

Dali L. YANG, *Remaking the Chinese Leviathan: Market Transition and the Politics of Governance in China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004. xii + 414 pp., with tables, figures, and maps. ISBN: 0-8047-4161-1 (hc). Price: US\$60.00.

This is an important book that anyone interested in the role of the state in development and the politics of transition in China should read. Contrary to a popular prevailing sentiment that political reforms have been minimal and have not kept pace with the changes in the economy, Dali Yang shows that China has undertaken significant reforms to improve the institutional framework for economic governance. Whether this will translate into broader government reforms and even political change remains an open question but Yang builds a compelling case that China has undergone a sea change shift in its view of governance and the role of the state in guiding the economy. Certainly having an effective, as opposed to strong, state mechanism is a prerequisite for any future democratic reforms.

Yang takes as his starting point the classic study by Karl Polanyi of how markets do not develop spontaneously but grow hand-in-hand with an expansion of central state power. However, this power should not be confused with the all-embracing power of interference enjoyed by the Maoist state. Rather it is a kind of power that allows the state to regulate activity more effectively through laws and regulations, fiscal policy, and indirect means. The process gives credibility to the notion of “limited government.” The book shows how China’s leaders realized that both the de facto decentralization of the 1980s and the chaotic market advances of the early 1990s had undermined the effectiveness of the state, and that there was a potential for government failure. The strong vested interests that had been a product of early reforms needed to be checked in order to prevent paralysis or even systemic crisis. As a result, China’s leaders undertook a wide-ranging set of government reforms to check the power of strong vested interests, such as the military members who ran vast business and trading empires, and to enhance state capacity primarily by building up the center’s fiscal base.

A number of pressures came together to cause the leadership to reform the governmental structures in an attempt to build a more rational, regulatory state that would be more effective in managing China’s increasingly market-influenced economy. Yang sees the government as pushed to act by general external pressures such as the Asian financial crisis, domestic economic difficulties, and rising social discontent at the unevenness of reforms. In addition, there were often specific crises such as the smuggling cases and

corruption by important officials that caused reforms in specific areas. The bulk of the book comprises a series of well-documented case studies of key areas where significant administrative reform has taken place. These include the attempts to streamline the government bureaucracy, fiscal reforms designed to boost central state capacity, attempts to eradicate smuggling and to provide a better framework to monitor corruption, and attempts to provide better horizontal accountability within the system.

In all these cases, Yang provides compelling evidence of substantial changes in central government behavior and practices. However, the key question remains as to how well such reforms are actually implemented, especially at the local level. Here the evidence is more mixed. While there clearly has been progress, it is unclear how many of the new regulations remain on paper, while not being carried out by local authorities. That said, it is obvious that the intent of the central authorities is to build a new governing structure that is more in tune with the demands of a modern, market economy. If the new leaders retain the same commitment and the message is reinforced for local leaders, over time new norms for government behavior will slowly take hold. Yang should be applauded for bringing to our attention just how seriously the government in Beijing has taken reform of its system of economic governance.

TONY SAICH, *Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA*

Sun-pong YUEN, Pui-lam LAW, and Yuk-ying HO, *Marriage, Gender, and Sex in a Contemporary Chinese Village*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004. xiii + 295 pp. ISBN: 0-7656-1254-2 (pbk). Price: US\$26.95.

Based upon a localized study, *Marriage, Gender, and Sex in a Contemporary Chinese Village* provides a fascinating insight into the way in which Chinese views of marriage, gender relations, and attitudes toward sex have changed over the past five decades. The authors Yuen, Law, and Ho, all of whom teach at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, conducted participant observation in an industrialized South China village, Baixiu, during 1994–5 and 2000–2. The book was originally published in Chinese in 1998; this is an English translation augmented by two new chapters deriving from additional visits in 2000–2. The data are presented mostly in the form of narrative stories in which the researched subjects are historically contextualized, and