

Gudula Linck: *Frau und Familie in China*. (Beck'sche Reihe 357). München: C.H. Beck, 1988. 150 pages, DM 17.80.

Gudula Linck's stimulating and knowledgeable work is long overdue, presenting the first recent comprehensive German analysis of the subject by a sinologist. Gudula Linck has integrated several of her earlier articles on specific aspects into an overall view. Her book is intended not only for China specialists – she has succeeded in combining a scientific analysis with a vivid representation.

The “history of the family with special reference to the role of women” (p. 9) is the subject of the work. She sets out to shed light on the family ideal and reality, with their societal, cultural and historical determinants. Gudula Linck is not satisfied with “a mere collection of opinions of male historical sources”, but rather “seeks out the underlying structures and meaning” (p. 10). However, she dissociates herself – to some degree at least – from a feminist position (p. 87). Her ambitious and far-reaching aims are accomplished by using examples which demonstrate typical behavioral patterns within a societal context.

The family in pre-modern China (pp. 12-86), in the Revolutionary Period (pp. 87-116) and in the People's Republic of China (pp. 117-141) is discussed in three chapters. The first chapter deals with topics demonstrating how the individual is embedded in the family (p. 81): image of the family and the individual, family forms and family cycle, marriage as legitimation for procreation, “sex-roles and spheres for women and men”, and the life cycle from conception to old age. The last section considers the “interconnection between the family and other social structures, its function as a model for order in society and, finally, the structures of family and cosmos according to analogous moral principles”. (p. 81)

In the second chapter, Gudula Linck uses the phrase “family at twilight”, alluding to the German title of Mao Dun's best known novel about Shanghai in the 1930's. Here, the author vividly illustrates on the basis of literary evidence, the initial efforts towards emancipation of women up to 1949 as a revolt against the old family structure in general. The “*weltschmerz*” of the hero, Baoyu, in the novel “*A Dream of Red Mansions*” shows the rebellion of youth against the old family system; this is also expressed by the marriage protest of the female silk spinners in the Canton delta and by the role given to women in the Taiping Rebellion in the middle of the 19th century. The beginnings of the women's movement are outlined and reviewed, using the works of Lu Xun and Ba Jin to illustrate the efforts of youth to emancipate itself from the old family structure.

The section on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) policy towards women and the family up to 1949 leads into the third chapter. Its premise is that “the disruption which the traditional Chinese family had experienced since the 19th century has

continued in many ways even following the founding of the People's Republic" (p. 117). The author implicitly agrees with the research opinion that predominated until the end of the 1970's, which held that the CCP was given the role (judged by most as positive) of destroying the traditional (patriarchal) family, acknowledging the party's contribution toward the liberation of women and youth from the supremacy of the head of the family and the elders. Gudula Linck doesn't take more recent theses into consideration which, in contrast to this premise, depict the stabilizing role of the CCP in the continued existence of the (patriarchal) family (economy) and its reshaping from a traditional to a socialist (patriarchal) family system (Judith Stacey). The author does, however, acknowledge the present "renewed strengthening of the family as the nucleus of society" (p. 129) and, in this context, she treats the double burden of women, the problems of the one-child-policy and the marriage problems of youth.

Gudula Linck repeatedly uses the method of contrasting common stereotypes, such as those concerning the Chinese extended family, with recent research findings. Also, in her clear depiction of ideals regarding, for example, the three-sided inter-relationship of individual-family-society in pre-modern China, she attempts to expose the tension between different positions and to question over-simplifying perspectives. A similar approach in her presentation of women and the family during the period of the People's Republic would have been desirable. In setting her main emphasis the author has neglected several other essential aspects concerning women and the family, (i.e. kinship relationships, economic function of the family), which have been analyzed in the most recent English works of Delia Davin, Kay Ann Johnson, Judith Stacey, and Margery Wolf. For instance, the dominant role of the head of the family and the "respect of elders", not just in connection with ancestor worship, which she did analyze in detail (p. 137, cf. 22), could also have been explained in their economic context.

In conclusion, Gudula Linck has succeeded in producing a very stimulating and fundamental introduction to a subject which has been neglected in Germany up to now.

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