

In certain ways this book complements Doris Chang's *Women's Movements in Twentieth Century Taiwan* (University of Illinois Press, 2009) and it is a shame that Tsai has not mentioned this book in the present work. Also missing were Ming-sho Ho's *Working Class Formation in Taiwan* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), a book which examines in detail the rise of labour movements during the same period, and Paul Katz's *When Valleys turned Blood Red* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), which reflects on the voices of rural Taiwanese under Japanese colonial rule. Since Tsai chronicles the intertwining of the peasant movement with Japanese unionism, I was also surprised that Christopher Gerteis's *Gender Struggles: Wage-earning Women and Male-dominated Unions in Postwar Japan* (Harvard University Press, 2009) was not used, nor was Rana Mitter's *A Bitter Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2004), since he links (although to a lesser extent) the Taiwan peasant movement to the peasant uprisings in China. That said, drawing on an impressively wide range of archival material in Chinese, Japanese and English, *The Peasant Movement* does provide a refreshing direction to the kinds of histories that can be, and should be, written on Taiwan. Its suitability lies beyond Taiwan history and it would be a useful comparative text on early 20th-century social activism. What is more, like the socialist/unionist organizations in Europe during the same period, the movement's "emotion, zeal, intensity and idealism" were ultimately short-lived and reflect a transnational picture of the *années folles* that were the 1920s. It contributes not just to the fields of Taiwan and Chinese studies but has pertinence in studies on both Japan and Korea. The book fits the discipline of history but has relevance in political science, sociology and political anthropology.

I shall end this review with a quote from the book: "Invariably, peasant movements and land reform [...] are a question of power. Without power, one can make fiery speeches, but they do not fundamentally change anything." Chien Chi's tenant union lacked "real power" (p. 222) but it did attract attention. This book is testament to this.

NIKI ALSFORD

na29@soas.ac.uk

Revisiting Gender Inequality: Perspectives from the People's Republic of China

Edited by QI WANG, MIN DONGCHAO and BO ÆRENLUND SØRENSEN

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xiv + 232 pp. \$95.00

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This book presents in translation nine papers by scholars from the People's Republic of China (PRC), which were published originally in Chinese. All of the chapters address gender inequality and, specifically, the disadvantages suffered by the least privileged women in contemporary Chinese society. Half are devoted to the particular challenges faced by women in rural China.

Before discussing the substantive chapters, I want to talk about how they've been framed. The book was published in a comparative feminist studies series, edited by the postcolonial feminist theorist, Chandra Talpade Mohanty. In her Series Editor's Foreword, Mohanty presents the volume as "uniquely positioned to challenge the hegemony of Western knowledge about China" (p. ix); a claim that draws on Qi Wang's Introduction, in which she portrays the book as contributing

to an “epistemology of the South” which “achieves a much broader understanding of the world than the Western way of understanding” (p. 5).

I find these claims problematic for two, contrasting reasons. On the one hand, as Wang acknowledges, this is by no means the first English translation of Chinese scholars’ work on gender issues. Quite a few gender scholars in the PRC have also themselves been publishing in English in recent years. In addition, women like Wang, herself, who grew up in China but now work in Western academic institutions and publish in English have become increasingly prominent producers of knowledge about gender in China. And both they and non-Chinese, Western scholars of gender in China, like myself, commonly engage closely with PRC colleagues, and are influenced by and learn from them. To some extent, then, we should celebrate the fact that the West/the rest geographical divide underpinning the editors’ claims about this book is an anachronism.

On the other hand, increasing the number and visibility of non-Western scholars on the global stage does not necessarily challenge the Western hegemony over knowledge production or contribute to an “epistemology of the South.” In this book, the authors of chapters three, five and six do explicitly challenge some Western theories and perspectives, but also draw heavily on non-Chinese, Western (and non-Western) feminist theory. The others all draw on Western theories (feminist and non-feminist) to varying degrees. None of the book’s contributors develop a specifically Chinese, “Southern” or “non-Western” conceptual framework or theoretical perspective, and nor do they indicate that that is their aim. In short, readers expecting to find a postcolonial challenge to “the West” in this book may be disappointed.

They will, however, find something different that is also highlighted by the editors, namely, a contribution to transnational feminist challenges to capitalism and neoliberalism. As Wang notes in the Introduction, recent years have seen the rise in China of New Left intellectuals, highly critical of the socially polarizing effects of capitalist economic development. But the most prominent of these intellectuals are men, who “seldom bother to care about women’s conditions,” (p. 8) or the intersections between class, gender, and other inequalities. In contrast, these are precisely the issues with which this book is concerned.

This is an exciting development. For many years, there have been a number of women’s studies scholars and scholar-activists in China, working tirelessly to combat rural/urban, class and ethnic inequalities as well as gender inequalities. However, they are much less well known, both within China and on the world stage, than either the New Left blokes or more elitist feminists, like Li Xiaojiang. It is wonderful to see more of their work made available to a broader, global audience.

My favourite chapters in the book are chapters two and nine, in part because they are more narrowly focused and richly detailed than the others. Chapter two, by Song Shaopeng, is important for uncovering disturbingly high and increasing levels of discrimination against women in employment and the media, and for its (self) critical reflections on Chinese feminism. We need, Song argues, “to reflect critically on the urban feminist movement that came out of the 1980s so that we may face the diversity among women and ... continue seeking ways to unite labouring women with other social movements” (p. 81). In contrast, chapter nine, by Guo Xiajuan and Zhang Jing, which reports the results of experimental democratic consultative meetings, aimed at enabling gender-equal participation, is truly inspiring. This isn’t just because the results they report are so positive, but also because their analysis is so comprehensive in its repudiation of the widespread notion that women are less capable of participating in public affairs than men.

Other chapters, which take a broader sweep, are more useful for their “big picture” statistics. This includes, in particular, chapter one, by Liu Bohong and others, which

provides an introduction to gender inequality in the economy; and Jin Yihong's chapter on urban new poverty. The statistics make for depressing reading though.

Overall, the quality of translation is good, although it could have done with more careful copy-editing. I would also have appreciated knowing the original date of publication for each paper. But these are minor quibbles. The book makes a very significant contribution to the social-science literature on China, and will be of interest to a range of scholars and students interested in gender, development, and contemporary China.

TAMARA JACKA
Tamara.jacka@anu.edu.au

Queer Marxism in Two Chinas

PETRUS LIU

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015

x + 244 pp. £17.99

ISBN 978-082-236-004-9

Queer/Tongzhi China: New Perspectives on Research, Activism and Media Cultures

Edited by ELISABETH L. ENGBRETSSEN and WILLIAM F. SCHROEDER, with HONGWEI BAO

Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2015

xiii + 274 pp. £19.99

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Bringing new critical perspectives to bear on contemporary queer China, the two books reviewed here adopt radically different – even opposing – approaches. Petrus Liu's *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* gives the unambiguous impression that its point of entry is a highly abstract theoretical premise: to bring Marxism and queer theory into dialogue. Rooted primarily in literary examples taken from Taiwan, Liu's book (con)sequentially carries this theoretical inquiry into an analysis of the cultural sphere. It is a book driven by a firm preoccupation with totality, teleology and ideological determinism. Moving in the opposite direction, the volume *Queer/Tongzhi China*, coedited by Elisabeth L. Engebretsen, William F. Schroeder and Hongwei Bao, takes as its point of departure the concrete experiences of political activism and everyday life. Based on this viewpoint "from below," the volume builds a more empirically grounded and pluralist account of what it means to study, experience, and expand the meaning of Chinese queerness in the digital age. It is a book animated first and foremost by the praxis of activism and social change.

Before I offer a critique of *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas*, I want to clarify at the outset that this is a book that I very much wanted to love before reading it. Many of the objectives stated in the opening chapter, especially the part where Liu articulates the need to challenge the Western-centrism of queer studies, resonate with those of us who work on non-Western or transnational queer cultures. That is to say, some of the intellectual and political agendas behind the book are commendable, timely and important. Nonetheless, my primary concern with the book's framing is the ways in which it frequently sets up a false straw man in order to build a case for itself. The most obvious example is the antagonism between Marxism and queer studies. In North America, where Liu critiques, a Marxist approach has been foundational to the critical awareness of a non-essentialist and post-identitarian queer thinking