
In the early twenty-first century, China is undergoing a historic transformation. The 'Chinese dream', which emerged as the times required, has also undergone change. What is the Chinese dream? Is it attainable? What are ordinary Chinese people's expectations for the future? Different people have different views. *The End of the Chinese Dream* by Gerard Lemos concerns ordinary Chinese people in Chongqing and Beijing, and gives thought-provoking answers to these questions.

As a senior scholar in social policy, Lemos was the former chairman of the board of the British Council (2008-2010). In this thought-provoking book, Lemos develops a creative field survey approach called 'wish tree'. From 2006 to 2010, as a visiting professor at Chongqing Technology and Business University, Lemos conducted an independent survey of Chongqing and Beijing residents in selected neighbourhoods. In specified public places, Chinese residents pasted postcards with a leaf design on the wish tree. Each postcard had four questions: Who are you? What event changed your life? What is your biggest worry? What do you wish for? In contrast to straightforward questionnaires, the unique approach of the wish tree succeeded at collecting 'large amounts of reliable information' and exploring ordinary Chinese citizens' concerns and expectations for the future (p. 15).

This book has a brief introduction, 14 chapters and an afterword. Chapters 1-4 describe life in Chongqing and Beijing and the field research as it was carried out in these two cities, and provide an overview of China's changing political landscape since 1978. According to the responses of ordinary Chinese people, Chapter 5 identifies the Chinese dream as 'their family's well-being, keeping their job, not getting sick, affording medical treatment, paying for their child's education, having enough to live on in their old age and living in a neighbourly, supportive community' (p. 103). In the chapters that follow (6-10), Lemos analyzes whether the Chinese dream of the everyday citizens of Chongqing and Beijing is viable. He explores the five challenges facing the Chinese dream: family life, educational pressure, health care, lifelong financial security and environmental sustainability. In Lemos' opinion, the Chinese dream is at an end. In Chapters 11-14, Lemos explains the negative impacts of the death of the Chinese dream and advances some solutions for more balanced and humane social policies in China. As Lemos argues, to a large extent, the traditional social order has been destroyed. Though
the competing interests of family life, education, health care, financial
security and environmental sustainability are addressed by a series of
piecemeal policies, there seems to be no cohesive framework standing
the test of time.

Based on the survey in selected communities in Chongqing and Beijing,
Lemos concludes that China is controlled by 'an interconnected, mutually
dependent but mistrusted and faction-ridden plutocracy', which focuses
on 'the creation and consolidation of wealth in their own hands' (p. 271).
However, on the basis of a survey of thousands of Chinese, we should
not conclude that the Chinese dream has come to an end, as the dream
is shared by hundreds of millions of people in China.

In my view, the anxiousness and fears echoed in the responses on the
wish tree are common in many other countries around the world. That
is to say, if another wish tree-style survey was conducted in communi-
ties in other countries, it would get similar responses. For example, if
the supporters of the Occupy Wall Street movement were asked the four
questions Lemos asked the Chinese, their responses would also refer to
income inequality and wealth distribution in the United States. If such a
survey were conducted in Detroit's communities, where many people are
living in poverty, they might express fears similar to those of the Chinese
respondents in Chongqing and Beijing. Should we refute the American
dream on the basis of some negative responses from Americans?

The End of the Chinese Dream still ranks as one of the works on the
Chinese dream most worth reading. This book provides an alterna-
tive look into the controversial topics of the Chinese dream, addresses
multifaceted aspects of the future expectations of ordinary Chinese and
analyzes the challenges facing the Chinese dream and the relevant nega-
tive impacts. This timely and controversial book is crucial to understand
the dark sides of the Chinese dream, and for the development of future
research. If Lemos is correct, our understanding of the Chinese dream
should be revised. This book should be required reading for serious
social policy makers, scholars and students who are interested in social
policy in China.

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