to observe local conditions away from the capital. Cao Jinqing wrote this book on rural life in Henan as a daily log of conversations and observations, and it reads like the report of such an inspection tour. Along the tour, the author ruminates on rural development problems such as the rising tax and fee burden on farmers and the stagnation of agricultural growth that Henan faces. The author traces such problems to political, economic, and cultural institutions.

Cao Jinqing primarily focuses on *xiang*-level administration, and he advances three main points. First, he argues that China’s administrative structure has created a set of opportunities for corruption and political

pressure that have pushed an enormous financial burden onto farmers. *Xiang* officials face pressure to provide schools and other social services for their populations, yet education budgets alone can eclipse the state-mandated cap of taxes and fees, set at five per cent of farmers' income. From above, local officials are pressed to expand their industrial base and agricultural production by investing in factories, converting grain fields to orchards, and implementing agricultural technology, all of which requires officials to extract fees. Such projects help cadres advance their careers, but they literally come at the expense of farmers. Total fees, according to one official, reach as high as 30–50 per cent of farmers' household income (p. 208). The political structure also creates incentives for local corruption. Several cadres interviewed suggest that corrupt officials get ahead and that upright officials are denied promotion.

Secondly, Cao Jinqing suggests that aspects of traditional Chinese rural culture – reliance upon social ties (*guanxi*), contentment with one's lot, clan relations, and inability to work together as large collective units – remain impediments to rapid development. In contrast to the assumed emergence of market exchange relations, the author notes the resurgence of clan ties in the market era (pp. 134–135). The author's analysis seems to imply that traditional forms of social organization are based on irrational criteria such as sentiment rather than on rational considerations such as profitability, and prevent community-wide social groups from mobilizing resources for development. The author's criticism of clans and other traditional social elements veers between complaints that farmers are not individualistic enough, and regrets that farmers cannot work together as they did on irrigation projects under the commune system.

Thirdly, Cao Jinqing contends that officials continue to manage aspects of rural economy, much to the detriment of average citizens. For example, officials force villagers to plant crops that are inappropriate to local conditions, and they start up factories to produce goods that saturate the market and, hence, lower profits. With the transition to market conditions, one might expect specialization of production based on comparative advantage. At least in Henan, farmers are still subject to government intervention to plant crops with no comparative advantage, which drags down farmers' income, an indirect tax on their livelihood.

Cao Jinqing's analysis is prone to three types of criticism. The book's analytical methods are weak. The author records thoughts and conversations on a daily basis, but there is little attempt to systematize the findings. Indeed, some of Cao's conclusions are not clearly compatible with his findings. For example, the author suggests that Henan peasants were content after land was decollectivized, so they were reluctant to take risks to make money (p. 46). Yet, the book's pages are chock-full of farmers' complaints about their economic situation and their inability to make money. It is hard to support the claim that the farmers under study are content with their lot. The Chinese version of Cao's book was probably groundbreaking for its frank discussion and documentation of these issues, but for a foreign audience, Cao does not illuminate much that is new about rural China and its political economy. Jean Oi, *State*

and Peasant in Contemporary China (Berkeley, 1989), Jonathan Unger, *The Transformation of Rural China* (Armonk, NY, 2002), and Yunxiang Yan, *The Flow of Gifts* (Stanford, 1996) have variously noted the tendency towards corruption, the resurgence of traditional modes of social organization, the difficulty of modernizing small peasant farming, and the heavy tax burden on farmers. Finally, a strong body of scholarship has contended that elements of China's traditional social organization such as *guanxi* have facilitated rather than hindered Chinese capitalist development. Instead of thinking in binary terms of traditional social relations or market exchange relations, Cao would better consider how traditional social relations are shaping market exchange relations and the ramifications of such a pattern of relations. The book will appeal to specialists on Chinese rural economy, but the serial character of the book undermines sustained and deep analysis of the various issues raised by the author.

The book has some compelling points. Unlike other works on Chinese farmers' discontent, Cao relates the conflicting pressures that *xiang*-level cadres face, which give rise to local taxes and fees. At times, the reader will sympathize with the plight of local officials as much as the farmers who bear the heavy fee burden. Cao Jinqing reminds the reader that, despite much rhetoric about modernization and rapid economic growth, pockets of rural China remain profoundly undeveloped. Grand modernization projects orchestrated by the state such as the Great Leap Forward and the smaller scale schemes described in this book ultimately fail, yet China's state control over rural economy persists. Rachel Murphy deserves a special note for her excellent introduction to the text.

SCOTT WILSON

Wild Grass: Three Stories of Change in Modern China. By IAN JOHNSON.
[New York: Pantheon, 2004. ix + 324 pp. \$24.00. ISBN 0-375-42186-6.]

The willingness of ordinary Chinese to take extraordinary risks to challenge their state is widely known. Just what kind of people they are, and what wellsprings of personality and events drive them to do so, is harder to fathom. Ian Johnson's *Wild Grass* provides three fascinating cases that illuminate the question. Moreover, it implicitly points to the power of law not just to shape protest, but to bring it about in the first place. It's also a great read.

His first protagonist is Ma Wenlin, the "peasant champion." A pretty ordinary 1962 Xi'an university graduate who worked quietly in local government for decades, in the early 1990s he taught himself the law and became a "legal worker," concentrating mainly on contract and civil cases. In 1997, during a visit to his ancestral home, local farmers, inspired by a successful case nearby, prevailed on him to file a class-action suit against their township government for excessive levies. He demurred, but

the farmers pressured him backhandedly by starting rumours that he was bribed by local officials to stay out of the matter. Rather than turning against them, he felt he had to clear his good name. He took the case. The failure of his legal filing, combined with his stubborn personality, his moral sensibility, and the inoculation against authority provided by the Cultural Revolution, emboldened him to participate in a political fight for his beleaguered clients. He helped the farmers organize local demonstrations, all citing the law, and eventually found his way to the Petition and Appeals Office of the State Council in Beijing. There Ma was detained, beaten, and eventually tried and sentenced to five years in a labour camp.

Johnson's second story centres on property development in Beijing – the destruction of *hutongs*, the profiteering and corruption that feed on it, and the efforts of ordinary Beijingers to fight, first for their homes and then for their city and against the abuses ruining it. We meet a range of protagonists. Luo and Feng failed in their legal efforts to save their own homes or to get proper compensation for them, and ended up banding together to organize a class-action lawsuit. Fang Ke is a Qinghua graduate student whose love of old Beijing impelled him to produce an encyclopaedic underground book documenting the “development.” Lawyer Wu represents Old Zhao, whose house is slated for demolition. The story is less dramatic than the other two: no one is incarcerated or knocked around. Repeatedly defeated, the advocates for historic Beijing nonetheless soldier on.

The final – and by far the most compelling – narrative concerns the *falun gong*, Johnson's *Wall Street Journal* accounts of which won him the Pulitzer Prize. He provides a textured story of the development of the movement, its criticism by intellectuals, and the government's efforts first to cope with and then to suppress it. Threading through the account are 57-year-old Chen Zixiu and her daughter, Zhang Xueling. Chen was an ordinary Shandong woman who happened upon some practitioners early one morning in 1997 and joined up. Angered by the 1999 crackdown against what she experienced as a salubrious exercise programme, she took political action for the first time in her life, journeying to Beijing to join fellow adherents in a protest in Tiananmen Square. She was arrested, sent home, put under surveillance, and warned off *falun gong*. Instead, the experience emboldened Grannie Chen, who set off again for Beijing. She was nabbed by the local gendarmes, and, after escaping and being re-arrested, beaten to death. Ms. Zhang soon found herself embarking upon an unsuccessful quest for the death certificate and, like her mother before her, undergoing her own unexpected politicization. Her persistent efforts landed her in jail for three years, which disabused her of any notion that legally-based efforts like hers could succeed in China for the foreseeable future. Her story ends with a line that sums up so many extraordinary struggles like hers: “China is still trustworthy, we're still waiting.”

The rising use of law to canalize, politicize and rhetoricize protest in China is widely known. *Wild Grass* documents that but also goes beyond it. Johnson's protagonists don't just use the law; they are seduced and

politicized by it. In each case, ordinary citizens find themselves drawn into previously unthinkable political activism when they connect an everyday grievance with the prospect of legal channels for resolving it. Johnson shows us how the rise of law in China, precisely because of its tentativeness and incompleteness, actually helps mobilize protest.

MARC BLECHER

The Great Wall of Confinement: The Chinese Prison Camp Through Contemporary Fiction and Reportage. By PHILIP F. WILLIAMS and YENNA WU. [Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2004. xi + 248 pp. \$21.95; \$55.00. ISBN 0-520-22779-4.]

By the “Great Wall of Confinement,” the authors refer to the prison camp system established by the Chinese Communist Party after 1949. The two crucial components of this system are the *laogai* system (*laodong gaizao*, translated in the book to “remolding through labour” rather than the more often used “reform through labour”), and the *laojiao* system (*laodong jiaoyang*) or “reeducation through labour.” Let me say at once that this book is much more than an analysis of the literature surrounding the phenomenon of the prison camps. Through memoirs from former inmates and reportage literature we learn many detailed facts about the Chinese camp system, details equally valuable to the legal and the social science scholar.

The book describes in detail the daily life of the camps, the prison conditions and the system’s methods of arrest, detention, solitary confinement, torture for confessions, famine, degradation of prisoners, and a range of practices showing the security forces’ discretionary powers and the “flexibilities” of informal sentencing. The authors emphasize both the modern ideology of remoulding and the traditional legalist (*fajia*) roots of a “very malleable sort of law.” Williams and Wu commendably combine a range of valuable empirical detail with a more general theoretical analysis of the historical, cultural and systemic roots and practices of the camp system.

The only exceptions to generally harsh conditions in the PRC camps were the special prisons for high-ranking persons like the famous Fushun prison in Liaoning province which contained the last Manchu emperor, Puyi, high-ranking prisoners of war such as former Kuomintang top military officers, and Japanese prisoners of war. More lenient treatment was also given to some high-ranking political prisoners and people close to the ruling elite who had fallen out with the regime. Here the enlightenment ideas of rehabilitation and remoulding were taken much more seriously, while the rank-and-file prisoners (both criminal and political) were left with a less reformatory system of forced labour.

The comparative point here, which the authors do not make, is that in Europe the *ancien régime* practices of more lenient treatment and mercy

for prisoners from the learned or upper classes gradually trickled down to the lower levels and finally led to a generalized humanization and softening of punishments. While the authors' criticism of the Foucauldian paradigm's failure to explain the development of the Chinese prison regime is well taken, and the comparison with the Soviet gulag system is valuable, even more comparative perspectives of the development of the camps could have been discussed. This is not so much a criticism of the book as it is an example of the issues inspired by the book. In China, we have not seen the same gradual softening of prison regime practices and punishments experienced in Europe since the French revolution. China and, regrettably increasingly so, America today stand out as examples of harsh and de-humanizing prison regimes in defiance of enlightenment expectations of a connection between modernization and milder punishments. The Chinese example contradicts Foucault's argument of a historical development from pain to regulation, but even the classical argument about the link between modernity and increasing leniency of sentences made by Émile Durkheim seems to go astray in the camp practices of a modernizing China. The book exemplifies such problems of modernity without explicitly discussing them.

Reading the book, I occasionally had a problem distinguishing fact from fiction. This problem is discussed in more detail in chapter five on prison writings. This informative discussion should perhaps have been introduced much earlier. For this reader, the switch from camp life data, based on reportage and memoirs, to fictional prison writing and literature analysis was too abrupt. Chapter five reads like a different book, and, despite my sympathy for the attempt to make a synthesis of disciplines, I am not sure that the cross-disciplinary intentions work the way they should here. Possibly because of my social science background, I found the last parts of chapter five on prison writings in particular to be of less interest than the first four chapters.

The tone of the book is sober and balanced. It is free from that Cold War attitude so prominent in many past analyses, and the discussion takes care to counter one-sided discussions both from inside and outside China. The book attacks the Chinese (both communist and ultra-nationalist) discourse of victimization at the hands of foreign powers as an easy scapegoat for predominantly internal Chinese problems. The present punitive system in China reflects what the authors refer to as a self-inflicted problem that simply does not go away by referring to old ghosts. Although we have seen reforms in detention and execution practices, and a quite impressive rollback of the *jiuye* placement system (where former prisoners had to remain at the prison as prison personnel after their sentences were served), the basic camp system still remains – and reflects – a general regime of extremely harsh punishment in China. The request by Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to dismantle and eventually abolish China's practice of re-education through labour is still dismissed by the regime as interfering in China's internal affairs. Execution rates in China have escalated during the Deng–Jiang era, and are now the highest in the world even in relative

terms (with the possible exception of Singapore). In absolute numbers the People's Republic of China today executes more people than the rest of the world combined, and the prison system is still a very de-humanizing institution. The book gives a chilling description of the methods of human degradation stemming from the camp system.

This book adds to the picture of a punitive society still based on the Chinese saying *luanshi yong zhongdian* – “in times of chaos, harsh methods are needed.” It is hard to see that this argument is of any help to a modernizing China, and the system in my opinion represents a de-stabilizing rather than a stabilizing factor in Chinese development. The harsh camp system, however, still remains. This is a valuable and engaging book about Chinese camps and the literature about these camps. It deserves a wide audience.

BØRGE BAKKEN

The Monster That Is History: History, Violence, and Fictional Writing in Twentieth-Century China. By DAVID DER-WEI WANG. [Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2004. 402 pp. ISBN 0-520-23140-6.]

This celebration of modern Chinese literature is a tour de force, David Wang's third major summation in English. He is even more prolific in Chinese. Wang's command of the creative and critical literatures is unrivalled.

Monster's subject is “the multivalence of Chinese violence across the past century”: not 1960s “structural violence” or postcolonial “epistemic violence,” but hunger, suicide, anomie, betrayal (though not assassination or incarceration), and “the violence of representation”: misery that reflects or creates monstrosity in history. *Monster* thus comments on “history and memory,” like Ban Wang's and Yomi Braester's recent efforts, although for historical reasons modern Chinese literature studies are allergic to historical and sociological methodologies.

Monster is comparative, mixing diverse – sometimes little read – post-May Fourth and Cold War-era works with pieces from the 19th and 20th fins de siècle. Each chapter is a free associative rhapsody (sometimes brilliant, sometimes tedious; often neo-Freudian), evoking, from a recurring minor detail as in new historicist criticism, a major binary trope or problematic for Wang to “collapse” or blur. His forte is making connections between works. The findings: (1) decapitation (loss of a “head,” or guiding consciousness?) in Chinese fiction betokens remembering or “re-remembering” (of the severed), as in an unfinished Qing novel depicting beheaded Boxers, works by Lu Xun and Shen Congwen, and Wuhe's 2000 commemoration of a 1930 Taiwanese aboriginal uprising; (2) justice is poetic, but equals punishment, even crime, in late Qing castigatory novels, Bai Wei, and several Maoist writers; (3) in revolutionary literature, love and revolution blur, as do love affairs in life with those in fiction; (4) hunger, indistinct from anorexia, is excess; witness

“starved” heroines of Lu Xun, Lu Ling, Eileen Chang and Chen Yingzhen; (5) remembering scars creates scars, as in socialist realism, Taiwan’s anticommunist fiction, and post-Mao scar literature; (6) in fiction about evil (late Ming and late Qing novels; Jiang Gui), inhumanity is all too human and sex blurs with politics; (7) suicide can be a poet’s immortality, from Wang Guowei to Gu Cheng; (8) cultural China’s most creative new works invoke ghosts again, obscuring lines between the human, the “real,” and the spectral. There is no conclusion. David Wang’s “monster that is history” is the “polymorphous” ancient myth of Taowu: scary (evil) but premonitory (good).

Wang disavows numerous value commitments, but has at least three of his own. One is to a palpable, non-relative, almost autochthonous Chinese modernity arising in the later Qing (or late Ming, as he argues in chapter six). The post-1917 linguistic revolution and modern Chinese literature’s links with the remote past and the rest of the globe are de-emphasized. One could gather from *Monster* that Chinese love-and-revolution, agitprop theatre, and 1950s Taiwan literature were *sui generis*.

Secondly, Wang’s writing implies an equivalence of all works written in Chinese, whether canonical or marginal, good or bad, finished or rough, though not the popular. There is an implicit *equivalence* of works from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Thirdly, Wang’s reiterations of the painter Goya’s words, “The dream of reason produces monsters,” may bespeak alienation from “Enlightenment” logic. Wang’s books are never histories or surveys, but post-modern performances of rhetorical art and post-Derridean word play. Does he then hope to be freed from the old canons of argument? Wang’s copious citation of his own prior research suggests to me instead a “play” for old-fashioned contributions to cumulative knowledge, a new, *and* old (“mythopoetic”) discourse of violence, and maybe alternative canon building. (His bibliography is full, but the citation politics mystify me. Chapter four, footnote two, says Wang finished writing before reading Gang Yue’s 1999 book on hunger, and so, presumably, my 2000 book on Chinese fictions of justice. Wang addresses Chinese rather than English-language scholarship when he claims originality for tracing scar and Maoist literature to pre-1949 left-wing works, or finding Chinese modernity in the late Qing, which my teachers argued.)

Counter-intuitive duple coinages are Wang’s signature critical contributions. *Monster*’s new ones include “radical lyricism,” “anorexic logic,” and “phantasmagoric realism.” If his previous coinages have not caught on, one reason may be the already rich ambiguity of the nouns he incongruously/tautologically modifies. *Monster* explains “imaginary nostalgia” as nostalgia for something never experienced (p. 170) and (or ?) “already suspected of inauthenticity” (p. 271). This nostalgia is underlain by a spatial dislocation *and* a “relocation of social status and intellectual/emotional capacity,” which “moreover” “points to a narrative device or psychic mechanism that makes possible the (re)definition of something either irretrievable or unspeakable, and to the eternally regressive state of

such a narrative and psychological quest” (p. 170). “Overdetermined abstraction”?

Monster may suggest, perhaps rightly, that Chinese literature lacks great works about the violence of 1900–01, 1911, 1925, 1927, and so on, down to 1989, and also that views of modern Chinese history as monstrous may be solipsistic or mostly figurative, which would be a mistake. Wang omits works about February 28, June 4, and the Nanjing Massacre, perhaps because those literatures are “old news”; scholars may indeed thank him, as some have me, for summarizing lesser works that they may now be excused from reading. He is at his best, I think, when skipping the philosophy, the better to narrate works, good and bad, as history, and biographies in the stories. The later chapters of *Monster* gain interest as influence (historical) studies of Chinese ghost stories and compendia of evils. The excellence of recent Chinese creativity further enlivens these pages.

David Wang is our best modern Chinese fiction critic of the postmodernist school (about the only school left standing in North America). Has he meted out “justice,” punishment included, to Chinese literature’s pleasure and art? *Monster* discovers in all Chinese literature a heart of darkness, but never identifies a bad work.

JEFFREY C. KINKLEY

The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China.

By MARK ELVIN. [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004. xxviii + 564 pp. ISBN 0-300-10111-2.]

Mark Elvin’s books often deal with big ideas over large swathes of Chinese history and this book is no exception. *The Retreat of the Elephants* attempts to describe three millennia of environmental change and environmental ideas in China and to produce conclusions about the nature of Chinese environmental thought as well as experience. It is a masterful tour de force. As such, there is something of interest for everybody. The book is divided into three sections: the first sets the scene and looks at some general cases of degradation over time; the second section concentrates on case studies; and the final section provides textual analysis to elucidate changes in the Chinese view of their environment.

The book begins with a simple geography and history lesson. This is helpful for the non-specialist but provides an overly simple and unusual regionalization. Then again, this approach, accompanied with a style that often translates lesser place names into literal translations, does help to open access to the book for a wider audience. Later in the book, however, there is a tendency to digress about Latin names of plants and stories of the supernatural, with wonderful esoteric translations of Chinese poetry and texts. Elvin’s translations use words that would require most of us to thumb through a very thick English dictionary although Elvin kindly introduces these Scottish, Welsh and old English terms to us and provides good explanations on the stories behind many of the Chinese textual

allusions. These are delightful and help to clarify the points being made. Still, with such almost overwhelming detail of textual analysis later in the book, it is not completely clear for whom the book is written.

It is in the second chapter that we get the story of the retreat of the elephant over four millennia from a range once covering much of China to today's very restricted range in a small portion of southern Yunnan. This chapter basically follows the work of Wen Huanran as Elvin duly notes. It seems odd that the title of book is *The Retreat of the Elephants* as the elephant discussion and subsequent chapter on deforestation provide general examples of degradation but really add little to the work done on these topics by Chinese scholars.

The three case study chapters, however, provide the reader with well-researched insights: Jiaxing in modern north Zhejiang, the Miao frontier in Guizhou, and Zunhua in modern Hebei. Elvin is on his old turf in Jiaxing. He devotes a lot of space to historical coastline changes along Hangzhou Bay and to the battle to stabilize the coast and build polders, something that was largely successful by the late Ming. In contrast, the battle to maintain the balance between population and good quality land was more difficult and items such as timber became scarce. The discussion then turns to bridges, the relation of crime to water passages, and supernatural fauna – all of which are very interesting but sometimes difficult to tie into an overarching theme. The Guizhou chapter is a worthy attempt to look at a frontier environment and describes the brutal cultural and physical damage caused during the conquest of the Miao. There is more discussion of wild animals of the imagination and of bridges – the latter more in a military nature than for Jiaxing – as well as the perils of travel and disease for Han-Chinese in-migrants. Zunhua parallels the other two cases with emphasis on deforestation, degradation around the imperial tombs and more discussion of animals and plants including the supernatural. Each case study, however, stands by itself and there is no dogmatic effort to pull them together into a strict comparison. This section demonstrates why it is impossible to talk about a 'Chinese environment' and that each region and each ecosystem presents differing challenges.

The final section is textual translation and commentary with three differing time slices. Elvin is trying to show variety of thought across time spans in a similar comparative fashion to what he did comparing conditions across regions. Here the book wanders off at times in its own entertaining way, and I found it hard to see in specific passages what exactly was the major point. For Elvin, during the early medieval period (roughly 500 CE) along the east coast, the natural infrastructure and resources were abundant enough to avoid contradiction between respect and sensitivity for the environment and development, but by 600 years later, this would become doubtful.

The next snapshot treats us to a textual analysis of *Fivefold Miscellany* of 1608 by Xie Zhaozhe, a Fujianese born in Hangzhou. Xie displays some views in his writing that are similar to Western science, but Elvin concludes that Xie's work (and by implication all China of this period)

had only a proto-scientific view of nature. I think it dubious to take one person's book as representative of China's view of the environment at the turn of the 17th century and imply that this was the view for a period encompassing hundreds of years on either side and would have felt more comfortable if Elvin had quoted numerous texts from this period. Elvin goes on to explore the relationship of emperors to what he calls "moral meteorology." He notes how some emperors were contradictory in assigning fault for disaster to local officials or to their own predecessors rather than to themselves. To sum up, Elvin makes three points about the attitudes Chinese used to look at landscapes: a belief that heaven and gods and dragons and spirits often influenced the land; humanity was shaped by and also shaped places; and metaphysical notions, often of a moralizing sort, influenced flora, fauna and geographical features.

In conclusion, there is a discussion of the difficulty of deciding what is a particular land's carrying capacity at one point in time, let alone through time. To grapple with the carrying capacity idea, Elvin uses the writings of Qing-era European missionaries who make comparisons with Western Europe. In the end, Elvin is pessimistic, suggesting that Chinese history demonstrates that levels of consciousness of environmental degradation and remediation techniques imply that humans might not have the foresight to sustain humanity in the long run.

This book has a lasting quality and is a wonderful addition for those interested in the Chinese historical perception of the environment. It is a must for those interested in environmental history and the development of human-nature interactions in China. Moreover, be prepared to wander off into interesting digressions in the process.

RICHARD LOUIS EDMONDS

Gutenberg in Shanghai. Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937. By CHRISTOPHER A. REED. [Vancouver, Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2004. xvii, 391 pp. ISBN 1206-9523.]

Gutenberg in Shanghai is a book about the industrial revolution in China's print culture and the ensuing rise of print capitalism 'with Chinese characteristics.' It offers a coherent and unique account of the introduction, adaptation and eventual imitation of modern, i.e. Western, print technology in China, with the aim of establishing the material basis on which to study the transition of China's ancient literary culture into the industrial age. It reconstructs the history of print technology from the first cast type matrices to the adaptation of the electrotpe process, from photo-lithography to the colour-offset press, from the platen press to the rotary printing press, and tells the stories of three of the most dominant lithograph and letterpress publishers of the late Qing and the early Republican period respectively. This is a worthwhile undertaking, exploring an aspect of modern publishing in China, which hitherto has not received the attention it deserves. The study is based on missionary

writings, personal reminiscences, collections of source materials, documents on the early book printers' trade organizations from the Shanghai Municipal Archives, and oral history materials (interviews conducted during the 1950s with former printing workshops apprentices). The bibliography also lists a couple of interviews, but unfortunately it is not clear how relevant they are to the story told in the book.

The introduction of lithography into Shanghai by Jesuit missionaries in 1876 plays a pivotal role in this account. Lithography, especially photolithography coming a few years later, was a technology particularly suited to Chinese needs and cheaper than traditional wood-block printing. For the author this year marks the beginning of a new era when "ever-increasing numbers of Chinese invested in and worked with capital-intensive Western printing technology" (p. 4). Early lithographic publishers achieved success through the reprint of traditional literature, such as novels, reference works and examination aids, and are characterized as "Janus-faced pioneers." Using a new technology to serve old needs, they unintentionally laid "the social, commercial and industrial foundations for Shanghai's late Qing and early Republican capitalist printing and publishing industry, ... effecting great socioeconomic changes while remaining essentially traditional themselves" (p. 91). Here, the author sees a culturally-motivated Chinese preference for lithography over the letterpress, paralleled by a preference for the book over the periodical.

The author suggests that the Commercial Press – a purely Chinese enterprise embracing the letterpress – was the main force behind a Chinese form of modern print capitalism. In this respect, it seems questionable, whereas it is adequate to leave the daily press entirely aside. This is justified with a Chinese "book publishing mentality" (p. 85), which gives the book a cultural priority over the periodical, and corroborated by the claim that the Commercial Press was the first importer of new printing technology. While the book might have had the greater prestige (though certainly not the textbook, on which the Commercial Press's economic success was built), it was doubtless the newspapers' need for daily production in high quantities which served as a major push for the import of faster machines.

New technologies were appropriated in a very pragmatic way. After having served more traditional needs, lithography became the necessary condition for the proliferation of reform magazines in the late 1890s. Most of them were produced with lithograph presses, which made the printing of new ideas much easier for the young reformers in Shanghai. In comparison, the few reform magazines published in Sichuan, Guangxi and Hunan were printed from woodblocks, and many journals projected in Hunan did not appear at all. But, for the dailies also the Chinese reformers preferred moveable type, even in Chongqing, where the modern letterpress was out of reach, wooden type was used. Lithography truly was a cultural success, it did constitute a kind of revolution of the printers' trade, but it did not lead to print capitalism. As the leading role of the Commercial Press is derived from it allegedly being the first

importer of multi-cylinder printing machines (in 1911, cf. p. 85 and table on p. 30), it seems strange that the import of the same type of machine by the Shanghai daily, *Shenbao*, in the same year (mentioned on p. 74) is not listed in this table. But still, there is evidence that the *Shenbao* had already imported a Wharfedale press in 1909 and a Hoe rotary press in 1912. It is also interesting to learn (albeit only in a footnote, p. 316, fn. 219), that it was the Major Brothers, the owner of the *Shenbao*, who acted as the first Shanghai agent for steam-powered platen presses imported from England.

Much of the account offered here is read “through the eyes of Chinese commentators of the 1920s and 1930s” (p. 22), and it seems that the kind of nationalist discourse prevalent during that time has at times obscured the facts and it has also been imposed on earlier decades. An example is the assumption of the rejection or appraisal of letterpress products on the grounds that the fonts produced by Europeans or even in Europe would not appeal to the aesthetically sensitive Chinese (p. 27). Later discourses on what was Chinese or not mostly served political needs and do not necessarily reflect the historical facts. We do not really know whether Chinese readers liked the fonts created by Westerners or not. But still, the Zongli yamen found the Gamble font good enough to use (p. 50). While there were Chinese-designed fonts after 1905, the Commercial Press and Zhonghua shuju developed their own fonts only in the mid-1920s, but, Reed says, “it is not clear who created the popular Song font” (p. 54). This question is actually answered by Martin Heijdra who states that this was the Chinese name for the Japanese Minchōtai, which was dominant in China until the 1950s. (“The Development of Modern Typography in East Asia, 1850–2000,” *East Asian Library Journal*, January 2005.) The Republican Chinese printing industry was heavily dependent on Japanese imports, a fact eschewed in Chinese accounts.

In sum, though there was no print revolution in China comparable to that usually associated with Gutenberg in the Western world, Reed shows how the industrial revolution in China’s print culture came about; how it led to the print capitalism that produced the class of print workers that was to replace the social group of printing and machine shop apprentices; and how this new class became a key factor in the labour movement of the early 20th century. We learn that the state always played a decisive role in the rise of the major Chinese publishing firms, be it in the case of the Tongwen shuju with an imperially-commissioned *Tushu jicheng* edition in the 1880s or in the case of the Commercial Press, with its collaboration with the late Qing and Republican states in the production of textbooks, or the *Congshu jicheng* project supported by the state order that local libraries should be staffed with it. As a lot of materials and archives have been lost and what remains are often only very subjective accounts, the factual basis of this story is hard to recover. This book is a very readable and valuable step in this direction, and it is to be hoped that the discussion will continue.

ANDREA JANKU

The Cult of Happiness: Nianhua, Art and History in Rural North China.

By JAMES A. FLATH. [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004. 195 pp. \$60.00. ISBN 0-7748-1034-3.]

James Flath's *The Cult of Happiness* is a stimulating and accessible book that contributes to more than one area of current concern in Chinese studies. The author effectively situates his work in relation to developing debates about print culture, alternative conceptions or experiences of modernity, and the relationship of popular culture to markets and to state power. It should also appeal to readers interested more generally in modern Chinese art, history and visual culture.

In this general vein, the book would be valuable simply as one of only a very few English-language works that deal with woodcut-printed *nianhua* or New Year's Pictures. These pictures, which depict a range of subjects from gods to auspiciously fat babies to scenes from legend and history, were a ubiquitous part of Chinese household ritual and decoration well into the 20th century, and are still evoked in a variety of contexts in contemporary Chinese visual culture. For various reasons, they have not received as much scholarly attention as they should, especially in comparison to other popular print traditions, such as their distant Japanese cousins, *ukiyo-e* prints. As a genre, *nianhua* are believed to have quite a long history (Chinese sources, for example, often identify a print found in a 12th-century tomb as one of the earliest extant *nianhua*), and they were certainly made and circulated throughout China. Flath, however, wisely limits his study both temporally and geographically by focusing on the last decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, when the vast majority of *nianhua* now extant were made, and on north China, which encompasses several of the most influential and best-documented centres of *nianhua* production. But, although Flath's work functions nicely as an introduction to the basic themes, subjects and methods of an important but still under-studied aspect of Chinese visual culture, it also does much more.

Most importantly, Flath situates *nianhua* firmly within modern history. He traces the development of *nianhua* from an independent commercial art form made by rural people and largely ignored by cultural elites and state agents, to its reformation as vessel of state-sponsored propaganda especially valued for its perceived importance in shaping rural consciousness, to its current incarnation as a dehistoricized signifier of "tradition." Along the way, he usefully disrupts the misleading binary between "tradition" and "modernity." For example, in his first chapter, which discusses the production and distribution of *nianhua* prints, he points out that some aspects of modern development (in this case improved road and rail transport) expanded rather than undermined the economic and social position of these "traditional" prints by making it easier to get them to even distant markets. Woodcut *nianhua* did face competition from new kinds of images – like the fashionable, ostensibly modern beauties of the *yuefenpai* advertising poster – but woodcut *nianhua* did not lose easily or instantly. Furthermore, Flath argues convincingly for an understanding of

rural China in the period under consideration as a cultural producer rather than simply a passive cultural consumer, offering a corrective to the tendency to think of rural China solely as a static, traditional “other” to the modernizing city. In his insightful discussion of *nianhua* prints that confidently take up the task of representing explicitly modern scenes and current events, he creates compelling a model for thinking about rural China “as a participant in an evolving modernity.”

The book does have a few small flaws. For example, this reviewer found frequent references to the “prescriptive” nature of *nianhua* print production less illuminating than might be desired. Of course, the author is right to point out that there are fundamental differences between objects – such as *nianhua* – designed for efficient mass production and made through a system of divided labour, and singular objects made from start to finish by one person, but we are still left with some thorny problems of agency, in terms of consumption as well as production. Finally, to turn to a small factual question, the implication (on p. 18) that *all* prints made in Yangliuqing were *entirely* hand-coloured is mistaken: Wang Shucun’s research indicates that many Yangliuqing prints were printed in colour before having additional shading and details added by hand. Minor problems such as these however, detract very little from the overall value of this fine book.

FELICITY LUFKIN

Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Culture in Republican China. By ANDREW D. MORRIS. [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004. xx + 368 pp. ISBN 0-520-24084-7.]

Over the last decade, there has been a growing media interest in the rise to world prominence of Chinese sport, fuelled first by the startling performances of China’s athletes in the mid- 1990s, then by their declared interest in staging the 2000 Olympic Games, and ultimately their successful bid for the 2008 Games. As if to underline this, China leapt into second place in the medals tally of the Athens Olympic Games in 2004, thus ensuring that the media took full note of the Middle Kingdom. However, in the corresponding period (and in fact much further back) there has been little serious interest amongst Western authors writing specifically about sport in China. Indeed, of the four hundred or so references in *Marrow of the Nation*, just a handful are by Western authors.

In finely honed detail, Andrew Morris traces the development of sport in Republican China from the early years of the 20th century, drawing a carefully argued distinction between the Anglo-American and the Euro-Japanese influences that had a major effect in shaping China’s early sporting identity (although the separation of the two influences, associating Anglo with American and Euro with Japanese, glosses over the importance of European figures in British sporting history). What is striking in unravelling the threads of Chinese history, is the manner in

which China “swayed with the winds of foreign influence” as the leaders tried to develop a national and modern sporting consciousness. As chapter two reveals, by the 1920s, there were also clear traces of Soviet influence – fitness and hygiene, new nationalism, new Chinese man, new meanings for sport. China was reflecting a broad cross-cultural profile which, paradoxically at the time, shunned its own indigenous roots.

This fully modern (so called) version of Chinese *tiyu* embracing aspects of sports science, notions of fair competition, reification of the body and globalized forms of sport, is what Morris refers to as a mimetic response to the particular circumstances of China in the early decades of the 20th century. The later realization by the Chinese that *wushu* (traditionally seen as belonging to the “itinerants of the countryside” and with little coherence between the many and varied forms) could actually add a unique dimension to a national identity led to the integration of Eastern and Western, communist and capitalist ideas into a contemporary Chinese form.

It is, however, noteworthy that despite generating considerable numbers of followers outside China, *wushu* has not become a globalized sport in the way that, for example, *judo* or, to a lesser extent, *taekwondo* have. *Wushu* remains essentially Chinese.

Throughout the book, Morris is persistent in his effort to relate the growth of sport in Republican China to the broad spectrum of historical events that engulfed the country during the 20th century and to that extent sharpens the focus on China’s current practices and policies surrounding the rush towards the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. He emphasizes the need to locate sport within the much wider notion of a national physical culture, or *tiyu*, whose agenda stretches well beyond the confines of the athletics track, swimming pool or playing field. Instrumental in constructing a national identity through *tiyu* was the need, especially in the case of *wushu*, to create a rational and written account of physical culture and sport that harmonized and resonated with locally, i.e. Chinese, perceived ideas of modernization. Partly by this means, the various forms of physical culture became a modern *tiyu*, neatly combining indigenous and imported activities that, today, give Chinese sport the dual stamp of both ancient and modern.

The book is comprehensive in its range of source material. Personal interviews, original texts, newspaper and journal articles give substantial weight to the authority of the writing, along with extensive chapter notes. There are detailed accounts of developments in the years leading up to the Second World War that epitomize not only the internal struggle between Nationalists and Communists, but also the unifying effect (albeit temporary) of the Japanese occupation.

Given the paucity of Western texts on sport in China, *Marrow of the Nation* provides a much needed and valuable addition to the body of knowledge that would be appropriate both for the broader study of contemporary Chinese culture and for the deeper understanding of the layers of meaning attached to sport in China. The historical detail – both

informative and fascinating – gives a rich contextual setting for sport and physical culture in Republican China.

ROBIN JONES

The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin: The Opium Trade and Opium Suppression in Fujian Province, 1820s to 1920s. By JOYCE A. MADANCY. [Harvard and London: Harvard East Asia Monograph, 2003. 430 pp. \$50.00; £32.95. ISBN 0-674-01215-1.]

Visiting New York's Chinatown, it is surprising to find there a memorial statue of the legendary anti-opium hero, Lin Zexu, instead of the more usual statue of the father of modern China, Sun Yat-sen. Perhaps Lin deserves his place in New York's Chinatown: it is generally believed the history of Chinese migration into the New World was a chapter of humiliation, resulting from the evil opium and the opium trade. Until very recently, the conventional wisdom has been that it was the opium trade that ended the house of Qing, and that opium had turned China into a nation of hopeless addicts, smoking themselves to death while their civilization descended into chaos (a view challenged by Dikötter, Laaman and Zhou in *Narcotic Culture: A History of Drugs in China*).

In her book *The Troublesome Legacy of Commissioner Lin*, Joyce Madancy argues that, like opium, Lin Zexu was turned into a potent symbol of nascent Chinese nationalism (p. 5). Like opium, the legacy of Lin continued well into the 20th century. In his native Fujian, for instance, Lin “came to represent the vitality of elite activism and the complex links between provincial, national, and international interests. Lin Zexu’s character and mission embodied the themes and motivations of Fujian’s late Qing opium reformers – the righteousness of opium reform, pride in country and province, and a none-too-subtle slap at foreign imperialist greed.” Accordingly, during the late Qing/early Republican anti-opium campaign in Fujian, “reformist elites, and officials presided over the apotheosis of Lin Zexu, whose image loomed, literally and figuratively, over their efforts and shaped the rhetoric and tone of suppression” (p. 5). Against such background, the book sets out to examine the anti-opium campaign in Fujian between 1906 and 1920, its process and consequences, as well as its failure until 1927.

According to the author, the book is “part of a small but growing number of works that have recently begun to recast the scholarly dialogue on opium by lifting it out its long-standing home in the annals of diplomatic history and placing it firmly in the centre of socio-political and literary analyses of Chinese history from the Opium War to 1949.” Opium, it is claimed, “has now become a lens through which we can examine state building, perceptions of social deviance and mechanisms for its control, and East-West interaction through medicine and religion, among other themes” (pp. 7–8). The book is therefore a study of reforms in Fujian province during the late Qing and early Republican periods.

Chapter two provides the background to the opium economy in Fujian province, showing its economic importance and its fate in the name of public morality, which led to its suppression. Chapters three, four and five cover the reform in the late Qing period. Chapter six is devoted to the reform in the early Republic. Chapter seven studies the protestant missionaries' involvement in anti-opium crusades. Chapter eight looks at the Huang Lian revolt, which was labelled the "opium rebellion," and its consequence, as well as the politics of prohibition in the province. Chapter nine explores the failure or the collapse of the reform, while the last chapter argues that while the legacy of Lin Zexu and opium played a vital part in the reform movement of late Qing and early Republican Fujian, nationalistic rhetoric and anti-opium campaigns were intrinsically linked throughout China. In other words, the book is a case study of the late Qing and early Republican Chinese social, political and institutional history. On the whole, the book is well researched with wide range of primary source material.

XUN ZHOU

Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies: Christian Missionaries Imagine Chinese Religion. By ERIC REINDERS. [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004. xvi + 266 pp. \$49.95, £32.50. ISBN 0-520-24171-1.]

In 1997, Eric Reinders was awarded a doctorate on the topic of "Buddhist Rituals of Obeisance and the Contestation of the Monk's Body in Medieval China." Any regret that might be felt in the decidedly restricted field of Anglophone studies of Buddhist China at the subsequent loss of his talents to that area of research must be outweighed by an awareness that he has chosen to move on to open up research in an area hitherto largely untouched by any scholarship at all in any language. For despite the longstanding efforts that have been put into the writing of mission history, the study of the cultural significance of the Anglophone missionary in China is a much more recent phenomenon, even though John King Fairbank pointed out the value of missionary writings in his presidential address to the American Historical Association as long ago as 1968, and now even novelists like Sid Smith (in his 2003 Picador work *A House by the River*) are beginning to explore the issue of cross-cultural understanding through the Chinese missionary experience.

For despite the subtitle, the focus of this study is very much on missionary reactions to their physical translocation to China during the 19th and 20th centuries rather than to any reflective analysis that they subsequently produced concerning the beliefs and practices that they encountered. From the immediacy of their encounters with alarming visual cues to Chinese religion (construed as 'idolatry'), to the equally alien sounds of the Chinese language, and on to the vexed question of

body posture in worship (something that Reinders, with his acute but tacit sense of the importance of history on the Chinese side, takes back on the European side to Reformation debates), and even to the olfactory assault that the missionaries experienced on arrival – all are given their due place. At the same time, the author is quite clear from his introductory remarks that this volume constitutes no more than a preliminary reconnaissance of some very rewarding materials. For example, it is plain to see that the fascinating tenth chapter on Christian opposition to vegetarianism in China, a religious tradition that continues to this day, could be further explored through the writings produced by the missionaries in Chinese. The musician Steve Race remarks the survival of at least one short work on this topic in *The Two Worlds of Joseph Race* (London: Souvenir Press, 1988), a biography of his grandfather who, despite his brief life (1847–1880), managed to produce (p. 151) a tract “of some 7 × 4 inches, 22 pages long” vaunting the value of meat eating.

As a pioneer in the field, Reinders is of course under no obligation to be comprehensive on any of the topics upon which he touches, and one should primarily be grateful that he maps out the main contours of the territory that he has discovered with such panache. But it must be said that even the English-language sources used are quite restricted. Amongst the missionary journals available, only the *Church Missionary Gleaner* and a couple of others are systematically exploited, to say nothing of archived manuscript correspondence, which seems to lie entirely beyond the scope of his investigations. Even published monographs by missionaries are by no means exhaustively consulted. Rather, a number of non-missionary writers are pressed into service in order to provide observations that, while interesting enough in themselves, may not be taken without reserve as indicative of a specifically missionary mentality. Examples would include the early governor of Hong Kong, Sir John F. Davis (1795–1890), the plant collector, Robert Fortune (1812–1880), and the American diplomat’s wife, Sarah Pike Conger (c.1843–?), all of whom could be (and in some cases have been) treated as representative of quite different Anglophone perspectives on China. It also seems slightly misleading to imply on p. 174 that the cited fictional account by John Hersey (1914–1993) of the smell of early 20th-century China was perhaps “faithful to his memories of missionary perceptions” when the author himself lived in China with his missionary parents for the first ten years of his life, and was presumably quite capable of recalling and reproducing his own impressions. No doubt Reinders and others will produce somewhat more tightly constructed accounts of the cultural interactions at the heart of this book in future. Already, however, he can claim a fair amount of credit for illuminating the considerable possibilities that lie ahead.

T. H. BARRETT

In Search of an Identity: The Politics of History as a School Subject in Hong Kong, 1960s–2002. By EDWARD VICKERS. [New York and London: Routledge, 2003. vii + 321 pp. £60.00. ISBN 0-415-94502-X.]

In recent years, much research has been published on nationalism and national identity formation in East Asia. It has been frequently noted that “official” historical narratives disseminated through school curricula have been crucial to popularizing state-sanctioned national and world-views and legitimizing the polity. Yet, excepting research into the international controversies surrounding Japanese history textbook portrayals of Japan’s wartime past, few studies have looked beyond a handful of government directives and textbooks. What has been written, moreover, has often assumed that political authoritarianism and/or the highly centralized nature of curriculum and textbook development in most of East Asia (at least until very recently) have rendered history education little more than a top-down process of attempted ideological indoctrination, an assumption reinforced by theories that depict mass education primarily as a means by which social and political elites sustain their hegemony.

In Search of an Identity offers a long overdue examination of this neglected field, focusing on the interesting case of Hong Kong where the territory’s dual Chinese–British heritage has been reflected in the inclusion of two wholly separate history subjects in the school curriculum: Chinese history, taught in Cantonese and chronologically narrating 5,000 years of Chinese civilization; and history, taught predominantly in English and covering assorted historical periods and events world-wide. This meticulously detailed study charts the evolution of the history subject at fourth to sixth-form levels (ages 14–18) from the late 1960s through retrocession up to 2002, coverage which is extended in the forthcoming paperback edition to 2004 to include the latest textbook revisions (Comparative Education Research Centre, Hong Kong University, 2005). Based on careful analysis of the relevant political, social, intellectual and cultural contexts, official education directives, minutes of high-level curriculum planning meetings, examination syllabi, textbooks and in-depth interviews with key curriculum development personnel, Vickers rejects “conspiratorial” views that portray history as designed chiefly to instil among Hong Kongers unswerving loyalty to the colonial state. The British authorities, he argues, never actively restricted curriculum content, and the post-1997 regime has not intervened directly either (although Chinese history has been revised to fit more closely with PRC patriotic-ideological imperatives). Furthermore, history curriculum developers have not been passive minions devoid of professional pride and academic integrity; in fact, they have increasingly striven to promote analytical and critical thinking skills through their subject, even if they have sometimes exercised self-censorship or avoided especially sensitive topics. Despite opposition from various quarters, they have also gradually expanded coverage of Hong Kong history, both to educate students about

the local past and to interest them in history as a discipline through making use of *in situ* extra-curricular resources.

As a former history teacher and textbook writer, Vickers is acutely aware that implementing these projects has not been easy, with local, liberal, critical and internationalist objectives frequently undermined by illiberal colonial and nationalist politics, by rivalry with the Chinese history subject over territory, status and resources, by the examination- and textbook-centred education system, and by the use of English as the medium of instruction. Nonetheless, he reveals a hitherto unrecognized dynamism in history, underpinned by an increasingly assertive “Hong Kongeseness” that moves beyond the British colonial past and essentialist conceptions of a homogenous ethno-cultural Chineseness promoted by the current administration to stake out a distinct historical identity of its own. While it remains unclear exactly how and to what extent history education influences individual or collective beliefs, values and identities, this volume makes a substantial contribution to understanding the complexities of curriculum development processes, identity politics, and notions of “culture” and “nationness” – not only in Hong Kong, but across the rest of East Asia and beyond.

ALISA JONES

Government Capacity and the Hong Kong Civil Service. By JOHN P. BURNS. [Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. xvi + 468 pp. ISBN 0-19-590597-0.]

John Burns has written an exhaustively researched and highly important book for scholars with a particular interest in Chinese politics and, more broadly, for the fields of comparative politics and public management. Burns examines the contributions of the civil service to government capacity in Hong Kong. His focus is the crucial post-1997 period, which presents him with a number of interesting analytical issues. First, post-1997 Hong Kong continues to lack the political institutions linking citizen preferences to government policy outcomes. In this context, the civil service takes on enormous political importance: it identifies and proposes solutions to community problems, roles that would be performed by politicians and political parties in a liberal democracy. Secondly, although post-1997 Hong Kong has significant autonomy, it is a local government, essentially subject to the rule of Communist leaders in Beijing. This raises interesting problems of relations between centre and locality. Finally, and not least of all, the Hong Kong economy suffered a significant decline in the late 1990s. This challenged the performance-based legitimacy of the government and placed new pressures on it to reform the civil service to strengthen government capacity. Evaluation of these reforms is an important contribution of this volume.

Burns examines the civil service from a public management perspective, both describing policies and analysing actual practices, the latter with the use of interviews, surveys and case studies. In the 1980s and

1990s, Hong Kong government capacity was high. Economic growth was rapid, unemployment was low, and public support for the government was strong, based on apparently successful performance. Comparative surveys gave high scores to Hong Kong government performance too, but these were based mainly on the successful management of corruption. Civil service management did not deteriorate after 1997. Rather, Burns argues, in the 1980s and 1990s, a strong economy allowed the government to ignore longstanding problems in civil service management, problems that he analyses with great clarity as a weak performance orientation, evident less in official policy than in the informal rules that consistently undermined it. In practice, integrity was highly valued, but not performance. Rewards for public service in Hong Kong were generous, indeed, more generous than those in the private sector, but essentially unrelated to performance.

The crisis of public finance that accompanied the economic downturn in the late 1990s forced the Hong Kong government to undertake civil service reforms to boost performance and enhance government capacity. These reforms include privatization, outsourcing, modest cuts in compensation, and employment of contractual employees. Burns argues that the reforms have produced few real changes, however, nor *can* they in the political context. He shows with pointed case studies that the political system continues to allow the Hong Kong civil service to manage itself with near complete autonomy. Civil servants have successfully deflected challenges to their privileged status quo; the political system, including provisions in the Basic Law, provides an accommodating framework for this. As Burns notes in his conclusion, the Hong Kong example aptly illustrates the “interconnectedness of context variables” – economic growth, political institutions and government capacity.

MELANIE MANION

Hitchcock with a Chinese Face: Cinematic Doubles, Oedipal Triangles, and China's Moral Voice (with DVD). By JEROME SILBERGELD. [Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004. 160 pp. £22.95. ISBN 0-295-98417-1.]

Jerome Silbergeld introduced an art history approach into Chinese film studies with *China into Film: Frames of Reference in Contemporary Chinese Cinema* in 2000. *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face* goes further. Like an art historian selecting three seemingly disparate paintings and demonstrating their links, Silbergeld chooses a film each from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China, but argues that they pursue similar aesthetic and political directions. The result is a virtuoso display of intense textual and inter-textual exegesis, informed by an in-depth knowledge of the pre-modern Chinese arts, contemporary Chinese political culture, and globally circulated Western culture (including Hitchcock). It is also a challenge to the discipline of film studies itself.

The three films Silbergeld selects for analysis are Lou Ye's 2000 film from mainland China, *Suzhou River* (*Suzhou he*); Yim Ho's 1994 Hong Kong film, *The Day the Sun Turned Cold* (*Tianguo nizi*); and the final part of Hou Hsiao Hsien's 1995 Taiwan trilogy, *Good Men, Good Women* (*Hao nan, hao nü*). He acknowledges that the project began as a personal indulgence allowing him to explore further some of his favourite films. However, his engagement with the films leads him to argue that each one, in its own way, deconstructs the commonly circulated idea of a unified Chinese culture, engages powerfully with morality, is narratively complex and anti-commercial, mobilizes a cosmopolitan knowledge of world cinema, and displays an unusual degree of interest in individual psychology and oedipality. The latter elements help to ground the comparisons to Hitchcock (as well as to *Hamlet*, Dostoevsky, Faulkner and others). He contrasts this to the emphasis on the collective and obedience that he believes characterized both feudal Confucianism, Maoist socialism and the KMT's martial law era in a manner reminiscent of the turn to the West that dominated what Jing Wang has called the "Cultural Fever" of the 1980s on the mainland in her book of the same name.

Silbergeld's work contains many impressive passages, such as his genealogy of women and water in pre-modern Chinese culture as background to the figure of the mermaid in *Suzhou River* or his discussion of mirrors in Chinese culture in relation to *Good Men, Good Women*. But *Hitchcock with a Chinese Face* might encounter at least two lines of resistance. First, although interpretation remains a mainstay of film studies, it has been under challenge. Scholars such as David Bordwell in *Making Meaning* (1989) have argued interpretation is always subjective and therefore an inappropriate scholarly activity. Silbergeld is unabashedly subjective. I also feel that all human work is located and interpretive, and that there is no objectivity, so this does not trouble me.

In these circumstances, the question is what sort of subjective interpretation is authoritative or worthy of publication? By selecting mostly pre-modern Chinese paintings and literature, and Western references ranging from Shakespeare and Freud through to Hitchcock, he validates his chosen films by invoking a high cultural genealogy. However, by avoiding more proximate cultural material that can be demonstrated to have shaped these films, he lays himself open to the charge of picking and choosing whatever suits the interpretations he wants to make. And those interpretations, in turn, could be subjected to the powerful critique of orientalism in Western film studies. (Zhang Yingjin's 2002 book, *Screening China*, is a good example.) By trying to link these films both to pre-modern glories and the Western values implicit in the Freudian narratives of growth to supposed moral maturity, Silbergeld's work could be criticized for projecting his own Western liberal values onto these "good objects" that are his favourite works of art, in much the way that others, including most prominently the veteran scholar of Japanese film, Donald Richie, have been.

But what if Silbergeld is not merely engaged in projection, but in a transnational project? He is careful to point out that the films themselves

and the writings of many Chinese critics suggest that the liberal American values he upholds are shared by many in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In an age of global cultural circulation and linkage, charges of orientalism are not straightforwardly upheld. However, on the other hand, whether those American values should be endorsed uncritically, and whether the cutting edge of Chinese cinema really takes such a position is worthy of more debate, and we must be grateful to Silbergeld for opening this up. Personally, I find Silbergeld's choices of films and inter-texts, as well as the interpretations he constructs out of them, provocative and engaging. I hope they will attract many readers. But I also hope they will provoke more explicit debate about the questions I have raised here.

CHRIS BERRY

Envisioning Taiwan: Fiction, Cinema, and the Nation in the Cultural Imaginary. By JUNE YIP. [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. 356 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 0-8223-33367-8.]

June Yip's *Envisioning Taiwan* considers Taiwan's emergent discourse on a national identity in light of its regionalist or nativist (*hsiang-t'u*) literary movement and the New Cinema which flourished in the 1970s and 1980s. The book has seven chapters, largely devoted to the work of artists such as Hwang Chun-ming and Hou Hsiao-hsien. It gives a most sensible and nuanced account of the development of post-colonial global consciousness and of the indigenization processes in post-1987, Taiwan when martial law was lifted. It argues that language, literature and cinema have played a vital part in constructing cultural nationalism. To map the critical paths in which the Taiwanese have struggled to fashion a unique cultural identity, Yip reveals how "the complexities of Taiwanese literature and film have themselves necessitated a reassessment of conventional assumptions about the local, the national, and the global" (p. 11).

Democratization, indigenization and the emergence of a vigorous native consciousness provided parameters that pushed forward local demands for "creative ways to assert the island's undeniable existence as an independent entity without actually declaring itself a nation" (p. 246). According to Yip, the ascendancy of Taiwanese national consciousness was indebted to the political liberation of the 1980s, but was in fact inspired by the *hsiang-t'u* literature of the 1960s and 1970s. She begins with the literary debates of 1977–78 and uses Hwang Chun-ming as a prime – albeit "curious" – example of someone who provided a voice of local colour in response to capitalist lifestyles, trendy Western ideas and American cultural goods. She situates Hwang in relation to the modernism and separatism debates of the time, looking upon him as ideologically detached but culturally engaged. Hwang is also credited for revitalizing the vernacular oral tradition by making use of the Taiwanese dialects.

What Hwang and his generation did in the 1970s was to foreground the differences within a national formation, and Hou Hsiao-hsien and several other Taiwanese New Cinema film-makers were to push it further by orienting themselves towards a “more postcolonial or post-modern understanding of nation that is neither essentialist nor caught up in notions of cultural authenticity” (p. 66). *City of Sadness* is, of course, a major piece in the re-telling of Taiwan’s national history, and Yip elaborates on Hou’s films in terms of the many forces that shape modern Taiwanese society. Hou is said to be most revealing in the ways he creates characters who move between multiple cultures – rural, urban, ethnic, national and even transnational. Drawing on work by Benedict Anderson, Mikhail Bakhtin, Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams and Paul Willemsen, Yip suggests that the tension between official (KMT) history and popular memory is at the heart of the nationalistic struggle. Hence, she examines Hwang and Hou in light of the history of the everyday in which literature and cinema became a means not only of political representation, but also of cultural belonging. Hou’s films are said to seek “to articulate his place in Taiwanese society and to affirm his identification with the island on which he has lived his entire life” (pp. 75–76). Yip reads the texts by Hwang and Hou very closely, first by examining the linguistic components and their implications for national construction, and then by highlighting the narrative functions in conjuring up reality. Her major discoveries are post-colonial subjects as they clear space for heterogeneous and disjunctive time frames. *City of Sadness*, for example, is “full of temporal disjunctions, gaps, and discontinuities that leave audiences with a rich and complex, though ambivalent and incomplete, sense of history” (p. 95).

In the concluding section to *Envisioning Taiwan*, Yip moves from the local and the national to the global, and by working through topics such as exile, displacement and shifting identities, she puts Taipei on the cognitive map of globalization and cultural hybridity. Hou’s 1987 film, *Daughter of the Nile*, features the “global teenagers” affected by transnational consumer culture. Yip mentions a more recent film by Hou, *Goodbye, South, Goodbye* (1996), without elaborating on it; this is where the book seems to fall short. For Hou has been turning his attention from Taiwan to China since the 1990s and has become more interested in the Chinese diaspora or alternative narratives of people moving across the Taiwan Strait. Hou’s later films may fit better into Yip’s observation concerning the fluidity of identity formation and the politics of travel in between spaces. The selection and significance attributed to Hwang and Hou thus present problems as Yip chooses to explore the imagining of a nation that has neglected trans-regional subjects and multinational interests in Taiwan, subjects which both Hwang and Hou have addressed. “Creative” ways to pursue the “formal independence,” as outlined on p. 246, therefore need to be complicated by the new developments over the controversial Anti-Secession Law and with strategic interventions from the US and Japan.

The book identifies and analyses in a rather convincing and well-documented manner the most crucial texts to the formation of a new Taiwan. Notes and bibliography fill almost one third of the book's 344 pages. Yip has conducted interviews with the artists to provide first-hand material in support of her interpretive accounts. *Envisioning Taiwan* is a must read for students in East Asian literature and cinema.

PING-HUI LIAO

Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture. Edited by EDWARD L. DAVIS. [London and New York: Routledge, 2005. xxiv + 786 pp. \$210.00. ISBN 0-415-24129-4.]

Readers seeking information about prominent urban Chinese artists, writers, composers, film-makers, public intellectuals, and socio-cultural trends in the reform period will find much of use in the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture*, a collaborative transnational effort that is unfortunately marred by unevenness and sloppy editing. Browsers will also find lively and opinionated essays about cars and taxis, *falun gong*, democracy, dating and sex shops.

Editor Edward L. Davis gave free reign to the contributors of the almost 1,200 entries in this fifth volume, encouraging them to pass judgment and editorialize. He also wisely involved mainland scholars like Yue Daiyun and Dai Jinhua when drawing up the lists of entries, and called upon Francesca Dal Lago to oversee the book's excellent sections on visual arts. While the *Encyclopedia's* list of contributors includes prominent, well-established scholars (Timothy Cheek on intellectuals and academics, Frank Dikötter on prisons, and Geremie Barmé on seemingly anything he wanted to write about), its large number of young, Chinese-born scholars based in North America and Europe reflects an important shift in the field of Chinese studies.

Entries, varying in length from a single paragraph to ten pages (see Lionel Jensen's piece on *falun gong*, for example), are organized alphabetically, include cross-references, and are often followed by suggestions for further reading. A helpful thematic classified entry list precedes the entries themselves. Unfortunately, problematic organization undermines the book's usefulness for both literate Chinese readers and those with no knowledge of the language. *Pinyin* renderings of names and phrases are not accompanied by Chinese characters, hampering the task of scholars hoping to conduct further primary-source research on a particular person. In addition, while some terms are alphabetized according to an English translation (like the music band, Wild Children, whose Chinese name, Ye haizi, is not provided anywhere), many others are arranged solely by *pinyin*, like *san ge daibiao* (Jiang Zemin's "three represents," a translation that does not appear in the classified entry list or in the "t" section of the index), rendering them completely inaccessible to readers unfamiliar with Chinese.

While previous volumes in Routledge's encyclopedias of contemporary culture series define the "contemporary" period as having commenced around 1945 or even earlier, the *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* limits itself to a much narrower timeframe: 1979 to the present. This practical editorial choice reflects the massive changes that have occurred in China since Mao Zedong's death. Yet it is also a reminder of an unfortunate trend in Chinese studies: social scientists rarely dare to conduct research on the Mao period or topics unrelated to recent economic reforms, while historians seldom venture beyond 1949. The resultant disjunctures, rather than continuities, dominate our thinking about modern China, and misconceptions about the Mao period, and especially the Cultural Revolution, abound.

Happily, some entries in the *Encyclopedia*, including a sensitive three-page essay on the Cultural Revolution by Barmé, violate the book's temporal boundaries. But overall, the Mao period appears as a cultural vacuum. For example, an entry about architecture proclaims: "Due to the cultural destruction between 1949 and 1979, the majority of the public are poorly educated" (p. 17). If we only seek "culture" in large coastal cities, or in galleries and on film screens appraised by Western critics, then perhaps the Mao period was culturally lacking. But if we turn our attention to villages, private spaces, and the patterns and rituals of daily life, rural China – both before and after 1979 – looks as culturally rich as today's Beijing or Shanghai. Notable and welcome exceptions to the *Encyclopedia's* overall urban elite bias include entries on Catholic villages and rural weddings by Eriberto P. Lozada Jr., on "cultural landscapes" by Peter M. Foggin, on hospitals by Eric I. Karchmer, and on suicide by Michael R. Phillips. Solid entries on ethnic groups and on regional music and performing arts also serve as reminders of China's incredible regional diversity.

I had initially hoped to recommend this book as a useful starting point for undergraduates in search of research topics on post-Mao China. Students interested in avant-garde art, or a particular trend in cinema or poetry, will find a treasure trove of interesting ideas and themes. However, after a close reading revealed over 30 typographical and spelling errors, I can only recommend it as a negative example of what to turn in for a bad grade. Slapdash proofreading is unacceptable in any publication, let alone an encyclopedia with an astronomical price tag. Even worse than the *pinyin* mistakes and misspellings of the names of scholars like Chen Xiaomei, Elizabeth Perry, and Michael Schoenhals ("Chen Xiaoming," p. 236, "Elisabeth," p. 494, and "Shoehals," pp. xiv, 563), is the disservice done to non-native writers of English, who in some cases were not given adequate assistance in transforming their entries into passable prose. If these problems could be remedied in a less expensive paperback edition, the *Encyclopedia's* utility as a reference tool would be greatly enhanced.

JEREMY BROWN