

## Linnemann, Maja: Women Business Owners in China: Results of a Survey

Bremen: Universität Bremen, 1998, 44 S. (Berichte des Arbeitsbereiches Chinaforschung im Institut für Weltwirtschaft und internationales Management; 10)

Maja Linnemann describes the findings of thirty non-structured interviews (that might as well be characterized as informal talks, p. 37) with women business owners in the cities of Beijing and Chengdu. Her data were collected during a 3-months' project in 1996, and would be perfectly sufficient for a handful of individual portraits. Instead, Linnemann chooses a more generalizing approach of cataloguing the figures according to topics, though her database is insufficient and her presentation ends by being an enumeration of single details. The reader gets the impression of re-reading a questionnaire (that is not included in the paper) while trying to find the clue for regrouping the facts into meaningful structures. He is further handicapped by the lack of information on interview methods and analytic approach.

This sort of short-term social survey is recommended for more extensive use in German modern China studies, as it is already common in the U. S. Unfortunately, Linnemann's brochure is not going to be a model for further efforts in the field.

In addition to structural problems, the small amount of figures the author provides is desperately lacking the background information necessary for generalization. Linnemann claims that there are no such data, whereas female lay-off (*xia gang*) and re-employment in their own businesses has been one of the main and officially sanctioned topics of the Women's Federation in the 90's, resulting in heaps of books and compilations of empiric data<sup>1</sup> and numerous special issues of women's magazines. Linnemann does not make use of empirical studies in Chinese and only twice quotes materials in Chinese.

In the first part of her study, the author enumerates her findings on areas of business, number of employees, period of existence, financial resources and profits. Numbers are given in great detail, although they are not representative and lack an analysis in more general terms. Without an overview of each of the enterprises the reader is unable to put the puzzle together to get an impression of the concrete business. Interesting details are often lacking further elaboration: What is that "school" like (p. 4) one of the women established to recruit her own fashion staff? Does it have to be licensed? Do graduates get a certificate? Which contents do lessons include? How big (number of pupils, teachers) is the school, and what qualifications do teachers need?

Subsequently, the study contains chapters on personal background (age, marital status, children, education, career), psychological and financial problems, and or-

1 E.g. the series of provincial studies published by local sections of the Women's Federation. For Chengdu/Sichuan: *Sichuan funü shehui diwei diaocha, Funü chubanshe*, Beijing 1995, with a chapter on female employment, job opportunities and economic status. Or: Meng Xianfan: *Gaige dachao zhong de Zhongguo nüxing, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe*, Beijing 1995, with a chapter on female employment during the reform period, etc. For an empirical study on Shanghai: *Funü yanjiu luncong*, (1998) 1, pp. 36 - 39, and (1998) 2, pp. 25 - 28. On Chongqing: *Funü yanjiu luncong*, (1998) 3, pp. 34 - 36.

ganizing/networking of women business owners. Although these chapters are more convincing and more complete, some judgements seem to be quite unfounded: Linnemann argues that most of her interview partners "only finished junior middle school", which does not deserve the negative assessment of an "only" as those 9 years are just what Chinese compulsory education comprises and is that which rural residents do not even achieve. Besides: Why is more schooling necessary to be an entrepreneur? Instead of a doubling of figures in tables and text, the reader would prefer to be able to link the schooling of each interviewee with her age and family background. The vagueness of some figures that are detailed to the utmost on the other hand (p. 13: "about 38 years old, p. 8: "at least 11 interviewees") is irritating.

Linnemann makes quite a number of interesting observations that submerge in the continuous flow of numbers and percentages: Women artists (photographer, designer) seem to be more eager to leave a state job for a business of their own than other professions. Women may very well try on their own and husbands are willing to help, but still they do not like their wives to be a "big boss" and employer of people from outside the family.

Part of the figures cited by Linnemann are not gender specific (p. 12, p. 41) and useful only if compared to female-only data.

Papers of the Series edited by the Institute of World Economics in Bremen are either written in German or in English. English is recommended insofar as reception comprises most of the Western countries and probably even China. But any German author should be aware of the traps of writing in a foreign language, and should cross-check his text accordingly. It is worse to stumble through an article like Linnemann's obviously directly translated from the German original than to read it in German, assisted by an English summary. For instance, the author might be reminded of the basic rule "Ort vor Zeit".

The question of who should read the booklet is not solved: It might be used as a single case study, but lacks reference to comparable case studies and hints for generalization. The data base is much too small and lacking in-depth analysis, so that it cannot be considered as a compact introduction into the topic of women business owners in China. The reviewer is reminded of a single chapter taken from the context of a complete book. In Maja Linnemann's text information is abundant, so that it could well be revised as a series of individual portraits of business owners.

Astrid Lipinsky

### **Joh. Heinrich von Stein (Hrsg.): Das Finanzsystem Chinas im Wandel**

Frankfurt: Fritz Knapp Verlag, 1997 (Schriftenreihe der Stiftung Kreditwirtschaft an der Universität Hohenheim), 432 S.

Die Finanzkrise in Asiens hat seit dem letzten Jahr das nationale wie internationale Augenmerk verstärkt auch auf das Finanzsystem der VR China und seine systemimmanenten Schwächen gelenkt. Allerdings wäre es falsch anzunehmen, daß die chinesische Regierung erst in der Folge der Asienkrise zu der Einsicht gefunden