

rather weak use of primary sources. Furthermore, a greater balance and inner coherence of this compilation could have been achieved if there had been a broader inter-disciplinary approach to the topic. All in all the level of the articles is very uneven, not only in quality, but also from the point of view of relevance to the general topic. In the opinion of the reviewer the editors should have been more critical in the selection of the contributions to be included. It is hoped that future publications from the project will be of a higher quality.

Henrik H. Sørensen  
University of Copenhagen

**Ole Bruun, Søren Poulsen and Hatla Thelle, eds.:** *Modern China Research: Danish Experiences*. Center for East and Southeast Asian Studies, Copenhagen Discussion Paper, Special Issue, University of Copenhagen, 1991. 148 pp.

The contributions to this small volume were originally presented at the seminar "Problems and Methods in Modern China Research" at the University of Copenhagen, November 1-2, 1990. The articles cover a wide variety of topics such as the compilation and research value of the new local gazetteers (Clausen), art research in China (Primdahl), anthropological fieldwork (Bruun), or the compilation of an exhaustive Danish bibliography on China (Hinrup).

As is often the case with conference volumes, the individual contributions vary greatly in quality and cover only little common ground. Several of the papers (Thøgersen, Odgaard, Madsbjerg & Poulsen, Sharma) point out the problems and possibilities of what is often called fieldwork in China studies: conducting interviews, carrying out observations, or collecting documentary evidence oneself while travelling or residing in China. These papers describe different practical approaches to collect data and can usefully be read by students or scholars preparing to go to China themselves.

Three other papers in the volume, namely those written by Clausen, Poulsen and Bruun, are connected to these. They, too, address the issue of data collection in China itself, yet at the same

time they are different in nature. Clausen's article on local historical sources gives a very interesting description of the way science is carried out on an everyday basis in the context of China's politicized bureaucracy. Knowledge of this is important to foreign fieldworkers who want to know where to go in order to get information or documents which are only locally available. Even more important, from this we can get some clues in what ways we can judge the value and reliability of such information.

Poulsen's article on the China specialist as a consultant deals with the China specialist's role as an intermediary and a cultural broker. Working for private commercial enterprises or national and international development agencies has its own specific pitfalls. At the same time, the China consultant has to face many of the same problems independent China fieldworkers grapple with.

Unfortunately, the contributions by Primdahl, Wedell-Wedellsborg, Thelle, and Hinrup stand largely on their own. The only thing each of them has in common with the other articles in the book is that they, in one way or the other, are about China research.

This cuts much deeper than just a lack of editorial work. In my opinion, the lack of coherence displayed by the book raises the question whether modern China studies still have sufficient in common to be thought of as a single academic specialization. The articles in this book only share the assumption that one of the things all modern China researchers have to do is to collect data in China itself. However, no unifying set of research questions or methodology exist.

This fundamental question is mentioned briefly in the article by Madsberg and Poulsen, but the anthropologist Ole Bruun is the only author who dwells at some length on this question. As Bruun points out, what anthropologists and modern China researchers call "fieldwork" are actually two quite different things.

For modern China scholars fieldwork is simply a way to gather information. For anthropologists, however, fieldwork is a full-fledged methodology speaking to the nature of the knowledge produced. Anthropological fieldwork therefore implies a long-term intellectual enterprise (admittedly only in the most general of terms) going beyond an individual research project or even the study of one specific culture.

I fully agree with Bruun on this point. Yet this should not be read as a fatalistic call to abandon modern China studies as an academic enterprise. It is, however, very important that all of us who share a research interest in modern China put this problem more explicitly on our intellectual agenda. Does the "Chineseness", as Brunn calls it, of what we study, require a common methodology (which should not be confused with the practical issues concerning data collection in China)? Does a long-term research agenda exist which provides at least some common ground for China scholars working in different disciplines? These questions have been avoided for much too long. At the same time, modern China research has grown immensely in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The fact that the editors of the book have been unable to weave their papers together shows that there is a genuine problem here. It is high time that we face it.

Frank N. Pieke  
University of Leiden

**Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard**, *Spillet om Kina* (The China Game). Mellem-folkeligt Samvirke, 1990. 231 pp.

Brødsgaard's book is an overview of the reform period in China since the end of the 1970s. Its objective is to throw light on factors that can explain the social, political and economic crisis facing the country at the end of the 1980s, culminating in the suppression of the People's Movement in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 and the resulting change in outside perceptions of China. The book has a popularized form, aiming at a broad audience.

After a brief historical introduction Brødsgaard starts with a presentation of the basic organizational unit in Chinese society, the *danwei* or the work unit. This part is interesting and informative, with repeated references to the author's own experiences from his stay in a Chinese *danwei*. At this point the book lacks a more critical discussion of the implications of this kind of stringent, tightly controlled ground-level organization on the development of policies of reform and on the import of market mechanisms into the