

Distant and not-so-distant ancestors play many roles between these two poles in Borneo societies, as described in this volume.

Given these considerations, Couderc and Sillander define ancestors as “people who live on in the memory of individuals, groups, or entire societies through what they have transmitted to them ... They must *live on through their influence*, either as contacted or otherwise influential spirits, or as remembered past characters taken into consideration” (12). Biologcial ancestors who no longer directly influence the living are simply dead elders, not ancestors within the context of this examination of ancestorship.

Starting out, Sillander describes the role of the ancestors among the Bentian of East Kalimantan. Ancestorship among the Bentian takes many forms, as the dead can transform into one of several types of spirit figures that have different roles and relationships with the living. Other analyses have critiqued the discussion of ancestors among Borneo societies because they are so often referred to as a collective unit. However, Sillander makes the important point that the social context affects the way people talk about ancestors: when seeking social cohesion, people tend to refer to an inclusive collectivity that defines “us,” but they tend to refer to individual ancestors to distinguish “us” from “them.” Individual ancestors may be invoked to substantiate one’s legitimacy as a leader, for example (89), in addition to being called upon in various ritual contexts.

Chapters two (Sather) and five (Béguet) address ancestorship among the Iban of western Borneo. Sather describes the funerary rites and various types of ancestors among the Iban. Similar to Sillander’s account, the Iban sometimes address the ancestors as individuals, and sometimes as a collective unit. Yet some ancestors continue to play a role in Iban religion and society. For example, dead shamans (*manang*) live on as spirit companions to *manang* in healing rituals (123) and other ancestors continue to influence the living as guardian spirits after the funerary rites have been completed. Béguet argues that Iban *petara*, which Sather glosses as “gods” (115), are in fact ancestors that have been transformed. Sather notes that the terms *antu* (spirits) and *petara* (gods) are used interchangeably in rituals seeking help from supernatural beings, and refers the reader to Béguet’s chapter to flesh out this relationship between ancestor spirits and *petara* (118). Béguet analyzes *petara* within the context of animism, with ancestors who transform into spiritually potent animals maintaining important relationships between the living human and the animal worlds.

Couderc examines the role of transformed ancestors among the Uut Danum of West Kalimantan. In his opening paragraph, he recounts an incident in which a man was said to be transforming into a watersnake, which would have transformed him into an ancestor without the man even experiencing death. While the man in this incident recovered and was alive and human years later, this ability to escape death through transformation creates an important category of ancestors. Ancestorship in this case is a contractual relationship based on an inherited alliance, with or without direct descent. In contrast, ordinary

dead receive funerary rites, have limited influence in the affairs of the living, but descent obligates them to do their part in the limited interactions they have with the living, predominantly within the mortuary rituals.

Ancestors played a prominent role in Dayak-Madurese conflict in Kalimantan. Local and mass media outlets sensationalized the violence, highlighting the exotic otherness of Dayak ritual claims and practices. Academics responded by pointing out the very real social and political history that contributed to the conflict, downplaying the ritualistic aspects. Oesterheld seeks to go beyond what has been written from either of these vantages to let the Dayaks involved speak for themselves, focusing on an outbreak of violence in 2001.

In their chapters, Appleton and Payne add to the argument for the importance of ancestors in Borneo societies. Appleton addresses the role of the ancestors among the Melanau of Sarawak, most of whom are now Muslims or Catholics, yet who continue to speak of supernatural influence from ancestor spirits. Payne explains various categories of spiritual possession found among the Benuaq of East Kalimantan, involving a range of characters, from distant mythological ancestor spirits to the spirits of the recently dead.

Helliwell wraps up the book with an account of a different variety of ancestorship found among the Gerai of West Kalimantan. Rather than tracing descent through human ancestors, the Gerai trace the ancestry of a set of ritual items grouped as a “ritual hearth.” In many ways, the relationships traced for the hearths fits the pattern of ancestorship found elsewhere in Borneo, except for the focus on ritual items to the exclusion of human ancestors.

Overall, this volume provides a wealth of ethnographic detail on the role of ancestors in Borneo societies. The evidence makes a strong case for the importance of ancestors, in various forms, in the ritual lives of several Borneo societies.

Angela Pashia

Dirlik, Arif, Guannan Li, and Hsiao-Pei Yen (eds.): *Sociology and Anthropology in Twentieth-Century China between Universalism and Indigenism*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012. 371 pp. ISBN 978-962-996-475-7. Price: \$ 51.00

Another collection of essays, in the form of a book, on the history and present state of Chinese anthropology and sociology, includes 13 chapters but its “List of Contributors” has left one author unmentioned, Professor Sun Liping, a famous sociologist of China today. Perhaps it does not matter, because occasional omissions or slight incoherence should mean little for a reader if whose hope is to survey the general development of social sciences, for such a purpose the collection is assumed to serve, which came out as the result of “three annual workshops held in Canberra, Beijing and Hong Kong between 2007 and 2009 on the topic of ‘the Formation and Development of Academic Disciplines in Twentieth-Century China’” (vii). A number of famous scholars, in and outside mainland China, have appeared in the volume, whose names, such as Arif Dirlik, Wang Mingming, or Al-

len Chun, should bring excitement for graduate students of social science, but, as such proceedings of conference volumes tend to be, individual chapters, often very good in themselves, may not find any “consanguineous” ties to other chapters, just as young people smiling at each other at a random party may not mean the same sentiments.

Dirlik, in his opening chapter, tries to “provide a broad historical context for the discussions offered by the contributors to the volume” (2). That is, he outlines, as a good historian would do, the basic features of contemporary China that has become part of social-theoretical thought originated in the West. Comprehensive and yet theoretically challenging, Dirlik tries to show the place of the Other in our social-theoretical struggles, globalizing still, with a focus of his attention on categories such as indigenization or sinicization, involving a set of issues that have taken up much of the intellectual energy in contemporary China. The problem of “cultural translation” in such a case as this, either today or in Maoist years, has always implied a political struggle, with which Chinese intellectuals have engaged. As Dirlik suggests, the question of translation, in the new context of global changes, must be brought up again in order for us to think about how China means not simply an object of theoretical analysis but a theoretical subject in and of itself. This is a useful lesson. It follows a chapter by Wang Jianmin, a known scholar from Beijing, who reviews the tradition of Chinese anthropology, for example, how it was affected by the Stalinist model of ethnology, and introduces a pair of theoretical concepts, universalism versus indigenism. Clear and lucid but little is added by this new contribution to such a topic, for which Prof. Wang’s earlier work on the history of Chinese ethnology continues to stand as a good representative example.

Following the two general surveys are four portraits of influential figures of social thought in China, respectively they are Sun Benwen, Lei Jieqiong, Huang Wenshan, and Li Anzhai. Li’s treatment of Sun Benwen is biographical in character, but in dealing with the adoption of sociology into Republican China, he argues that the Republican academia owed much of its merit to Sun’s vision and work. Yue’s study of Lei Jieqiong, also biographic, tries to show how the political career of a famous woman sociologist, as one might call her as such, has made it possible for her to insert into the scholarly world a unique influence, not only academic but also political, i.e., feminist in a unique historic-political context of modern China. Because of her contribution and influence, a significant number of women have become public, professional leaders in social scientific fields after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. True it is that any one who wishes to influence must first gain a political recognition, especially in Mao’s China, as Yue rightly insists. And here is an example of a unique combination of science and politics, quite convincingly argued. In chap. 5, once again, Li wrote on Huang Wenshan who, a less known figure today, studied under Franz Boas, the father of American anthropological tradition, in the 1920s, and became a sociological promoter for culturology. Although not fully demonstrated, Li has provided several suggestive points regarding such

a pioneering figure of the Republican past. For example, Li has discussed in some detail of Huang’s cultural ideology, essentially reflected in the Boasian tradition of “historical particularism,” a very useful theoretical weapon for fighting, for example, a certain form of evolutionary Eurocentrism, then and now. Li alone has contributed two chapters to the volume, and reading him, as an anthropologist might feel, seems to suggest a little George Stocking flavor. In the following chapter, Yen treats Li Anzhai, an anthropologist who studied with Kroeber and Lowie, whose legacies are still registered by their material presence in the building in which I am writing now, and shows how Li tied his anthropological learning to the study of the frontiers of China during the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s–40s. These four articles share one important idea: intellectual life does not occur in a vacuum; instead, it is always rooted in a sociopolitical context in which the intellectual endeavor wrestles itself with or against other forces of society. Just as history is impregnated by ideas, a tradition of thinking, social science or theory in particular, is also the child of a particular history.

Chapter 7, by Wang Mingming, a leading China anthropologist, directs the reader to an altogether different direction, a direction the famous scholar has been pointing to for a decade or so. To begin with, Wang has taken up a line of argument from Richard Fardon, a British anthropologist, who once reacted to the Writing Culture debate, such as represented by James Clifford and George Marcus, by arguing that there exist different regional traditions of ethnographic writing, which may or may not correspond in the same way to the general crisis of cultural representation as they identify. In other words, according to Fardon, a sweeping self-criticism will not do, and anthropologists, as they did in the past, should assume a more subtle regard for each particular tradition, which is indeed “written” but differently so according to its particularity in the world. With such a theoretical thought in mind, Wang has hoped to recreate a drawing line between Southwest and Southeast as a new ethno-cultural division of history. Quite genuine in intent, Wang’s approach has already assumed the importance of local history not simply as real political geography but also a peculiar tradition of thinking. His attention lies in the Southwest, a most complicated region of ethnicity and local traditions. With local histories being a theoretical element of his argument, his call is a call for anthropology to become, if put it simply, ethno-cultural theory that should help reformulate historical conceptions. Obviously, this is different from the official mode of historical thinking, because ethnic regions, made according to the official classificatory scheme assisted by a long Chinese tradition of historical work, should become, in the new theoretical division of labor, intrinsic elements of theory for anthropological investigations. This is an insight that one may derive from Wang’s argumentation. One should also note that this is different from historical anthropology we are familiar with, where in the case of China it tends to focus on local traditions of peasant origins. In Wang’s proposal, if one may infer, the given designation of time and space, with which we have conducted our research, would have to be problema-

tized, because any attempt to draw a line that demarcates an ethnic region or local tradition should be in and of itself part of theorization. Although only a proposal, its intent is to find a way to travel between history and culture, with a curious eye on the complication of local histories in a particular region. Conventionally, ethnic divisions of the region are merely subjects of a thought subordinated to the official geopolitical reasoning, but the anthropologist wishes to turn it into a theoretical formation for anthropological imagination.

The following four chapters are written on overseas Chinese, with Tan's article dealing with the literature of diaspora, hoping to give the notion of China a cultural definition and shows how it is related to the intersected confluence of several traditions that have come together to shape what means to be on the fringe outskirts of being Chinese. Tan's article tries not only to examine China from a perspective outside its main continent but also hopes to tie the literature of such studies to a general literature on migration and transnationalism in social theory. Productive in its own way but, on the other hand, this topic, i.e., what means to be Chinese, seems a bit away from the guidance we were given by the two introductory chapters. Chang, Chun, and Chuang's articles, chapters 9, 10, and 11, are on Taiwan, with Chang and Chuang dealing with social sciences in Taiwan, particularly with the idea of indigenization (*bentuhua* in Chinese), showing how such an attempt has gained a couple of different senses, for example, after the collapse of the GMT regime since the 1980s. Quite interesting they are two studies of the Taiwanese situation, a good comparison for thinking about mainland China today in terms of the experience of Taiwan. However, Chun seems to disagree, as he reacted to the sentiment that characterizes the intellectual tendency for the argument of *bentuhua*. With Taiwan being his case, Chun argues that there is very little intellectual import in such callings for indigenization which has become somewhat a political game played out by academics, comparable only to lesser politicians who dread people with the ideology of "political correctness" but possess no genuine political imagination. Definitely impatient if not angry in his tone, Chun has launched an attack in several directions, such as his attack on self-pitying nativist attitude. His chief argument, very critical and yet different from all other articles, is that social theory, as a general reflection of human thought on life and reality, does not have to be carried around with a national passport. It seems, as he argues, that all the ideological discussions of so-called indigenization resemble the modern state's practice of immigration and naturalization, which, in Taiwan as in other places, have benefited some and offended others. There is little intellectual import in such debates as this, Chun insists. Theoretical categories may come from a particular tradition, Hegel in Marx or Marx in Ricardo, biographically Western, but they are, when employed for argumentation, tools of thinking, which should constantly be sharpened by the situation into which they are adopted. Dirlik's introductory chapter has already hinted on this: should we count sinicization of Marxism during the early Maoist years as part of the indigenization of social

theory in mainland China? A question hardly any of those who are interested in *bentuhua* could answer adequately.

The last two chapters are written by two sociologists, and both of them come from Tsinghua University. Sun Liping, a famous sociologist whose insight and eloquence are truly impressive on any scale, has discussed his main idea of China's transition from socialism to market economy, not unuseful but definitely unfitting for the volume. It is a rehearsal of an old song for the new audience whose patience is tested, for this is an old article he has repeatedly published for more than a decade by now. From Victor Nee to Kornai, from everyday practice to what he calls "event-procedure analysis," etc., etc., all of these items we have known so well belonging to the sociological genius but our ears are worn out by the repeated beats of the same old drums. Better to have dinner with Prof. Sun when one goes to Beijing if he is not on an airplane traveling for lectures on the same topic, which used to be sensational in the 1990s. Party officials in a distant province may still like to hear this, but one really wonders, when reading this great paper of old days, why there is no expiring dates for such stuff in the supermarket of ideas! Truly innovative is the approach another sociologist, Guo, takes in her treatment of stories of suffering by those who led a life of poverty and pain. It means to shed a different light on development, guided and brightened by the official lamp. This is an attempt to go to the deepest layers of social reality, representing a true sociological spirit that hopes to restore a voice to the silence. Detailed and admirably clear, Guo has shown how this sociological attempt should be connected with the on-going social science studies of suffering and Chinese history. A most adequate use of references Guo makes, it is an indication of the maturity of a sociological mind in today's China, definitely recommendable for students of social sciences. However, it does not survey the disciplinary history, which one might have thought as the goal of the volume, but in and of itself this is an excellent piece which allows the reader to understand the sociological concerns with theory in today's China.

A good volume is good, one may say as conclusion, not simply because of its organization and preparation but also because of the effort a reader exerts in his patient reading that renders a useful lesson.

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Dyck, Noel: *Fields of Play. An Ethnography of Children's Sports.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. 214 pp. ISBN 978-1-4426-0079-9. Price: C\$ 26.95

Every late afternoon after work, boys and young men in the villages of Tonga, Samoa, and Fiji stage informal games of "touch" rugby, casually watched by their female age-mates, a few adults, and whoever else happens to be around. In these games, rules are flexible, as the main point is for the young male players to have fun, as well as to display one's physical prowess, and, particularly for the benefit of the young women watching, to show off one's ability to dodge one's opponents and confuse them in as humorous a fashion as possible. But these games have a serious covert purpose: they are socializing events, in