

lies not in the stated first part (where names and places appear), but in the unstated second part (meaning and subject); the lack of true subject indexes (such as family, profession, literature, and art) therefore greatly diminishes the usefulness of the book.

Researchers might also wish for more information about the origins of the enigmatic folk similes. It is true that Rohsenow includes some dialect terms (such as Cantonese and Shanghainese), but the majority of entries are compiled without any indication of regional provenance. Granted that the origins of most *xiehouyu* are difficult to pinpoint, an examination of them will shed important light on the local variations, transformation, and uniqueness of the language, thus providing a larger social and cultural context within which enigmatic folk similes operate.

In a work so ambitious as Rohsenow's, there are understandably typos, misprints, and occasionally incorrect information. "Feiji weiba" is misspelled as "feiji yiba" (55B); "Guan Yun Cheng" should be rendered as "Guan Yunchang" (71A); and Tang Tai Zong (misspelled as "Tang Tai Zhong") was not the "first" but the second emperor of the Tang dynasty (242A), to name just a few.

Such critical comments, however, should not diminish the value of this dictionary. To organize this mountain of material into usable form is no mean accomplishment. It is a significant work for it contributes to our overall understanding of folklore in general, and Chinese folk language in particular. The dictionary will be of great interest to folklorists, writers, linguists, political scientists, and anthropologists.

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SUN Zhiping 孙治平 and WANG Shijun 王士均, eds.

1982 *Xiehouyu siqian tiao* 歇后语四千条 [Four thousand enigmatic folk similes]. Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe.

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WALTNER, ANN. *Getting an Heir: Adoption and the Construction of Kinship in Late Imperial China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990. vii+226 pages. Glossary, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$26.00; ISBN 0-8248-1280-8.

The author, using abundant historical materials including medical and ritual texts, legal codes, local gazetteers, biographies, genealogies, fiction, etc., discusses in great detail the legal, ritual, and moral aspects of adoption in the late Ming and early Ching periods.

Chapter 1 discusses general Chinese views about procreation and heredity. The author points out that "the prominence given to notions of blood affinity in early modern Europe has no Chinese counterpart" (47). The Chinese in the 15th and 16th centuries believed that the linkages of a child and his progenitors were complex and were not perceived to be strictly biological in nature. The timing of a child's conception, the behavior of a woman during pregnancy (education of the foetus in the

womb), and early childhood education are the elements that shape personality. The last of these elements confirms the important function of nurture. That is to say, one can still have heirs through adoption.

Chapter 2 enlists evidence of adoption and the author's interpretation of it. Topics covered include adoption of *wai-tsu* 外族 (relatives through a female line), uxori-local marriage, adoption across surname line, posthumous adoption, etc. In Chapter 3 the author, using genealogies, further analyzes adoption through case studies. She points out several facts worthy of special mention, one of which is that "the adoption of sons related through the female line, be it maternal, affinal, or sororal, occupies a middle ground between agnatic adoptions and adoption of non-kinsmen" (99). In Chapter 4, through a study of Ming and Ching fiction, the author concludes that adoption, especially the problem of conflicting loyalties, is mostly a kind of fictional portrayal.

As for the reason why adoption was more popular in the Ming and early Ching than in the period before the Tang dynasty, the author hints that "by the Ming, the aristocracy of blood and birth had almost completely disappeared. The expansion of the examination system, the growth of urbanism, and increasing commercialization contributed to a more fluid society. The blood lines of one's father were less significant than they had been during the T'ang" (81). However, this interpretation only explains part of the phenomenon.

In fact, the author, when analyzing her evidence, assumes that the period from Confucius to the Ching dynasty and the area from Central China to Fukian and Kwangtung, the southeastern part of China that was incorporated into Chinese civilization in the later period, are more or less homogeneous. Whether such an assumption can stand or not is questionable. In other words, periodical and regional differences can be explained not only by social and economic development but also by the heterogeneity of a Chinese society constituted by various ethnic groups, which may perhaps be an even more important factor. Future studies of Chinese social and cultural history should not neglect the heterogeneity of Chinese society.

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SOUTHEAST ASIA

WIJEYWARDENE, GEHAN, editor. *Ethnic Groups across National Boundaries in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990. 196 pages. Softcover S\$29.50/US\$18.00; ISBN 981-3035-57-9. Hardcover S\$39.50/US\$24.00; ISBN 981-3035-61-7.

This book is a collection of rather dissimilar papers on a common theme: ethnic groups and the more general phenomenon of ethnicity in Mainland Southeast Asia. The dissimilarity is not so much the result of each author's particular academic background or focus of investigation, as the result of the respective treatment of his/her materials. It fundamentally is a matter of epistemology and problematic.

This is best illustrated by the theoretical controversy that develops between Gehan Wijeyewardene in his Introduction and Rozanna Lilley in her Afterword, which exemplifies two different conceptions in anthropology regarding, in particular, what "ethnic groups" actually are. While Lilley stresses that "questions of definition cannot be taken for granted" and that "no assumptions can be made regarding internal cohe-