

# Asian Anthropology

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publisher, Nova Science Publications, is not a first choice (to say the least) for academics, and has little visibility in journals or in libraries. The lack of copy-editing by the publisher is apparent, since the book contains frequent minor errors of grammar and phrasing, which would be corrected by mainstream publishers before a book goes to press. Nevertheless, the book belongs in libraries, and on the bookshelves of scholars beside the earlier books on Caodaism by Victor Oliver and Jayne Susan Werner. Together, these three books provide a nearly definitive resource for the analysis of the history and development of this extraordinary new religion.

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*Social Change and Continuity in a Village in Northern Anhui, China: A Response to Revolution and Reform.* By Min HAN. *Senri Ethnological Studies* no. 58. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001. xx + 253 pp.

Reviewed by Andrew KIPNIS

This book examines the reproduction of the Li lineage in a northern Anhui village, Lijialou. Though Han conducted 14 months of ethnographic research in 1990 and 1991, she devotes more than half of the book to the pre-reform era history of the village and the lineage. Arguing with those who conclude that lineage organizations thrive only when they manage significant corporate property, Han examines how the Li lineage has been able to reproduce itself without such resources. She concludes that local desires for the protection and prestige a lineage can offer, along with the Li's institutionalized mechanisms for controlling their organization, explain the lineage's success.

The first chapter examines the general circumstances of Lijialou village and environs. Located near the former path of the Yellow River and China's first east-west rail line (built by the French in 1914), the village has suffered more than its share of both man-made and natural disasters. For the past millennium, agriculture has been the primary economic activity. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Li lineage was quite successful in producing scholars, and this proved to be the main method of obtaining wealth and prestige in an area that lacked significant business opportunities.

The second chapter examines the Li lineage in the late imperial period (1369–1911). The entire area was depopulated as a result of the wars at the end of the Yuan dynasty, and many lineages in the region trace their origin to the program of forced migration from the overpopulated parts of Shanxi at the beginning of the Ming dynasty. The Lis were no exception, as two brothers who migrated from Shanxi in 1369 established the North Anhui Li lineage. According to the latest version of the genealogy, these two men now have over 50,000 descendents living in the area. Three important Li lineage institutions were established during the Ming and Qing dynasties. First, the educational traditions that enabled a relatively high level of success in the imperial examination system were developed. Second, a procedure of keeping the family genealogy in a central village was mandated. Lineage rituals were regularly held there and dispersed members of the family visited there to register their newborns. Finally a system of generation names was established. These names enabled dispersed

members of the lineage to identify each other (there were and are many other lineages with the family name Li in the area) and calculate their generational distance from each other.

Chapter Three examines lineage history during the Republican period (1912–1949). The end of the imperial examination system meant social decline for those families in the Li lineage that had previously depended upon this institution. The establishment of the railway opened up some business opportunities for others, and the most successful households during this period had ruthless businessmen. Considerable class differentiation within the lineage arose.

Chapter Four focuses on the Li lineage during the Maoist decades. The successful businessmen of the Republican era received bad class labels during the Land Reform. Although the violence associated with this campaign was not too extreme, a symbolic reversal was effected. Everyone in the area fared badly during the post-Great Leap famine. Those with bad class labels also suffered considerable violence during the Cultural Revolution, including one old man whose Republican era murder was finally avenged. As elsewhere, during the Cultural Revolution lineage rituals were outlawed, graves leveled, and genealogies burned. A few Li households, however, worked together to maintain one copy of the family genealogy by splitting it up and hiding it piecemeal.

Chapter Five examines Lijialou during the 1980s. With no local industries to control, the breakup of collective farming severely undermined cadre power in the area. For most non-cadre families, however, the 1980s were better than the previous decades. Han argues that the acceptance of scientific farming methods (including chemical fertilizers), the development of an irrigation system and the diversification of crops led to improved living standards. She pays particular attention to the role of increased cotton yields, but fails to mention the importance of the nationwide agricultural procurement price increases that were implemented in the beginning of the reform era. She also does not discuss the collapse of cotton prices during the 1990s. I suspect that the economically positive portrait Han provides has changed drastically over the past decade.

Chapter Six focuses on recent changes in marriage patterns. Han argues that because of the shortage of unmarried women in rural China and the increasing value of female agricultural labor, wife-giving families have gained considerable power over wife-taking families. The value of the gifts from wife-givers increased dramatically during the 1980s and some desperate men have tried to marry wives from distant areas. This practice has

proved risky, however, as long distance marriage brokers often cheat one side or the other.

Chapter Seven examines the rise of Christianity. Protestant Christianity has grown dramatically in the region, and Han attributes this growth to the lack of security during the reform era, the compatibility of Christianity with local beliefs about the soul, and the flexibility of Anhui Christian leaders in blending the Christian message with locally relevant themes, such as filial piety.

The final substantive chapter examines the revitalization of rituals, the lineage, and affinal ties during the reform era. Han argues that people spent considerable time and money on gift exchanges to build networks that may be relied upon in times of hardship and utilized in business. The strength of these networks was enhanced for many by the reformation of the Li lineage. The Li genealogy was reconstructed at the beginning of the reform era, as were the practices of keeping control of the genealogical register in a central place and conducting lineage rituals. A poem to designate the next set of generation names was also agreed upon and money was collected to refurbish a stone monument dedicated to an important lineage ancestor. In addition to the value of lineage networks for ensuring security and conducting business, Han notes the presence of overseas Chinese money and the desire of old people to remember the past as factors contributing to the Li lineage's revitalization. While appreciating her portrait of lineage life, I wish Han had placed more emphasis on the fictive aspects of lineage relations. It seems to me that the institutional mechanisms that allow the lineage to be reinvented from scratch are just as important as those that allow it to be reproduced from an already existing basis.

Overall Han provides a valuable portrayal of the role of lineages in rural life in North Anhui during the 1980s. I hungered for more information about conditions in the 1990s, as I suspect some drastic changes may have occurred. Perhaps another book will appear soon!

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