extension of anti-utopian thinking and the urge for a non-imitative dialogical exchange with the modern West are the two main methodological positions of Iranian liberal intellectuals. It is in this sphere that Marxism is assumed to be no longer a valid or sufficient theory for the explanation of social and political reality in Iran. Instead, one confronts traditionalist clerics referring to Heidegger, liberals to Habermas, Berlin, and Kant, feminists to Arendt, and some young nihilists to deconstructionism.

The validity of Postel's arguments is open to discussion. His celebration of liberalism as the cure for the present dilemmas of the Third World lacks theoretical and practical plausibility when one recalls the actual peripheral position of the Third World within the capitalist world-system. The downfall of Marxism in Iran is not only the result of the political entrenchment of Islamic fundamentalists, the absence of an organized proletariat in Iran, the upper-class origins of Iranian Marxists and the support of some Marxist groups for Islamists after the revolution, as both Postel and Jahanbegloo wish the reader to believe. Since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the speedy expansion of capitalism has been imperative in pushing Marxism into the margins of the social, political and intellectual landscape all over the world. Iran is no exception.

Iranian liberal progressives have yet to comprehend the utopian nature of what they perceive as their anti-utopian, non-imitative, non-dominative exchange with the West. They cannot escape the real political and economic constraints of the present historical moment by invoking the universality of human experience in the realm of philosophy. It is worthwhile to recall Marx's famous dictum that "[m]en [*sic*] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under given circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past."

Despite the good will involved in his effort to provide an empathetic portrait of Iranian politics and society, Postel's image is still trapped within an Orientalist framework. His analysis is based on the fact that a relatively small group of intellectuals based in Tehran are reading modern Western philosophy. The practices and dreams of these few figures, who belong to rival bourgeois classes in Iranian society, are no basis for generalizations about 70 million people. Nevertheless, as one of the relatively few efforts to dispel the spectre of Iran as a dangerous fundamentalist country, Postel's work deserves Slavoj Zizek's advance praise for the book in showing that Iran's story is the West's own story.

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Laurel Bossen, *Chinese Women and Rural Development: Sixty Years of Chinage in Lu Village, Yunnan*, Lanham and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002, 391 pages.

Reviewer: *Eric Henry*
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Understanding social change in gender, the division of labour, land tenure and political culture requires an historical depth usually unobtainable by ethnographers of rural communities. However, in this study of Lu Village in China's rural Yunnan province (conducted over the course of ten years, from 1989 to 1999) Laurel Bossen avails herself of a classic of Chinese ethnography, Fei Xiaotong and Zhang Zhiyi's *Earthbound China: A Study of Rural Economy in Yunnan* (1948), part of which was conducted in the same village. Fei was the principle investigator in Lu Village, and Bossen uses his ethnography to good effect, comparing the data he collected on agriculture and land ownership in the 1930s with contemporary trends, and using interviews with older informants to fill in the gaps that resulted from Fei's cursory concern with issues of gender.

Bossen does not engage in an extended critique of Fei's work, but uses his ethnographic descriptions as starting points for her own analyses. She is not concerned here with any particular theoretical problem, but attempts to trace out the wider intersections of gender and development as they have affected Lu Village over the past 60 years. This book includes studies of the role of gender in land ownership and farm work (chap. 4), the distribution of wealth (chap. 6), marriage (chap. 7), family planning (chap. 8) and village politics (chap. 9). In all of these cases, Bossen carefully documents the historical trajectories of change in Lu Village that can be deduced from Fei's ethnography and from local records, as well as current configurations. She describes how these changes have affected village women, although at times the progress of gender equality seems stalled as when Bossen remarks "the gender division of labor in 1990 would not surprise a member of the 1938 community" (p. 145). Her demographic data also indicates a "suspicious sex ratio" heavily favouring male children that may (Bossen is frustratingly inconclusive here) be linked to the increasing use of ultrasound technology in prenatal examinations; in other words, sex selective abortion may have been an issue. But there are also positive signs. Economic development has brought some measure of security to village families. While women are still more concentrated in farming, they are also able to participate in rural industry, transportation and even political institutions. Bossen notes that this situation may be peculiar to Lu Village which, with a history of uxorilocal marriage, tends to favour local women over in-marrying males.

Some of the most interesting ethnographic description concerns the extremes of wealth and poverty in the village. Bossen describes the material conditions and daily routines of some of the poorest families, often relegated to this status

by disability, infirmity, bad luck or the moral calculus of the Chinese state during past political crusades—Bossen points out that many families which were classified as "landlords" after Liberation in 1949 were so labelled only because they had fewer sons among whom to divide their land. In turn she records the stories of the newly wealthy households, showing how a mixture of education, hard work and political opportunity provided the means for them to accumulate more than their neighbours. She concludes that wealth is produced by co-operation between men and women in the rural economy and migrants to Lu Village without ties of kinship, or unmarried individuals, are limited in what they can earn.

Two further chapters deserve special attention. In chapter 3, Bossen outlines a theory of the demise of female footbinding in the early Republican era (1911-49). While most analysts argue that the rapid decline of footbinding was the result of changing cultural norms (the desire of men for bound feet) and government-initiated reforms, Bossen links it to a decline in women's domestic textile production. When cheap imported fabrics became available, women's labour moved outside into the fields, often replacing the labour of men who sought paid work in the cities or in the military. Thus for Bossen it was the shift in labour practices (from housebound textile production to outside agricultural production) and not rapid cultural change which eradicated footbinding. She also points out that the change was not abrupt, as is often described, but often involved the "early release" of young women's bindings, resulting in what were called "cucumber feet" rather than the "three-inch golden lily" ideal of imperial times (p. 73). Bossen's other unique contribution is her reconstruction of the experiences of a female shaman (chap. 5) who practised in Lu Village during the 1930s. Through interviews with the shaman's daughter and elderly members of the community, Bossen paints a picture of a shrewd outsider to the community who was able to establish herself in a comfortable lifestyle on the basis of her insights into the spirit world.

Unfortunately one of the drawbacks of rural Chinese ethnography is the limitations of access. It sounds as though Bossen's experiences with government minders and local Party officials were generally productive, but many of her conclusions are inferred from production or demographic data rather than confirmed by informants. These include such sensitive topics as political participation in the past (the Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward are like dark pits in the villagers' memories), infanticide, suicide and even the ongoing political struggles in the community. To some extent this is to be expected, but it lends the overall ethnography a sense of speculative conjecture on many topics for which the reader might hope for firm answers. Typically Bossen presents her data in the form of tables and statistics, befitting the overall focus on economic anthropology. At times however the reader might wish for more than the life histories which Bossen provides, but instead the opinions, motivations and judgments of the Lu Villagers themselves concerning the sweeping changes taking place around them.

Still, the advantage of this book is its historical depth and topical breadth concerning one village in China's rural countryside. It provides a necessary corrective to the gender myopia of past studies of Chinese peasants, including Fei's work, with which this ethnography might be read in tandem. The book will appeal to anyone interested in rural China, peasant economies and the intersections of gender and development. While the picture of the Chinese countryside is not always rosy, Bossen extends the metaphor of the unbinding of women's feet in the early 20th century to the potential for unbinding the technological, political and structural inequalities that afflict Chinese peasants in this one. However, as the book demonstrates, especially in the case of women, there is much ground that remains to be covered.

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Marie Mauzé, Michael E. Harkin and Sergei Kan, eds., *Coming to Shore: Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, 508 pages.

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The book *Coming to Shore* is a collection of papers that grew out of a June 2000 conference in Paris and represents, as the editors suggest in their introduction, "the culmination of a several-year collaboration among many of the most prominent researchers in the field of Northwest Coast ethnology"—a project, they assert, that is long overdue (p. xi). But like most Northwest Coast ethnographic volumes, there is a decided bias in the number of chapters devoted to the more prominent and expressive northern cultures of the region (only about three, out of 21, chapters focus on the peoples of southern coastal British Columbia).

The initial impetus for the Paris conference was Claude Lévi-Strauss's 90th birthday, and it seems only fitting that the first chapter is of the honoree's personal reflections on his Northwest Coast work. I found this chapter and Frederica de Laguna's similar, autobiographical chapter quite fascinating. Along with most of the chapters in the first section, "The Legacy of Northwest Coast Research," Lévi-Strauss and de Laguna provide interesting insights into the development of this regional tradition and draw out the "anchored radiance," to borrow a phrase from the notably missing Jay Miller (1999), of Northwest Coast academics. Of particular note in this first section is Regna Darnell's contribution describing the similarities, continuities and differences between historical particularism and structuralism. She argues that the Northwest