

This book is definitely worth reading and should be included as an example of what ethnography can do today. It offers precious insight into the manners in which the violence perpetrated by the socialist Chinese state influenced the intimate lives of the Zhizuoens, and how they resisted it.

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**Wenona Giles**, *Portuguese Women in Toronto: Gender, Immigration, and Nationalism*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.

Reviewer: *M. Gabriela Torres*  
*York University*

The histories of immigrant women in Canada are fundamental to our understanding of how Canada constructs itself through the purposeful inclusion, sidelining and overt exclusion of its prospective citizens. Wenona Giles provides a revealing look into the role that immigrant women play in the construction of Canada's self-image in *Portuguese Women in Toronto*. The everyday dynamics of Canada's nation-building project is illustrated through an analysis of the discourses and practices of Portuguese immigrant women in the 1990s.

Using rich interview narratives and census data Giles shows the complexities of the work and home lives of first- and second-generation Portuguese immigrant women in Toronto. In addition to providing a dynamic portrait of immigration and settlement in Canada's largest city, *Portuguese Women in Toronto* is a revealing look at the everyday effects of Canada's multiculturalism and immigration policies. Though Giles' study is firmly focussed on everyday life in Toronto, it also addresses the broader issue of how women's citizenship, in general, can be influenced by male-biased national policies and the inequalities of global political and economic trends.

Giles' study first focusses on households through a comparative analysis of life stories taken from the first two generations of "Portuguese-Canadians." Particular emphasis is placed on the changes in gender relations that result from immigration and settlement experiences. Looking at different degrees of change in gender relations, Giles emphasizes both the impact of Canadian multiculturalism and immigration policies—as well as global economic and political inequities—on the strategies for survival and advancement adopted by Portuguese immigrant women.

Because women were defined as dependents of men from their entry into Canada, their survival and advancement are particularly affected by the definition of their community as unified and homogenous "ethnicity" in multiculturalism policies. For Giles, the definition of the "Portuguese Community" best serves the interest of the Canadian state and not the varied interests of the women and men defined as its members. For Giles, one of the primary disadvantages

of being defined exclusively as part of an "ethnic minority" by the state is the obfuscation of the degree to which immigrants to Canada have been active participants in the economies and societies of the cities in which they settled.

Portuguese immigrants of diverse class and geographic origins—both men and women—came to Canada as labourers between 1950 and the 1980s to work in the manufacturing, construction, and domestic and retail service industries. Settlement in Canada relied more on personal, regional and familial networks than on government-sponsored settlement and integration programs.

In her discussion of women's work lives, Giles highlights the activist working histories of first-generation women and contrasts these to the non-unionized working spaces where their daughters tend to labour. Second-generation Portuguese women are now employed in clerical, administrative and retail jobs where Giles documents a lack of impulse to collectively change shortcomings in their working conditions. Nevertheless, Giles does note that second-generation women do resist what they still perceive as ethnic- and gender-based discrimination through their involvement in formal party politics.

Yet, women's strategies for resistance are for Giles also defined in part through the influence of hegemonic cultures—Portuguese culture, Portuguese immigrant culture, and the elusive but well used "Canadian" culture. Women must manage the allegiance to competing nationalisms implied by the cultures within which they live. As the life stories show, both first- and second-generation Portuguese women in Toronto must manage competing prescriptions of their behaviour in the home, their involvement outside the home, their attitudes towards education, the ways that they approach child rearing, and even their very definitions of home. Based on a discourse analysis of the proceedings of three Portuguese community conferences between 1982 and 1997, *Portuguese Women in Toronto* explores the construction of community-based strategies of resistance to multiculturalism's ideal of the Canadian nation. These strategies range from advocating a seamless integration into Canada to a type of strategic essentialism that promotes a simplified ideal of "Portuguese-ness." Giles notes that Portuguese immigrant women must also manage the intersection of cultural prescriptions with discriminatory settlement policies that together ensure the privileging of English as a second language education and job training for male heads of household.

Giles shares the critique of Multiculturalism policies that states that Canadian policies attempt to define those seen as "different" Canadians into ethnic enclaves in an effort to control and manage difference. The disjuncture between the rhetoric of inclusion in multiculturalism and the reality of exclusion in the practices of the Canadian state is best illustrated for Giles through the analysis of women's access to education. As Giles' data shows first-generation Portuguese immigrant women were seldom able to access a high school education and have a school life expectancy of only 7.2 years.

The less than complete elementary education that first-generation Portuguese women have pales in comparison to the 17.1 years average school life observed for Canadian women. This marked lack of access to education, due in part to discriminatory policies and attitudes in Toronto's school systems, serves to further differentiate Portuguese women from so-called "Canadian society."

The combination of an ethnographic approach, life stories and descriptive statistics make Giles' study a particularly rich entry point into the lived effects of Canadian immigration and settlement policies. Beginning at the household level gives the reader a grounding from which to better understand the heterogeneity located within the descriptive statistic analyses that are included in Giles' later chapters.

*Portuguese Women in Toronto* provides a poignant illustration of Canada's contradictory desires for "unskilled" labourers. Quoting Kearney, Giles reminds us that though the labour power that new immigrants bring to this country is both desired and necessary for national growth, in most cases the actual people who labour are undesirables. As Giles demonstrates through the analysis of Portuguese women's participation in selected cases of organized labour unrest in Toronto, Canadian immigration and settlement policies are designed both to attract incorporate labourers as human capital and to under-serve the needs of immigrant labourers as full persons or citizens.

Yet Giles' account also shows how, despite structural constraints, Portuguese immigrant women are able to find ways to resist the state's imposed definitions through labour organization, political organizing, and artistic expression. It is perhaps Giles' emphasis on women's resistance to structurally engrained discrimination that best highlights the complexities of Canada's immigration and settlement policies in practice. Though these are designed, either consciously or unconsciously, to differentiate Canadians to their detriment, immigrant women are still able to actively challenge the competing identity prescriptions of their home life and their work life, as well as those prescriptions imposed through state policies.

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**Cai Hua, *A Society without Fathers or Husbands: The Na of China*, translated by Asti Hustvedt from the French *Une société sans père ni mari : les Na de Chine* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1977), New York: Zone Books, 2001**

Reviewer: *Michael Stainton*  
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It was helpful to read this ethnography in a summer when the question of what is marriage, aka "same sex marriage" was being debated in Canada. This study of the Na, a small group in the now popular anthropological paradise of Yunnan, presents a wonderful case (which Cai argues is unique)

that "without marriage a society can function perfectly well." However, in trying to establish a major theoretical conclusion from interesting ethnographic detail, Cai ultimately makes the same circular error of which he accuses other theorists—conflating "marriage" and "family" in mutually circular definitions. Cai concludes that the Na have neither marriage nor the family "given the absence of a husband and father." I would rather see in his data the existence of strong matrilineal families, who ensure the reproduction and continuation of these consanguineal, co-residential, economically communal units through the "institution of the visit."

This Na mode of sexual life is a lifelong practice of free and unprivileged sexual access between all non-consanguineal adults. Consanguinity is constructed matrilineally, as the identity of a person's genitor is usually unknown and always irrelevant. Sexual partners, called *acia*, can make no claim for exclusive affection; as the saying goes "*your acia is also my acia*" and indeed "*to leave your mother and your sister for a wife, that would be shameful.*" Much of the book details the various modes of the visit—"the furtive visit," "the open visit," and "cohabitation" and seeks to work out the rules of each, and how these rules integrate with what Cai presents as the fundamental rules of Na society—"the concept of pure matrilineality," the incest prohibition, and strict prohibition of any form of sexual evocation in the presence of kin of the opposite gender (necessitating the furtiveness of visits and even gender-separate TV watching). In addition there are structurally complex bendings of the rules to facilitate the continuation of matriline in households where there are only sons. Though these appear to have some of the elements of marriage, Cai successfully uses both linguistic data and quotidian practices to show how these are "last resort," contingent, and infrequent solutions to carrying on the matriline, not conceived as a form of marriage.

Cai sees the origins of both the marriage and the visit in the contradiction between "*two needs rooted deep in the innermost depths of human nature—the desire to possess one's partners and the desire to have multiple partners.... From these two opposing desires two types of opposing institutions were born (that of the visit and that of marriage).*"

Certainly the Na solution was an abomination to both Qing and Communist moral engineers. To me the most lively (and all too short) chapters in the book are the two on "Kinship in the Zhifu's (Na chief) Family" and "The Matrimonial Reforms" which the Communist regime has attempted to impose on the Na. Cai uses historical records to show that the anomalous institution of marriage of the regional chief was the result of the Qing requirement after 1656 that the (male) chiefly position must be inherited by primogeniture. This meant a Na chief must marry to hand down his office. The kinship gymnastics necessary to satisfy the empire, and maintain Na matrilineal consanguinity (as well as the practice of the visit) are fascinating, as are most human responses