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Photo Essay: Deng Xiaoping's Failed Reform in
1975-1976

Emily T. Yeh, *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*,

Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2013, 344 pp.

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coal consumption in the 2000–2012 period. The result: in 2012, Chinese CO₂ emissions had to be reassessed at one billion tonnes,⁽²⁾ or nearly thrice the total French emissions! Nothing too surprising in this discovery, given that an article published in 2012 showed that based on data supplied by local statistics departments, China in 2010 emitted 1.4 billion tonnes of CO₂ more than it was declaring.⁽³⁾

The book by Rock and Toman containing meticulous analyses, several graphs, tables, and concrete examples constitutes an interesting contribution to a debate that is far from over.

■ Translated by N. Jayaram.

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2. Chris Buckley, "China Burns Much More Coal Than Reported, Complicating Climate Talks," *The New York Times*, 3 November 2015.
3. Dabo Guan, Zhu Liu, Yong Geng, Sören Lindner, and Klaus Hubacek, "The Gigatonne Gap in China's Carbon Dioxide Inventories," *Nature Climate Change*, No. 2, 2012, pp. 672–675.

Emily T. Yeh,
Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development,
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Studies about the economic development of China's western regions have mainly focused on the central government-driven plans carried out since the post-1980 reform period and intensified during the last decade. However, without a much-needed historical assessment of earlier development projects started in the 1950s, the China Western Development (*Xibu da kaifa*) program launched in 2000 and the most recent One Belt One Road (*Yi dai yi lu*) initiative promoted last year have often been mistakenly presented as sudden sprouts without seeds.

In her insightful work, *Taming Tibet: Landscape Transformation and the Gift of Chinese Development*, Emily Yeh contributes to filling this gap with an excellent monographic study that explores the topic of development in the circumscribed location of Lhasa City and its environs over the long stretch from the 1950s to the 2000s. Through a detailed account of Chinese policy changes during this period, she analyses the interconnections among physical, economic, and social transformations that affected the historical and religious capital of Tibet.

The main argument of the book is that from the beginning, the Chinese state enterprise's coercive development strategies were conceived as acts of benevolence and that development itself was "offered" to Tibetans as an irrefutable gift to establish effective national rule in Tibet. Drawing on the Maussian theory of the gift, the author maintains that through the disguised act of disinterested giving, Chinese development is given to Tibetans as a

gift that generates obligation and indebtedness, while bringing with it a high expectation of being reciprocated with gratitude and loyalty.

Based upon historical sources, policymaking analysis, and ethnographic fieldwork, Yeh effectively shows how development has been deployed by the Chinese state as both a theoretical principle and an applied strategy aimed at the territorial incorporation of the Tibetan land and its inhabitants. In this sense, the purpose of any Chinese development project carried on since the 1950s ultimately entails a hegemonic discourse that – beyond its merely economic purpose – assumes and in fact demands that Tibetans should appreciate the gift.

The book exposes the consequences of different development projects and outlines the social and economic dynamics involving Tibetans, the state, the land, and Han newcomers over the course of 60 years. The author identifies three phases of government intervention in Tibet, and more specifically in Lhasa, each characterised by a single development focus, respectively: state farms, greenhouses, and house building. This long narrative is arranged around these three thematic and chronological nuclei, poignantly named soil, plastic, and concrete, which over time have reconfigured Lhasa from originally being the very centre of Tibet to its present status as a geographic, cultural, and economic periphery in need of development.

The first part, "Soil," deals with the earliest phase of development (1950s–1980s) and the first transformations of the Tibetan landscape through the institution of state farms, with the introduction of new modes of production and the initial cultivation of the land that involved the joint efforts of the Chinese army and the local people. In terms of centre-periphery relations, the first years witnessed the best period in the history of the region: the enthusiasm animating both the Han soldiers and the local Tibetans working in the state farms sustained relatively good ethnic relations that rapidly deteriorated afterwards, following the increasing symbolic and effective conquering of the land.

This part of the book sheds light on many pieces of diversified memories from that time that have been often silenced in the Tibetan exile communities, including, for example, the improvement of gender equality thanks to the inclusion of women in farming work. Extracts from interviews and memories vivify and contextualise the historical reconstruction of this and the next two parts of the book: the constant shifting between concrete micro-examples of biographical experiences and broader political issues offers a complex and complete narrative to the reader, and this alternating macro-micro lens authenticates the accuracy of the historical and political analysis.

In the second part, "Plastic," the chronological focus is on the 1990s, a critical phase of transition from state economy to market economy at the national level that had a direct impact on development strategies in Tibet. State farms were progressively abandoned, and a growing number of Han migrant workers from Sichuan Province took over the emerging market of greenhouses that spread through the suburban villages around Lhasa.

The author provides an insightful analysis of the interdependence of multiple political, economic, and cultural levels of discourses and practices that, following the introduction of greenhouses, marked Tibetans' overdetermined condition of marginalisation in vegetable farming and markets (p. 121). For Tibetans, the decollectivisation of agriculture essentially entailed not only nonparticipation but also a progressive exclusion from the new lines of market-led development.

With Han immigrants replacing the previous direct intervention of the state, the issue of Tibetan development became further connected to ethnic tensions, and the naturalisation of the increasing presence of Han workers

turned into the second strategy of territorialisation in Tibet. The author clearly outlines how Tibetans were prevented from taking advantage of the new liberalised market due to the concurrence of Tibetan traditional social relations and cultural norms, the failure of technology transfer from Han workers, and the sharp contrasts between “scientific” agriculture and traditional use of the land. The interiorised Tibetan negative notion of Chinese-style development as systematically spoiling the land with chemical fertilisers and corrupting the people through urbanisation made Tibetans live in a renting economy that gave up increasingly larger portions of the land to Han immigrants to build greenhouses. The author attentively argues that the reproduction of economic and ethnic imbalance in Lhasa was also connected to the failed applicability of the Chinese popular concept of *suzhi*, the quality of place and people, to the city of Lhasa. In inland China, the increment of *suzhi* is in fact deliberately associated with urbanisation: moving to the city from the countryside means an automatic rise of *suzhi* that, in the case of the small and under-populated Lhasa, dramatically failed to meet Han immigrants’ expectations: based on dominant representations of backwardness, dirtiness, and superstition, Tibetans were and still are considered low in *suzhi*, as is Lhasa, a periphery becoming urban.

In the last part of the book, “Concrete,” the focus is on the enforced urbanisation of Lhasa and its environs that in the last decade has been pursued in order to spread development through building construction. The imposition of new living spaces that affects family relations and traditional use of the domestic space is one of the consequences of the state’s intrusive and pervasive presence in local lives. Once again, the Tibetan failure to “perform gratitude” for this new gift made of concrete is disapproved of, and its acceptance is forcefully imposed.

Constantly shifting policies regulate different programs aimed at restoring old villages, expanding the urban space, relocating people from old houses in the historical centre, and building new ones in the periphery. The author insightfully points out the specific economic dynamics of these housing projects involving both central Lhasa and the neighbouring villages, and defines the sources of investment that sustain them. Although the state provides a substantial contribution towards most of the housing plans, house owners themselves are required to cover part of the funding. Being dependent on both private credit and bank loans, Tibetans’ involuntary participation in the state’s development and urbanisation projects becomes an inescapable condition of indebtedness. The book ends with further reflections on the Maussian theory of the gift, originally elaborated in the context of “archaic” societies, and its applicability to contemporary state-citizens relationships in Tibet.

This work is a notable contribution to the study of the PRC’s long-term development strategies to incorporate peripheral areas within the body of the state and to clearly demark its territory in a way that, as the author notes, sinisterly echoes state terror.

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Zhaohui Hong,
The Price of China's Economic Development: Power, Capital, and the Poverty of Rights,
 Lexington, The University of Kentucky Press, 2015, 296 pp.

BENOÎT VERMANDER

The author of this work, an expert in economic history, takes an interdisciplinary approach to study the non-economic consequences of the developmental process followed by China since 1978. So it does not take into account such matters as the environmental aspects of that growth but is concerned mainly with the social and cultural costs of the model that has predominated throughout the period. The author notes that even the notion of a “price” or cost does not imply any value judgment: every growth process comes with a price tag. The question is one of assessing the price in relation to the confirmed benefits, especially if the price in question involves a burden imposed on a considerable number of people.

The interdisciplinary aspect of this analysis arises from the tripartite nature of the transitions undergone since 1978: from a planned to a market economy; from an agrarian to an industrial society; from a traditional to a civic culture. The author advances two main theses, the first of which is that these three transitions have combined to form a “power-capital institution” (or, in Chinese, *quanli ziben zhidu* 权力资本制度) made up of an economic structure, a culture, and specific players. This institution manages the transfers from political power to capital and vice-versa; within it the players ensure the maximisation of their profit from the use of labour power by capital; and finally, the overall institution takes the form of specific institutions, norms, values, and discourses. It goes without saying that the relationship between political power and capital has radically changed since 1949, and that the study of the modes of their interconnection has become necessary for understanding the current system in China.

The second thesis that forms the framework of this volume is that this “power-capital institution” has arisen in parallel with a “poverty of rights.” The term applies to civic, economic, social, political, and cultural rights, along with the absence of any space where such rights could be claimed. The nature of the discriminations linked to the poverty of rights has itself developed in tandem with the reform process, and the denial of those rights is the direct cause of both the poverty and the low morale weighing on certain sectors of the population. So the study of the “denials of rights” coming into effect at different stages in the developmental process should have to form an integral part of the history of the process, enabling a comparative approach to it, and influencing in turn its future planning. (Incidentally, it seems to me that one of the most interesting ideas in the work is precisely that the various rights – to property, free expression, social security, etc. – are subjected to denials whose vigour and extent vary according to the stages of any given developmental process).

This volume sets out these two theses in two parts, *The Haves* followed by *The Have-Nots*. The first is focused on the emergence and development