

tion Department – not by the central government or the boards of the companies in question.

The book is written in first person, where the author himself is centre stage. This makes the book easy to read. However, it subtracts from the academic quality. It is also disappointing that there are very few Chinese language books and articles in the reference list/bibliography. Lack of academic quality and rigour is also reflected in the fact that there is no methodological and theoretical discussion informing the reader how the author intends to go about his research. The result is a rather descriptive book, which will have a limited academic impact.

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Leta Hong Fincher, *Leftover Women: The Resurgence of Gender Inequality in China* (Asian Arguments series), London & New York: Zed Books, 2014, 192 pp. ISBN: 978-1-78032-921-5 (paperback).

This book examines the resurgence of gender inequality in China with a focus on residential property. Leta Hong Fincher argues that real estate is an important indicator of women's socio-economic status in urban China since 'Chinese consumers have very few places to invest their money, so most people invest it in a home, which is the most valuable family asset and worth much more than income alone' (p. 5). The author begins her investigation by looking into the so-called 'leftover woman', a derogatory term used to refer to 'an urban, professional female in her late twenties or older who is still single' (p. 2). By analysing various official media news reports and television programmes, the author shows how the state-sponsored 'leftover woman' campaign stigmatizes single women in their late twenties and presses them to 'rush into marriage with the wrong man' (p. 16). Consequently, women also 'make excessive personal and financial compromises' (p. 6) in conjugal relations in order to keep the marriage. Home real estate, for the most part, is registered under the man's name; married women have no legal home-ownership rights and are therefore deprived of their equal share in 'China's urban real-estate boom' (p. 11).

Leta Hong Fincher is an award-winning American journalist who has worked for the *New York Times*, CNN and *Ms. Magazine*. She received a Master's degree in East Asian Studies from Stanford University and a Bachelor's degree in East Asian Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University. She is completing her PhD in sociology at Tsinghua University in Beijing, and this book is the result of her two and a half years of research in that programme.

The book consists of an introduction and six chapters. In the introduction, the author outlines the theme of the book, her main argument, and the scope of her investigation. Chapter 1 examines the state media campaign regarding 'leftover' women since 2007. It shows how the campaign promotes marriage and hence serves the overall political agenda of the state: to maintain social stability and upgrade the quality of the population. Chapter 2 focuses on the impact of the state 'leftover' women campaign and examines how the fear of being 'leftover' has propelled many women to 'give up too much bargaining power within the marriage' (p. 12). Chapter 3 analyses gender inequality within the extended family and explains why many parents favour their sons or even male relatives in home buying instead of their daughters. Chapter 4 looks back into Chinese history and shows that 'more property was transferred to women' (p. 12) during the Song Dynasty. Chapter 5 pinpoints the connection between women's lack of property rights and domestic violence, showing how women's bargaining power within marriage is likely to be reduced if they do not have an equal share and control of the home as an asset. Chapter 6 examines how the Chinese authoritarian state contains women's rights movements and how gender and women's rights activists, especially the LGBTQ community, 'find ways to fight back against entrenched gender discrimination' (p. 13).

One strong point of the book is the author's shrewd analysis of how the state (official media and television programmes, including the All-China Women's Federation, the state institution for women) orchestrates a pervasive campaign about 'leftover' women on the one hand, and how home buying was created as a middle-class dream by the joint force of the media, property developers and the matchmaking industry on the other hand. Urban women in their twenties are thus caught in a dilemma: they must hurry to get married and establish a standard middle-class home-owning family before it is too late, but they run the risk of scaring the husband (or husband-to-be) away if they insist on co-ownership of the marital home. This seems to be a zero-sum game for the potential 'leftovers': either to get a husband and

give up your property rights or to fight for property rights and lose your husband. Furthermore, Leta Hong Fincher shows how the idea of home ownership, as 'a defining feature of masculinity' (p. 84) and a marker of middle-class men's success, couples with the traditional view of men as the household head and hence the owner of family property, giving men a far more advantageous position in home ownership than women. The book illustrates very well that gender inequality in today's Chinese society derives from multiple sources and is often a combined result of state guidance, market development and the perpetuation of traditions.

Another interesting point of the book is the author's analysis of domestic violence in light of property rights. The book is also thought-provoking in comparing women's property rights today to that in the Song dynasty and arguing that today is no better than the past. The author's dismissal of 'linear progression', however, opens a whole new space for rethinking the historical conditions for gender equality and the relationship between the pace of social evolution and the trajectory of gender equality.

One weak point of the book is that not all the author's arguments are well grounded and thoroughly documented. The discussion of women's property rights in the Song Dynasty, for instance, mainly relies on the work of two historians, Bettine Birge and Kathryn Bernhardt, without any first-hand historical documents. It is also a pity that the question of why women enjoyed strong property rights in the Song Dynasty is only mentioned but not elaborated, for the question is so vitally important for understanding how and under what circumstances imperial Song fared better than women today. In discussing domestic violence, Leta Hong Fincher shows convincingly that weak property rights make it difficult for a battered woman to leave a marriage, but the statement that 'partner violence . . . is the worst possible outcome for a woman who rushed into marriage with the wrong partner out of fear of becoming "leftover"' (p. 162) is highly questionable. Violence can happen anywhere and to anyone, even in a marriage between two seemingly well-matched partners, and violence shall and must never be attributed to a woman's 'wrong choice'. Moreover, the interviews cited by the author provide neither substantial nor representative empirical evidence to show that the occurrence of partner violence has to do with 'women's rush into marriage with the wrong partner'. The closing chapter shows how women's rights activists and the LGBTQ community resist the authoritarian state and how some single women ignore the 'leftover' women campaign by

either delaying or refusing marriage. However, the author leaves out of the discussion whether and how women, in marriage or on the way to marriage, actually fight back by taking actions to claim and defend their property rights. It is hard to imagine the absence of strategic or tactic subversion of male home ownership from women's side when a home property has become such an important source of wealth and financial security in China.

To conclude, the book powerfully brings to light the mechanism of gender inequality in property rights in China. It is forceful in argument and rich and detailed in observation. The use of fresh media reports and vivid personal accounts gives the book lots of 'blood and flesh' and makes it highly readable and reader friendly. It shows how women are shut out of 'the biggest accumulation of residential real-estate wealth in history' (p. 12) and is no doubt a 'must-read' for China studies and gender studies professionals as well as anyone else who is interested in Chinese society, gender relations and, what Lydia H. Liu calls, 'the political economy of gender' in China.

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W. Richard Scott, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, Fourth Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014, xiii, 345 pp., references, index, about the author. ISBN 978-1-4522-4222-4 (paperback).

This fourth and updated edition of Richard Scott's book, *Institutions and Organizations: Ideas, Interests, and Identities*, provides the reader with a sophisticated overview of how institutional theory has evolved from the late nineteenth century, where the earliest institutional arguments arose in Germany and Austria as a by-product of the famous *Methodenstreit*, that is, a debate over scientific method in the social sciences. From there the book discusses actor-oriented institutional logics initiated in the mid-1980s, before finally moving towards a new theoretical agenda and framework for institutional theory in the early twenty-first century. Scott suggests turning our attention from the study