

Abstracts

Women in Qing Period China—A Symposium

Concepts of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Infancy in Ch'ing Dynasty China

CHARLOTTE FURTH Pages 7–35

This is a study of the classical medical norms governing reproduction as found in China in the late imperial era (1600–1900). The author explores how interpretations of biological processes shaped Chinese cultural understanding of the status of women, early child development, and the meaning of sexuality; as well as how these influenced the social organization of pregnancy and childbirth. Drawing on evidence from contemporary popular handbooks on *fu k'o* (medicine for women) and *erb k'o* (medicine for children), the author concludes that biological models of female gender were two-sided, labeling women as the dependent “sickly sex” and also as a source of pollution in the form of disease. In this way they were bound to their children as both nurturing creators and a toxic source of childhood sickness and death. These symbolic models legitimized Confucian paternalism, while revealing misogynistic fears of female power. Through them, medicine acted as an important ideological force for the support of the Confucian family system.

Widows in the Kinship, Class, and Community Structures of Qing Dynasty China

SUSAN MANN Pages 37–56

The ideal of the celibate widow, who remained faithful to her deceased husband and refused to remarry, dominated the biographies of exemplary women during the Qing period. Tens of thousands of women widowed before the age of 30 who remained chaste past 50 were rewarded with testimonials of merit and honored in shrines commemorating virtuous persons. But how real was this ideal? Examining conflicting views of widow celibacy in Qing society, the author argues that the chaste widow played a critical role in three aspects of Qing social life: as a surrogate son who served her in-laws in her husband's stead; as a devoted mother who inspired her own sons by her example; and as an emblem of prestige whose fame enhanced the status of her marital family. Moral education campaigns in the early eighteenth century helped propagate the ideal among the commoner classes, and changes in the last half of the nineteenth century made chaste widow honors more accessible, even as members of the elite grew increasingly disdainful of the chaste widow cult.

Ideology and Sexuality: Rape Laws in Qing China

VIVIEN W. NG Pages 57–70

The author of this essay discusses Qing rape legislation in terms of the dynamics of ideology and sexuality. The Qing government actively sponsored the renewal of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, an ideology noted for its straitlaced view of sexuality. The government employed a number of means to promote Neo-Confucian values, and the Qing Code was deemed a potent tool for social engineering. Through the vehicle of the rape laws, sexual behavior that violated the strict rules of Neo-Confucianism was rendered criminal and violators were severely punished. The redefinition of forcible rape of women, for example, practically mandated women to die in defense of their chastity; to do less was not only unbecoming of “good” women, but also criminal. The homosexual male rape statute not only addressed the crime of rape, but it also felonized consensual sodomy between adults. Female sexuality and male homosexuality were put on trial.

Caste, State, and Ethnic Boundaries in Nepal

NANCY E. LEVINE Pages 71–88

Ethnic relations in Nepal today can be seen as the outcome of long-term processes of accommodation between local groups and a centralizing state. In the northwest of the country, state economic and political policies that discriminated among groups on the basis of caste and ethnicity have contributed to the perpetuation of small and insular communities divided by persisting ethnic distinctions. Despite this, there is considerable mobility; individuals and the entire memberships of villages rapidly transfer both their ethnic affiliation and position in the local caste system. The motivation for this seems less an issue of status and caste rank than of change in economic specialization. Changes in the way a group makes its living, in turn, affect the sociocultural system and are accompanied by a renegotiation of affinal relationships in the wider region.

The State and Ideology in Meiji Japan—A Review Article

ATSUKO HIRAI Pages 89–103

Carol Gluck's *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* is an attempt to revise radically some of the leading theories of postwar Japanese scholars on the state and ideology in Meiji Japan. She argues, for example, that the Meiji Emperor was a secular, constitutional monarch, not the divine, absolute monarch of Japanese Marxist theory. She maintains that what most Japanese scholars regard as the orthodox doctrine of the state of prewar Japan was, in fact, “insubstantial” and failed to take root among the masses. She believes that the official ideology of Meiji nationalism was a form of civicism, rather than the state's self-aggrandizement over the nation.

Gluck's ideas are interesting, but her argument rests on insufficient evidence or inappropriate interpretation of relevant evidence. The same data, buttressed by others, prove the opposite: the Meiji Emperor was divine "to the Japanese," the imperial orthodoxy had a pervasive influence, and the state was independent from the nation in the official doctrine of the Meiji state.

Gluck's book covers a vast terrain, which is in itself an impressive accomplishment. For that reason, her enterprise should be applauded.