

decade also followed the lifting of martial law in Taiwan (July 1987) and the resumption of the traffic between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait (November 1987), included the rise of Taiwan localism and the change of rules of college teachers' promotion, and preceded the Democratic Progressive Party's defeat of the Nationalist Party in the presidential election (March 2000).

Chen first illustrates how feminist scholars in the Chinese cultural realm deliberated upon their knowledge about Western feminism in order to resolve various gender problems in the late Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), the Republican and Nationalist era (1911–49), the PRC (1949–present), Taiwan and Hong Kong. She emphasizes that not all feminist rhetoric, initiatives and strategies in the Chinese cultural realm came only from the West, because for many decades Chinese feminists in the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong had been developing local forms of feminist ideology and discourses based upon their own understandings and interpretations of Western feminism.

Chen then offers a comprehensive insight into Chinese feminism in the 1990s. She compares the reception of feminism and feminist scholars by academia in the mainland and in Taiwan, the survival strategies that feminist scholars adopted in order to be accepted in various research fields by the academy, and internal conflicts among feminist scholars. Of significance is Chinese feminist scholars' preference for French feminist theorists Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixious, and Julia Kristeva, despite the majority being unfamiliar with the French language. She discusses how French feminism was localized, applied and advanced in order to ensure academic survival for feminist scholars in the PRC and Taiwan, and at the same time corresponded to local historical developments and socio-political environments.

Chen's concluding chapter is an analysis of prestigious English-language academic journals, to examine how non-Chinese, English-speaking scholars understand women and feminism in the Chinese cultural realm. She reiterates that Chinese feminism is diverse and multifaceted, combining local and Western influences, and therefore, is a subject that can be endlessly explored but never conclusively defined.

Through her interviews with feminist scholars and her analysis of journal articles, Chen reaches an understanding of feminism in China that is deeper than existing scholarship which focuses on feminism in the PRC, while neglecting Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Chinese-speaking areas in the Chinese cultural realm. This makes this book a timely study of Chinese feminism that considers the capricious cross-Strait relations between the PRC and Taiwan and the uncertain future of Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region. Chen's contribution provides us with a thoughtful and meticulous analysis, opening up new avenues to the study of feminism in China. As such, this book will be a useful point of reference for scholars with an interest in gender and women, globalization and social movements in contemporary Chinese societies.

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*Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China*

JULIE Y. CHU

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Among the small number of ethnographies of overseas migration from China, Julie Chu's is the second to focus on the countryside around Fuzhou. Though part of a

broader historical emigration region, this stretch of the coast only became a major sending area in the late 1980s, and in the following decade became notorious as the source of most illegal Chinese immigrants in the US and Britain.

Although multi-sited ethnographies of migration are becoming increasingly common, Chu chose to focus on the preparations, successes and failures of would-be migrants in “Longyan,” a village that has become a virtual suburb of Fuzhou City, and not to follow them to New York. This is because she is interested primarily in the *desire* for mobility rather than in its effects. Even the chapter that deals with left-behind wives and children focuses on their desires and the rumours and gossip that surround those. International mobility in today’s China is a sign of success and modernity, and Chu shows how Longyan villagers’ efforts to emigrate help them climb the scale of modernity vis-à-vis their educated urban neighbours. Urbanites see their own orderly migrations to work or study abroad as uniquely legitimate in representing a new, modern China in the world, and condemn the extravagant spending of Longyan’s “peasants” on fake papers and expensive rituals – in hope of landing a menial job in the US – as wasteful and irrational. For their part, villagers, even as they violate the state’s norms by making illegal attempts to migrate and are treated by its agents as “low quality” subjects, are not rebelling against China’s hegemonic project of modernity, but hope eventually to become a part of it by earning the status of the modern subject. (Chu sometimes calls this desired modern sensibility a cosmopolitan one, but this is perhaps a misapplication of the term, since the point is not to develop the sensibility of the global citizen but to comply better with an imaginary of modernity that is squarely national.)

Indeed, although the area Chu studied has been subjected to a number of “strike hard” campaigns to stamp out illegal emigration, Longyan’s party secretaries are more concerned with villagers’ conservative outlook, which prevents them from migrating in even greater numbers. They see those who have secured legal status and a job abroad and return to Longyan to visit as “visibly marked by their social superiority to their peasant neighbours” (p. 72) and as a model of improved manners and dress for the entire village. Yet, hopes for successful emigration in Longyan are nothing but rationally calculated. They are overwhelmingly associated with a good “snakehead” (migration broker), successful mastery of one’s “file self” (Chu’s term for the persona created on paper to satisfy immigration rules), and luck, for which the help of gods can be essential. Although villagers are aware of gradations of “real” and “fake” documents, they see these only in terms of differing efficacy rather than of differing legality. The contradiction between the desired modern persona and the classically superstitious practices that are deployed to attain it has been noted by other researchers, but its ethnographic elaboration is one of the most interesting aspects of Chu’s book.

*Cosmologies of Credit* enriches our understanding of the meshing between private and state desires of modernity that are so characteristic of today’s China. It is also a reminder of the limited usefulness of treatments of migration that focus on the dualities of licit versus criminal or on economic rationality alone, or indeed on international migration as a *sui generis* phenomenon. While emigration has certainly brought an inflow of cash to Longyan, the case of the 82-year-old woman who wants to obtain a US residence permit only to secure an exemption from obligatory cremation after death shows how migratory practices can have an entirely different significance in the context of an individual’s life-world.

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