

rence culturelle opérée par un système économique qui, par ailleurs, crée un fossé toujours plus grand entre riches et pauvres sur la planète entière y est considérée comme le talon d'Achille de ce même système : «(...) la culture, dans toute sa diversité, est l'immense problème que l'argent n'a pas résolu et qu'il ne pourra jamais résoudre, ne serait-ce que parce que son essence est de le nier» (p. 253). Pour Blondin, il semble inévitable que nous parvenions éventuellement à «(...) une certaine forme de saturation, à un état du système social devenu dysfonctionnel, mais donnant graduellement naissance à un autre type de système...» (pp. 155-156). Précisons que, si Blondin souhaite sa mort, il ne suggère toutefois pas que l'argent, en tant qu'unité de compte et moyen de paiement qui facilite les échanges de biens et de services, disparaisse nécessairement. En réalité, pour l'auteur, ce n'est pas l'argent comme tel mais bien le fait qu'il prenne autant de place dans notre société et qu'il contribue à la reproduction de rapports de domination d'une minorité sur les autres qu'il faut condamner. Ainsi, contrairement à ce que le titre de l'ouvrage pourrait laisser croire à première vue, c'est bien le fétichisme de l'argent, la marchandisation de la vie et ce qu'il appelle la «biologisation» des rapports sociaux, une forme d'essentialisme qui s'est développée avec la modernité et la croyance aveugle dans la science et la technologie, qu'y dénonce Blondin, et pas l'existence de la monnaie comme telle.

On en arrive ensuite, dans la quatrième section du livre, aux scénarios qui concernent le processus de changement et à l'«après» : comment la mort de l'argent aura-t-elle lieu? Par le biais d'un changement graduel ou à la suite d'un brusque effondrement du système et de ses institutions? Si cela semble impossible à prédire et si plusieurs scénarios sont envisageables, pour Blondin cette inévitable révolution devra nécessairement se jouer à l'échelle internationale. En attendant, les alternatives qui se multiplient aux échelles locale et régionale (systèmes d'échange local, simplicité volontaire, agriculture soutenue par la communauté, etc.) jouent un rôle important puisqu'elles offrent des «modèles culturels» différents qui contribuent à alimenter notre imaginaire. Il s'agirait donc, pour changer l'ordre des choses, de créer des symboles et de les manipuler collectivement pour développer des institutions et des organisations différentes car «(...) nous possédons tous ce pouvoir magique de manipuler les symboles et de réécrire le monde sur le coin d'un napperon» (p. 279).

Après avoir connu des sociétés organisées successivement autour de la parenté, de la religion et de l'argent, la Culture devrait constituer pour Blondin le principe organisateur de la société qui succéderait à un monde centré sur l'argent. Ce type de société reconnaîtrait la diversité culturelle et s'y alimenterait constamment, faisant de la complémentarité et non plus de la réciprocité, de la soumission ou de la domination (comme dans les types précédents de société) la règle d'or de la vie sociale. Bref, c'est à un exercice de création utopique que nous convie Blondin, tout en nous exhortant à agir dès maintenant pour changer le monde, car le pire est de penser qu'on

ne peut rien faire devant les dynamiques en cours et de rendre les armes : «...Pour construire une autre société sans argent, ce n'est pas la matière première qui fait défaut, c'est le manque d'imagination résultant de la résignation» (p. 268).

Enfin, cet ouvrage participe d'un débat public de plus en plus global et qui s'est étendu depuis quelques années avec les manifestations anti puis alter-mondialistes, les revendications qui concernent le droit à la différence sexuelle aussi bien que culturelle et les initiatives collectives visant la mise en place de manières alternatives de produire, d'échanger ou de consommer, qui s'inscrivent dans une économie solidaire. Il s'adresse au grand public mais aussi aux anthropologues en quête de manières originales de transmettre les connaissances issues de l'ethnographie à leurs concitoyennes et concitoyens dans un langage accessible et mobilisateur.

## Références

- Bennholdt-Thomsen, V. FNicholas et C. Von Werlhof, dirs.  
 2001 *There Is an Alternative : Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance to Corporate Globalization*. London et New York : Zed Books.
- Dobson, R.V.G.  
 1993 *Bringing the Economy Home from the Market*. Montréal : Black Rose.
- Hart, K.  
 2001 *Money in an Unequal World*. *Anthropological Theory* 1(3) : 307-330.
- Oliven, R.G.  
 1998 *Looking at Money in America*. *Critique of Anthropology* 18(1) : 35-59.
- Parry, J. P., et M. Bloch  
 1989 *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Raddon, M.- B.  
 2003 *Community and Money. Men and Women Making Change*. Montréal : Black Rose Books.

---

**Han Min**, *Social Change and Continuity in a Village in Northern Anhui, China: A Response to Revolution and Reform*. *Senri Ethnological Studies* 58, Suita, Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology, 2001.

Reviewer: *Laurel Bossen*  
*McGill University*

Packed with interesting and useful information, Han Min's ethnography of a north Chinese village is one of the most comprehensive and data-rich anthropological studies published in the post-Mao period. Examining different periods before and after the 1949 revolution, it describes the many forces affecting village life in China's northern Anhui Province, an area where little ethnographic work has been done. Its detailed social history of the patrilineage is an outstanding illustration of the importance of kinship to understanding political and economic dynamics in rural society.

Han's research site was Lijialou, a single-lineage village, or "natural village," where nearly all the families share the surname, "Li." Located close to the borders of Henan and Jiangsu Provinces, and near a major east-west railway built by the French in 1914, this region is part of the north central plain, the heartland of Chinese civilization, and the site of many military campaigns. It is also the site of Nobel Prize winner Pearl Buck's famous novel, *The Good Earth* (2004 [1931]).

This is one of the first English-language ethnographies of rural China written by a woman from the People's Republic of China. Han was not trained in the West, but was exposed to Western anthropology in Japan. (She wrote her PhD at the University of Tokyo, under the supervision of Funabiki Takeo, and also worked with Jerry Eades). This background contributes to a unique perspective drawing on different Asian and Western academic traditions as well as insider access to Chinese political culture. As an outsider to the village (she grew up in northeast China), she developed unusually good relations with the villagers by pursuing their shared interest in lineage genealogy. Her fieldwork was conducted from 1989 to 1991, supplemented by follow-up visits.

The central focus of Han's book is her detailed description and analysis of a Chinese lineage. She traces its long history, and its survival through the political transformations of the last half century, and the significance of its current revival. This was formerly a lineage of gentry landlords that produced many scholars and officials. Scholarship, not farming, was the fountain of their success in past centuries. Comparing this Anhui village to other lineage studies, Han reinterprets the various forms lineages have taken in different regions and contexts within China. The lineage revival and reunification she witnessed in the reform period shows how lineage ideas still provide a powerful template for social organization in rural Chinese culture. The lineage is a familiar social tool and source of identity employed by villagers as they adapt to the social and economic conditions of reform China.

Understanding lineage dynamics is inherently complex but Han has made it easier through a variety of helpful aids. The book includes a detailed fold-out genealogy that looks intimidating at first, but is actually very easy to follow and helps keep track of individuals described in the text using a simple code. There are also useful maps and diagrams of housing compounds, tables, and an appendix with a detailed cast of characters (full of anecdotes about each one) listed according to their location in the lineage and in the village, as well as significant individuals from outside the village. The photographs include a good selection of images of villagers at work, and at ritual and ceremonial events. The most powerful image illustrating lineage unity is that of a hundred solemn men on their knees, facing forward, at a ceremony for their lineage ancestor. Han succeeds in demonstrating the central role of the lineage in this particular village and in showing how lineage relationships were affected by the politics of the collective and reform periods.

Given the centrality of men in patrilineal organization, it is surprising to learn that many women were recorded (Han

counts 82 between 1 370 and 1 670) in the genealogies that the lineage has kept over the past centuries, and also that from the 18th century they recorded the men whom many of their daughters married (pp. 47-48). Han argues that this was evidence of the growing significance of influential affines as a measure of lineage success.

In addition to careful reconstruction of lineage history and village conditions prior to the revolution, Han's chapter on socialist collectivization in Rural China is a very useful account, both for its overview of the political process, and the local details of land reform and collectivization. I particularly value the information she gleaned on the local impact of the Great Leap Forward famine (1958-61), a tragedy hushed up for too long. Unlike the accounts in other village studies claiming that their village was spared deaths from the Great Leap famine, Han gives a more complete account. She refers to the Great Leap Forward, a disastrous national policy fusing villages into large rural communes, as "militarization" (p. 99). She reports that 39 villagers (out of 205), or 19% of Lijialou's population, died of starvation in 1961, with more than 80 deaths in a nearby larger village (pp. 103-104). She also describes how and why some managed to survive while others perished. Overall, she gives vivid accounts from different villagers and different generations on the political mobilizations and how they were carried out locally.

With a chapter on gender, marriage and affines to balance the emphasis on the patrilineage, Han also provides useful summary information about village women's lives, supplemented by revealing quotes and stories from individuals. Han maintains that women's lives have generally improved during the reform period. In the early 20th century, rich and poor women in this village had bound feet and spent their time at home "sewing, spinning, weaving and cooking,"—activities which did not bring much income (p. 71). During the militarization of the Great Leap Forward, men and women were made to leave their village to live in segregated barracks or "long houses" until they rebelled and returned to their village (p. 100). During the collective period, women had to work at farming by day, and in the evening they spent hours cooking, weaving and sewing clothes for the family. Following the reforms of the early 1980s, women's double workload decreased as they began to purchase cloth rather than weave their own. With high cotton prices, women concentrated their labour in cotton production, increasing their incomes and bargaining power (pp. 160-161). In marriage negotiations, this helped give brides' families the incentive to bargain hard for money and gifts from the grooms' families.

Han addresses the subject of unequal sex ratios (a shortage of women) in this region in terms of the difficulties and deceptions encountered by poor men who cannot find local wives. Her detailed description of their attempts to get wives from afar is complemented by reporting research of the county women's federation on the problem of abducted women among out-of-province wives. This innovative material complements other recent research on out-of-province wives in north China

(Bossen N.d.) and on bachelor men, or “bare branches” as a social problem in Asia China (Hudson and de Boer 2004).

One obvious omission in the book, however, is a discussion of the state family planning policy and its impact on families’ plans to have sons. The policy would have been in effect for nearly a decade, although perhaps not rigorously enforced at the time of Han’s research in 1990. The village demographic data show a drop in the number of children born in the 1980s compared to the previous decade and, surprisingly, show more daughters (30) than sons (25) in the 0 to 10 age group (p. 24). This makes it unlikely these villagers were practising female infanticide in the 1980s, although they were reported to have done so in the past. In a village with such a strong emphasis on patrilineal descent, one would expect some kind of collision with the family planning policy. It would have been interesting to know villagers’ responses to the policy, particularly those who had no son.

The chapter on Christianity and its revival in the community is also very interesting and one of the few anthropological studies apart from Lozada (2001) that discusses village Christianity. Christianity appeals to some villagers as it is more inclusive than the lineage. Examining religious conversion from a social and economic point of view, Han suggests that Christianity attracts people who are more marginal to the family and lineage structure, many of them women.

Taken as a whole, Han’s work makes a valuable contribution to anthropological research on rural China. Its story of continuity and change is supported by clear empirical data, qualitative and quantitative, on a range of important issues. Would that more Western anthropologists would make the effort to collect such useful data! Refreshingly free of Western academic jargon and posturing, this multi-angled story of village change reveals the working and reworking of power relations at different levels. Researchers will appreciate the thorough examination of the village over time, and will find the data useful for historical and regional comparison with other anthropological studies of Chinese villages and lineages such as those by Gao (1999), Ruf (1999) and Ku (2003). Her reconstruction of lineage records and residence patterns confirms the importance of examining kinship in village social organization.

As both social history and ethnography covering the late imperial, republican, revolutionary and reform periods, Han’s study documents not only the revival of the patrilineage, but also the local changes in land tenure, politics and policies, economic relations, marriage and affinal relations, gift exchanges and rituals and religion. Beyond this, her discussions of the changing economic role of women, the growing power of the bride’s side in marriage negotiations, the problem of finding brides for poor men, and the role of the women’s federation in tracking the fate of out-of-province wives provide stimulating material for comparative analysis.

There are three very useful appendices, one describing fieldwork, the second identifying the cast of characters, and the third with a glossary of Chinese *pinyin* terms in Chinese characters (but not in English). Unfortunately, the book lacks

an index to help locate information on particular topics. The English is clearly written, with a few minor editing errors. Because this book was published in Japan in English, it has not yet received the wider exposure in the West that it deserves. It will soon be published in Chinese and will become an important resource for the rapidly growing anthropology of China.

## References

- Bossen, Laurel  
N.d. In Press. *Village to Distant Village: The Opportunities and Risks of Long Distance Marriage Migration in Rural China*. *Journal of Contemporary China*.
- Buck, Pearl  
2004 [1931]. *The Good Earth*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Gao, Mobo  
1999 *Gao Village: A Portrait of Rural Life in Modern China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Hudson, Valerie M., and Andrea M. Den Boer  
2004 *Bare Branches: The Security Implications of Asia’s Surplus Male Population*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ku, Hok Bun  
2003 *Moral Politics in a South Chinese Village: Responsibility, Reciprocity and Resistance*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lozada, Eriberto P, Jr.  
2001 *God Aboveground: Catholic Church, Postsocialist State, and Transnational Processes in a Chinese Village*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Ruf, Gregory  
1999 *Cadres and Kin: Making a Socialist Village in West China, 1921-1991*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

---

Éric Jolly, *Boire avec esprit. Bière de mil et société dogon*, Collection «Sociétés Africaines 18», Paris/Nanterre : Société d’ethnologie, 2004, 499 pages.

Recenseur : Jean-Claude Muller  
Université de Montréal

Voici un livre d’une très grande richesse qui explore la totalité de ce qu’il faut savoir sur la bière de mil et ses significations profondes dans la célèbre société dogon du Mali. Dans ce livre de cinq cents pages, le lecteur découvre mille aspects insoupçonnés de la place que remplit la bière de mil dans toutes les niches de la vie sociale des Dogons, dans sa symbolique et son imaginaire. Bien que l’importance de la bière de mil et de sorgho dans les sociétés d’Afrique occidentale ait été abondamment notée par les observateurs, seuls quelques rares d’entre eux se sont penchés sur la question, et encore de manière assez peu exhaustive si on compare leurs écrits à ce monument qu’est l’ouvrage ici recensé.

Après avoir cité et rendu hommage à ces rares ethnologues précurseurs qui tentèrent de réhabiliter la consommation de la bière de mil, considérée jusqu’alors comme un frein au développement ou une monstruosité débilante, Éric Jolly