

in Dalian, a city in northeastern China. There, she conducted interviews with 50 men, from all walks of life; she also held interviews, online chats, face-to-face and telephone conversations with 50 women. Additionally, interviews with government officials, police officers, judges, lawyers and feminist activists were carried out to scrutinize official as well as non-official responses to gender-based violence. Placing first-hand, ethnographic data side by side with secondary sources, including media coverage and scholarly publications, Zheng mobilized multiple data sources to build her claims and arguments. These efforts in turn allow readers to view intimate partner violence from the perspectives of victims, perpetrators, law enforcement agents and feminist activists, an accomplishment that should not go unnoticed.

A final remark. There is much to admire when it comes to the author's analysis of systemic atrocities against women. That said, at various places in the book, Zheng invokes binary categories – say, the Chinese versus the Western, the traditional versus the feminist, the rule of law versus the capricious rule of humans – in a very uncritical, unreflective way as if they were merely givens, with a *sui generis* existence. Small wonder that, in this book, “patriarchal traditions” simply linger on in post-socialist China, and that historical continuities effortlessly eclipse discontinuities in the Chinese official justice system. In treating these categories as givens, this book obscures a crucial reality: what we consider as *Chinese law* today is actually a conglomeration of ideas, practices, principles and institutional arrangements – appropriated from diverse origins, including Western liberal democracies. Put differently, this book could have benefited from a more thorough break from an essentialist view of culture and history.

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## Re-enchanting Modernity: Ritual Economy and Society in Wenzhou, China

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The central theoretical concept of Mayfair Yang's book pertains to the “ritual economy” in Wenzhou, China. The book is very well organized and provides a clear exposition of the principal theoretical concept of ritual and some highly pertinent ethnographic cases from Wenzhou of lineages, their halls and their ritual activities. Part one describes the Wenzhou model of rural development in China; part two addresses religious diversity and syncretism in Wenzhou; part three describes the religious civil society and ritual economy.

In *Re-enchanting Modernity*, Yang formulates a close study of the vitality of ritual-social lives in urbanizing China. Yang draws on ritual theory to rethink how religion and social-economic lives are intertwined, and specifically how the ritual economy works in contemporary China. The empirical cases are very well chosen and comprehensively presented. Yang is clearly well versed in the anthropology study of Chinese religions and is skillful in navigating the conceptual issues in this field.

The concept of ritual economy refers to the functional convergence of ritual and economy in many ritual activities. The revival and expansion of the ritual activities introduced in this book include the worship of gods and renovation of ancestral halls (chapter six), lineage rituals (chapter seven), traditional festivals and community religious marches (chapter three), Buddhist and Taoist rituals (chapters four and five), ancestor ceremonies, activities for community projects and charities (chapters eight and nine), divination and *feng shui* (chapter three). Moreover, these rituals have played a vital role in combatting the accumulation of personal wealth, promoting wealth redistribution and community development in Wenzhou.

In classical Chinese philosophy, the concept of “ritual” was a cornerstone in Confucian thinking about human life, and it was the core concept as far as the practical consequences were concerned for designing, establishing and maintaining social order. In the writings of the leading Chinese anthropologist and sociologist of the 20th century, Fei Xiaotong, ritual was conceived as a third type of social order, alongside “rule of law” and “rule by men.” Recent research on “ritual” has referred to the concept of “governmentality” (Carsten Herrmann-Pillath, *China’s Economic Culture: The Ritual Order of State and Markets*, Routledge, 2018). Such work has explained the notions of kinship and popular religion in terms of the revival of traditional ritual activities, which in contemporary South China has resulted in the emergence of patterns of governmentality as part and parcel of the larger scheme of cultural governance.

This opens the view on continuities with imperial statecraft, as Tim Oakes also points out (“Making cultural cities in China: governance, state-building, and precarious creativity,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 2019, 51(1): 8–86). The cases presented in the book allow for a stronger argument in this regard because Mayfair Yang deals with a central phenomenon in historical Wenzhou: the co-optation of local lineages for state power via cultural governance. The role of lineages in the Wenzhou social fabric has been recognized by many scholars studying urban villages, but there are few in-depth anthropological field studies.

Here, Yang demonstrates that ritual order was specific to Chinese rural society and will not wither away in the transition to urban modernity. In Wenzhou, we see how the ritual economy has made it possible for some people to turn inward in self-cultivation and work toward enlightenment about the transience of life. The main divisions of the ritual economy include sacrifices and offerings, rituals and festivals, donations and charities, construction of ritual sites, gift circulation and ritual services (ritual performances, spirit possession, divination, geomancy and scriptural chanting). The significance of making sacrifices to gods and ancestors, and donating to temples and charities, lies in people’s readiness to sustain a material loss – a loss that helps one to detach oneself from worldly obsessions and pursue higher ends. The re-enchantment of modernity in Wenzhou has much to teach us.

Lastly, for the international audience of the book, it may have been helpful if the author had situated the “ritual” beyond the Chinese context. The book briefly mentions that Wenzhou people have embarked on journeys of labour migration or emigration to Italy, France, New York City and Africa. This is a very important aspect of globalizing Wenzhou economy and society. Yang could also have added a discussion of such a ritual economy (in Wenzhou) under global conditions. For example, family businesses overseas uphold social networks, in which rituals play a crucial role. The operation of family businesses reveals both traditional and modern features. In this sense, the ritual economy stays at the core of competitiveness in the current context of globalization.

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