

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.

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

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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

to absolute contradictory demands. More interesting (and less developed) is Cai's finding that the tripartite stratification of Na society was also created by this cultural imposition. The system of chiefly marriage ended by fiat in 1956, replaced by an even more uncompromising demand on all Na to end "depraved customs" of the mode of visitation and get married, made by a state convinced of "the superiority of socialist monogamy." Though "no other ethnic group in China underwent as deep a disruption as the Na did during the Cultural Revolution"; Cai gives this period less attention than I would like to see, as it is tangential to the main point of his book.

As to the future of the Na mode of sexuality, Cai feels that the education system (in which marriage and nuclear family are taken for granted) and the effects of commerce and industrialization will do more than the "administrative constraints" to eventually end what clearly is a successful human solution to reproducing society. Two current issues are not in the purview of Cai's book but perhaps later studies will address them. The spread of HIV in China is a growing reality, and the Na reputedly already have higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases than their marrying ethnic neighbors (an allegation which makes sense). What will this mean for them? As with other Yunnan minorities, the Na, now more or less permitted to practice their customs, are also a target of Han tourism. How is their unique sexual mode of life being commodified for all those socialist (with Chinese characteristics) monogamous visitors?

So what can we do with this book? It strives for more theoretical cachet than it achieves, but don't all of us? Cai is theoretically conservative in that his principal interlocutors are structural functionalism, Murdock and Levi-Strauss. But like them, he gives us a richly detailed micro-analysis of kinship and sexual custom without flying off prematurely into ego-syntonic cultural critique. Of course recounting stories of kinship and seeking to derive its underlying rules is always more interesting to the writer (for whom it is ultimately gossip about people he knows and likes) than the reader, for whom it is sometimes mind numbing in the way that moves undergraduates to ask "is this important?"

It is exactly this quality that leads me to think that Cai's book is a good ethnography for an introductory anthropology course, as well as one on "kinship and family." Students need to be presented with an ethnography which, sometimes flatfootedly yet consistently and systematically, shows how anthropologists try to derive principles from slowly adduced data. Because Cai also brings in historical and political factors there is a diachronic aspect to his discussion, which stimulates further questions. Finally, though I am dissatisfied by his conclusion that the Na have neither marriage (true) nor family (doubtful), Cai presents enough evidence linked to basic theoretical discussion that students can debate with him from his own evidence and reasoning questions such as What does kinship "do"? Does society need

marriage? What is a "family?" Does sexual exchange necessitate emotional attachment? Are the Na a feminist paradise? Why should anybody need to know who is their father? And what would the Na have to discuss in place of the issue of gay marriage?

Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith (eds.), *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster*, Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2002, 312 pages.

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This volume illustrates why the School of American Research Advanced Seminar program is so valuable. What might be seen as a specialized topic, the anthropology of disaster, is here revealed as a medium by which the different subfields of anthropology can interact in a synergistic manner. The introductory chapter by the editors makes the case very effectively: "When hazards threaten and disasters occur, they both reveal and become an expression of the complex interactions of physical, biological, and sociocultural systems....Within disaster research, anthropology finds an opportunity to amalgamate past and current cultural, ecological, and political-economic investigations, along with archaeological, historical, demographic, and certain biological and medical concerns" (pp. 5-6). These opportunities, of course, carry with them difficult challenges, requiring work at the interface between the sociocultural and physical worlds, and demanding attention to longer swathes of time than are encompassed in the usual field research. For example, the chapter by Michael Moseley examines the Andean archaeological record to argue that groups tend to be able to cope with regular disasters, but may be pushed beyond the edge of recoverability by the proximate occurrence of multiple disasters, such as a prolonged drought followed by an earthquake. Examining similar issues on a shorter time-scale, Christopher Dyer analyzes the Exxon Valdez oil spill to illustrate his ideas on how such processes of what he calls "punctuated entropy" (crisis followed by crisis) can lead to system collapse. These, as well as most of the other chapters, engage with the ideas of other contributors at a sustained and productive level, something not always found in edited volumes.

Anthony Oliver-Smith provides a magisterial effort at theorizing disasters, integrating the multiple dimensions from which the development and outcome of disasters must be seen. He focusses in particular on how socially produced vulnerabilities are created and influence the disasters that result. In doing so, he deals with cultural constructions of nature, and ways of integrating culture, nature, domination and the technology/nature interface into anthropological