

REVIEW ARTICLE

WHITHER CHINA? FEI HSIAO-T'UNG AND ANTHROPOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

R.David ARKUSH, *Fei Xiaotong and Sociology in Revolutionary China*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press 1981 [Harvard East Asian Monographs 98]. xviii, 322pp., Bibliography, Glossary, Index. £10.50.

FEI HSIAO TUNG, *Toward a People's Anthropology*, Beijing: New World Press 1981. vi, 111pp., Photographs, Map, Appendices, Index. No price given.

With British and French anthropology reportedly in the doldrums,¹ the publication of Arkush's book is particularly apposite. Through the biography of its subject, Fei Hsiao-t'ung, it illustrates the dismantling of the entire discipline in post-revolutionary China. While Western anthropologists bemoan the lack of direction they perceive in the current post-structuralist interregnum, at least they are able to probe new avenues at will. Our colleagues in China can however, only despair. From 1952, when all university anthropology and sociology departments were closed by the Government, until the time of the publication of Arkush's book in 1981, the academic disciplines of anthropology and sociology had officially ceased to exist. (That there ever was, or ever could be, an independent discipline of anthropology in the People's Republic is a question I will return to below.)

¹ See 'Commentaries' by Collinson and Picone in *JASO*, Vol.XIII (1982) pp.287-299; also Kuper's observation that the 1980s are a 'pinched, anxious, sceptical, uncertain' period for anthropologists in A.Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1983, p.x.

As is evidenced by the title of this book, Arkush weaves together two themes. On the surface we find an orthodox biography of one of the major figures in Chinese anthropology. This is only part of the story however, for through Fei's biography the reader is also provided with a general introduction to the destruction of the social sciences in modern China.

As biography, Arkush's book has much to offer and is interesting on two levels. Specifically, it is a stimulating biography of Fei in which his many roles are examined. To those of us who know Fei only through his academic publications, Arkush's book is revelatory, and the prominence that is given to Fei's non-academic roles does much to put his academic work in perspective. Here a new side of Fei is presented: we are informed of his work as an activist and as a popular writer; of his work in the 'Third Stream' of Chinese intellectuals (who sought, through the Democratic League, a middle ground between the KMT and the Communists in the years before the consolidation of Communist power); of his work as an important populist and cultural broker (through his frequent appearances at mass meetings in factories, schools, and government assemblies) in the formative years of the People's Republic. Through this detailed examination of Fei's career, Arkush illuminates dimensions of Fei's life previously hidden from Western scholars, which, once revealed, do much to clarify incidents in his professional life. Taking one episode as an example, Arkush's treatment does much to resolve the confusion over Fei's confrontation in the pages of *Encounter* with Wittfogel and the 'Cold Warriors' in 1955.

On a more ambitious level the examination of Fei's career is used to provide the reader with an introduction to the intellectual history of twentieth-century China. In this sense the author employs Fei's life history to adumbrate an entire class during a pivotal period of Chinese history. Arkush maintains,

Just as Fei thought Chinese society could be illuminated by microscopic studies of carefully chosen single communities, so too it is my hope that a study of a single influential example like him can contribute to an understanding of what it meant to be a Westernized intellectual at the time of one of the greatest revolutions in human history.

In the details of his and his relatives' lives can be glimpsed a process of significance for China's modern history: the transformation of traditional local gentry into urban, Westernized, modern intellectuals separated from the rural society which is most of China.

This representation of Fei as microcosm is both ambitious and problematic. Through Fei's biography we see most graphically the rapid and sometimes violent transformation of Chinese society with which the Chinese intelligentsia had to contend. In Fei's biography we have detailed before us the example of one intellectual's accommodation to revolutionary change in China. Insofar as any one life *can* be taken as representative of an entire class in the re-making

of China, this book is a contribution to that debate.

As biography, this book has much to commend it. Arkush brings to bear a depth of research of impressive proportions. Where else, for example, could we learn that 22 of the 36 faculty members at Fei's first university (Soochow) in 1925 were Chinese (six of whom had been educated abroad), with three Ph.D.s and 15 M.A.s on a staff teaching 341 students; that 14 of the 16 Christian Colleges in China offered courses in sociology that year; or that in the year of Fei's admission to Yenching University (1930) its Sociology Department library received 20 English-language journals and 70 Chinese-language journals, and moreover contained 2000 books? Arkush is equally conversant with the personal details of Fei's life which he deploys to great effect. I found, for example, that Arkush's explanation of the events that led to Fei's fieldwork in Kaihsienkung greatly enhanced my understanding of his *Peasant Life in China* (London 1939). Similarly, the excellent and extensive (43pp.) annotated bibliography of Fei's Published works will be a boon to the growing army of Fei-watchers.

This is not to say that there are not occasional lapses in the text - for example identifying Fei as among the first fieldworkers in China (which does scant justice to the contribution of D.H. Kulp's classic *Country Life in South China* (New York 1925) and ignores entirely such important antecedents as Leong and Tao's *Village and Town Life in China* (London 1915) and A.H. Smith's *Village Life in China* (New York 1899)), or the omission from the Index of Boorman, Hawtin, Sanchez and Wong (all cited on page 323 of the text) - but, happily, most such lapses are innocuous. A minority, however, suggests a general lack of familiarity with anthropological literature - for example his reference to 'Malinowski's *kulu*' (*sic*) on page 144 - and this gives rise to more important reservations about the book.² It is difficult to countenance the narrow scope of the biography and the resulting imbalance in it. While Arkush successfully follows Fei's accommodation to revolutionary change in China, this represents only one aspect of his career. While it tells us much about the pertinent circumstances of Fei's life and of the events that shaped his career, it is curiously imbalanced in that it pays remarkably little attention to Fei's own contribution to the discipline of anthropology. That he did play a major role in the evolution of the discipline (both in China and the West) cannot be denied.³ But Arkush confines himself to the con-

²The high standard of production generally maintained in the Harvard East Asian monograph series makes it unlikely that this is merely a type-setter's error.

³ See Malinowski's enthusiastic Preface to Fei's *Peasant Life in China*, in which he credits Fei with opening the Aladdin's cave of non-tribal societies to anthropological study. Even allowing for what Arkush has called 'prefatory hyperbole', it is clear that Malinowski saw Fei's work as pushing back the accepted boundaries

sideration of Fei's effect on the social sciences in *China*. In the light of Fei's major contribution to the discipline as a whole, I find it disappointing that Arkush limits his assessment in this way. Of course it is always difficult to reconcile a reader's expectations with an author's intentions, but it seems that this oversight detracts from an otherwise remarkable piece of scholarship.

Imbalance is apparent in the text in other forms as well. The concentration on Fei's early years is almost complete: of the 286 pages of text the first 257 pages only take us up to 1957 - leaving Arkush to race through the past 26 years in the final 29 pages (first in an Epilogue, then in a Postscript). While the reasons for these addenda may be admirable (to be generous one could see them as a conscientious attempt to bring the text up to date), the execution leaves much to be desired. The reasons for this are clear: Fei's disappearance from public and academic life from 1957 to 1979 denied Arkush the documentary material on which this biography is based. But this merely illustrates another shortcoming in the text: Arkush's overwhelming reliance on Fei's own publications. Arkush uses Fei's prolific output to provide the basis of this biography to the virtual exclusion of other source-materials. This hamstringing the author and forces him to terminate Fei's biography prematurely at the time of the anti-rightist campaigns that followed the Hundred Flowers.⁴ But although Fei ceased publishing

of the discipline:

The anthropology of the future [he wrote in 1939] will be... as interested in the Hindu as in the Tasmanian, in the Chinese peasants as the Australian aborigines, in the West Indian negro as in the Melanesian Trobriander, in the detribalized African of Haarlem as in the Pygmy of Perak.

A position accepted as commonplace now, but bold words in 1939.

Nor was Malinowski the only Western anthropologist to recognize the importance of Fei's work. Maurice Freedman went so far as to refer to the 'Chinese phase in social anthropology' wherein the new directions and priorities in anthropology were credited directly to Fei's pioneering effort 'that pushed the frontiers of anthropology outward from savagery to civilization' (M.Freedman, 'A Chinese Phase in Social Anthropology', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XIV (1963), p.1). Freedman commented elsewhere on the 'general reverence' anthropologists still hold for Fei. 'To this day', Freedman wrote, 'Fei is a piece of furniture in the minds of Anglo-American liberals' (M.Freedman, 'Sinology and the Social Sciences: Some Reflections on the Social Anthropology of China', *Ethnos*, Vol. XL (1975), pp.194-211; at p.197). Nor is Fei's importance restricted to the past of the discipline: his fieldwork monographs remain among the best ethnographies of Chinese society generally.

⁴ Fei was among the most prominent targets of the anti-rightist backlash. Indeed, one commentator identifies the 'first and decisive blast' in the Government's anti-rightist campaign as an editorial in the influential *People's Daily* which took as its title a satirical version of the title of an earlier article by Fei (see

at that time, he has continued to play a role in post-Maoist China worthy of examination. This is particularly true for the period since 1972. Other authors have found ways of penetrating the wall of silence surrounding this period and have valuable things to say about Fei's place in it.⁵ Even if Arkush's reliance on Fei's publications alone denied him direct access to this period of Fei's life, his lack of interest in these secondary sources seems perplexing and undermines the value of his text.

While it is clear that Arkush intended his work to be a biography of Fei through which the experiences of a generation could be examined, his book is also of interest for the light it throws on the dissolution of academic sociology in China. Here the imbalance in the text is rendered advantageous, and the section on the Hundred Flowers period nicely complements Wong's admirable study of the rise and fall of sociology in China. The confrontation between sociologists and the Government in the Hundred Flowers period is deftly handled, and Arkush shows clearly the twin dilemmas with which sociologists had to contend. On the one hand a shift towards a 'socialist' rather than an 'academic' sociology was imperative if the discipline was to survive in any form.⁶ But at the same time such a shift resulted in a repudiation of their new work in some Western circles (e.g. Wittfogel) and their isolation from the mainstream of sociology. On the other hand we note the escalating conflict at this time between the sociologists (fighting a rearguard action against the contraction of their discipline since

A. King, 'The Development and Death of Chinese Academic Sociology', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. XII (1978), pp. 37-58). There was a vigorous campaign against Fei in the popular press (Arkush refers to 'perhaps a hundred' books and articles criticizing Fei) which published articles with such titles as 'The Reactionary Nature of the Functionalist Social Anthropology Imported by Fei Xiaotong and Others', or his friend Lin Yueh-hwa's article entitled 'The Sinner and Ugly Fei Xiaotong'. Fei's vilification was complete: he had the dubious honour of being personally savaged by Chairman Mao Tse-tung himself in a passage now immortalized in Mao's *Selected Works*.

⁵ See G. Cooper, 'An Interview with Chinese Anthropologists', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. XIV (1973), pp. 480-481; A. R. Sanchez and S. L. Wong, 'On "An Interview with Chinese Anthropologist"', *China Quarterly*, Number 60 (1974), pp. 775-790; and King, *op. cit.* Wong's excellent *Sociology and Socialism in Contemporary China* (London 1979) Arkush notes on page 323 as having been unavailable to him.

⁶ On this distinction between 'academic' and 'socialist' sociology see Wong, *op. cit.*, and King, *op. cit.*

1952), who saw the re-establishment of the discipline in academic institutions as an intellectual issue, and the Chinese leadership, which saw it as a political issue. For the authorities, sociology was anti-socialist and anti-Marxist, and, consequently activities directed towards the reinstatement of sociology departments was politically suspect. Once perceived on a political/ideological plane the dismantling of the discipline was inevitable. As King put it in 1978, 'Today in Communist China sociology...is completely dead'.⁷

That there could ever be an independent discipline of sociology or anthropology in China - both in light of the present Government and with reference to the intellectual history of China - is a question worth pursuing. Up until now I have deferred to the convention of Hsu (and implicit throughout Arkush) that the terms 'anthropology' and 'sociology' be used interchangeably.⁸ There is, however, *prima facie* evidence to suggest that the equivalence between 'anthropology' and 'sociology' may not be absolute. Certainly two different terms for anthropology (*ren lei hsueh*) and sociology (*she hui hsueh*) exist in Chinese. These terms derive from different roots which, in fact, closely parallel the difference in usage of their English counterparts. It will be noticed that the core elements of the two terms differ. The *ren lei* in *ren lei hsueh* ('anthropology') may be glossed as 'human beings' or 'mankind' from the two characters 人 (*ren*, 'man') and 類 (*lei*, 'a class, species, kind').⁹ The core of *she hui hsueh* ('sociology') is derived from the unrelated characters 社會 (*she hui*) which can be variously translated as 'society, community, social order, an organized society'. *Hui* (會) alone can be glossed in terms of an association of people: 'to meet, to co-operate; a society, guild, association'. The first character of the compound (*she* 社) is more difficult to translate as its meanings vary widely depending on context. In this instance it derives from a term relating to a village or hamlet in which the inhabitants share a common altar to the earth god, and can be loosely translated as 'a company or society'.

It can be noted, therefore, that in the Chinese terminology

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.57.

⁸ 'Few serious Chinese scholars,' Hsu wrote in 1944, 'today maintain the distinction between the once separate disciplines' (cited, approvingly, by M.Freedman ('Sociology in and out of China', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol.XIII (1962), pp. 106-116; at p.106). This view is accepted also by Sanchez and Wong (*op.cit.*, fn.4). Wong (*Sociology and Socialism*, *op.cit.*, p.79) similarly: '...for many Chinese students of society, sociology and anthropology were inextricably enmeshed.'

⁹ For these and other terms cited below, see R.H.Mathews, *Mathew's Chinese-English Dictionary*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1969.

there is the same vulgar bifurcation of subject-matter implicit in our own usage of the relevant terms: thus anthropology is the 'whole science of man..., study of man as an animal' and sociology the 'science of the development and nature and laws of human society' (as defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*). It could be argued that in the formative years of the social sciences in China, as in the West, the term 'anthropology' was laden with connotations of the primitive and the exotic, whereas sociology gained respectability through its study not of 'man the animal' but rather 'the science of human society'. Certainly the pejorative sense implicit in the term 'anthropology' was readily apparent in the 1930s, and it is easy to impute a Chinese antipathy to the application of the term to the study of their own society.¹⁰ This, perhaps, explains why there were several sociology departments in Chinese universities in the 1930s, but not a single anthropology department. Indeed, it is only in the post-colonial world that the attention of Western anthropologists has shifted in a large way to the study of modern, industrial societies. Certainly at the time Hsu was writing the anthropological world was largely confined to that of 'primitive man'. The notion that Chinese society could be studied by that sort of anthropology would have been anathema to the Chinese (whose own perception of the self was no less strong than the ancient Greeks' antipathy to 'barbarians'), and so it was that a blurring of the disciplinary boundaries came about.¹¹

That the distinction has since remained blurred in China may be related to the subsequent history of the country. The years of occupation, civil war and revolution effectively stymied the growth of the discipline; it was the lack of contact with other intellectual and academic traditions that has rendered invisible the demonstrably *methodological* (rather than *topical*) differences which are now seen to be the primary distinguishing features between the studies of anthropology and sociology in the West. Thus while Hsu's statement may have been valid at one time it now represents a bias outdistanced

¹⁰ Wong, taking the opposite tack, suggests that 'sociology' was a mode of discourse particularly attractive to the Chinese in the 1930s because of its pretence of being *scientific*.

¹¹ In Fei's reminiscences about the early history of sociology in China he refers indirectly to the prejudice against anthropology. He reports that the work he and some of his colleagues were doing in the 1930s did not conform to British and American conceptions of sociology: '...some friends and I smuggled in something else under the name sociology' (cited in Wong, *op.cit.*, p.79). But they nevertheless sought to call what they were doing 'sociology'. The reason he gives for this deception illuminates the intellectual climate of the time. 'But at that time anthropology and ethnology were not regarded as respectable academic labels, so very often they [Fei and his colleagues] had to take shelter in the departments of sociology' (*ibid.*).

by events in the growth of the discipline. As the Chinese have been cut off from the significant events in the evolution of the social sciences for three decades they seem to be unaware of the vast changes that have occurred. Specifically, they still labour under a bias no longer relevant to the subject but which continues nevertheless to colour the perception and reception of anthropology as an academic discipline in China.

But if anthropology in China was first subsumed and later eliminated because of its association with sociology, is there anything we can say of the future? While anthropology in China has been still-born and academic sociology has been pronounced as 'on the verge of extinction'¹² or even, as King claims, 'completely dead', there may be some cause for cautious optimism about the future. We may, at last, be witnessing the creation of an *indigenous* Chinese anthropology. Events of the past five years are encouraging. The early reliance on an alien intellectual tradition was effectively terminated after the closure of the university departments in 1952, and the subsequent repudiation of the Western (i.e. non-Marxist) tradition is complete. However throughout the period from the Hundred Flowers to the present there has been a small nucleus of researchers doing work which in some ways does approximate that of anthropologists. This is the work of the staffs of the various institutes which study the Chinese minority populations and who define their work as 'ethnology'.¹³ It is anomalous that Chinese national minority work continued throughout the period of suspension of the social sciences in China. Some Chinese anthropologists and sociologists (including Fei) were shifted into minority work after the closure of the university departments. This has caused some Western observers to see this as evidence of applied anthropology in China, but such a conclusion is probably naive. From the little we know about the Central Institute of Nationalities and the various regional National Minorities Institutes the picture is not clear.¹⁴ Preliminary analysis indicates

¹² Cooper, *op.cit.*, p.481.

¹³ The etymology of the Chinese term for 'ethnology' (*ren chung hsueh*) is interesting and again betrays a certain ethnocentrism which would prohibit its application to Han Chinese populations. The term is composed of the characters for 'man' (*ren* 人) and 'seed, grain; a kind or sort' (*chung* 種). The use of this second character is highly suggestive. It appears in such compounds as 'classify, type' (種別) and 'variety, type, species, genus' (種類), as well as in the compound which is translated as 'clan, race, or tribe' (種方). Wong states that contemporary Chinese use the term idiosyncratically and define ethnology as 'the study of (Chinese) minority peoples' (*op.cit.*, p.78).

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 80ff; and see G.Gjessing, 'Chinese Anthropology and New China's Policy toward Her Nationalities', *Acta Sociologica*, Vol.II (1957), pp.45-67.

that these institutes function in a way not unlike the early activities of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the United States - that is, as an organ of the Government in which research priorities are subordinate to the Government line. Such an interpretation is consistent with the drastic reversals in their activities in the past two decades. But whether their activities are in a form properly identifiable as anthropology as such is another matter. Gjessing, reporting on his visit in 1954 to the Central Nationalities Institute, took the view that it was the only place where 'academical tuition in anthropology' (*sic*) was given.¹⁵ Whatever can be said of his view at that time, it is doubtful whether it could be maintained today: the work of the Institute's staff now only vaguely resembles that of Western anthropologists. Examination of their research methodology is informative:

...team work and not individual enquiry was the rule. The collection of information, preparation of the preliminary drafts, discussions, and then revisions for selective publication were all conducted collectively.¹⁶

Such ethnography by committee seems to be the antithesis of the participant observation which is the corner-stone of Western anthropology. Moreover, the inclusion of ideologically-sound cadres on the research teams doubtless influences research priorities and conclusions. Thus Wong notes that national minority research is used in China as ammunition to prove the validity of Marx's pronouncements on socialist development and revolution.¹⁷

Nevertheless, while the work of these Institutes may be politically motivated and circumscribed they do perform a valuable function. Since the 1950s, under Fei's leadership, the National Minorities Institute has engaged in activities which now fall under the rubric of 'urgent anthropology' in the West (i.e. the 'rescue' of data about China's minority populations before it is 'irretrievably lost during rapid social changes').¹⁸

Whether the work of the National Minorities institutes will evolve into a recognizable anthropology remains to be seen. Certainly the foundations are there, but a reconciliation between Government policy and academic affairs will have to be effected before such a development can occur. At present, with the Chinese government committed to a Soviet-style *etnografia*, the outcome is in doubt.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹⁶ Wong, *op.cit.*, p.89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.86.

¹⁸ Fei, cited *ibid.*

¹⁹ The Soviet approximation of 'anthropology' is ideologically circumscribed. Gellner defines their *etnografia* as the study of 'pre-capitalist social structures' (E.Gellner, 'The Soviet and the Savage', *Current Anthropology*, Vol.XVI (1975), pp.595-617; at p. 595; cf. T.Dragadze, 'Anthropological Field Work in the USSR',

Western access to the work of the National Minorities institutes is restricted, and publications by their staffs seem to be directed to internal consumption, making it difficult to assess their continuing role. The past five years have, however, seen a slight easing of the climate and tantalizing morsels of their work are now beginning to surface in the West. One of the most significant of these is the publication (in English) of a collection of recent essays by Fei. Not only does this mark Fei's rehabilitation but it provides us with an invaluable window on the activities of the National Minorities institutes and, indirectly, on the current climate of anthropological research.

The six essays in this volume may well define the place of anthropology in China. In the first essay (which provides the title of the volume and which is the re-publication of Fei's address on his receipt of the Malinowski Memorial Medal in Denver in 1980), Fei makes clear to his Western audience the independent status of the 'new' anthropology in China. In this essay he expands on his earlier rejoinder to Cooper (*op.cit.*) and points out again the incompatibility between Western conceptions of anthropology and his own activities in China. It is clear that 'the things that anthropologists do' takes second place to his 'revolutionary work' in China. The other essays also indicate the research priorities of the National Minorities institutes. Essay 3, 'On the Social Transformation of China's National Minorities', purports to explain why tribal groups in China remained 'primitive'. The explanations put forward are mono-causal and seem crude to the Western ear. We are told, for example, that the reason the Lisu people did not progress is because successive Han Chinese governments prohibited them the use of iron. The essay is reminiscent of nothing so much as the 9-fold evolutionist scheme from savagery to civilization so long repudiated in the West but kept alive by Marxist 'modes of production' research.

The intrusion of ideology occurs in other places as well. We note, for example, that the essay entitles 'China's National Minorities - An Introductory Survey' contains the text of a poem by Mao to explain the plight of China's minorities. Whether such obeisance is obligatory or merely prudent, it seems inappropriate to Western social scientists. The final essay in this volume, 'Revisiting the Mountains of the Yao People', provides numerous examples of the confusion between ideology and research. We note, for example, the (obligatory?) castigation of Lin Piao and the Gang of Four and we are told of the damage their policies did to the region. Fei's recapitulation of the history of the Yao people also has a strange ring to it:

Final victory [from oppression] came only after the Chinese

JASO, Vol.IX (1978), pp.61-70. As long as such ideological restraints are in operation the interface between Western anthropology and Chinese ethnology (or Soviet *etnografia*) will remain imperfect.

Communist Party united all the nationalities in China in a concerted effort to topple the three mountains crushing the Chinese people - feudalism, imperialism and bureaucrat capitalism. In the case of the Yao's, liberation came in the shape of the People's Liberation Army.

At times this essay reads like the text for an advertisement for either the Chinese Tourist or the Chinese Development Boards. Of his first night back among the Yao after a 43-year absence Fei writes,

After a brief rest, I pushed open the windows and was greeted by the sight of a galaxy of lights sparkling on both sides of the Jinxiu River. I asked myself if I was really in the Dayao Mountains. Just then my host turned on the lights in the room and said, 'We can't use all the power our hydro-electric station produces. We need faster development.'

After treating his readers to a description of the marvels of the Jinxiu Central Power Station (with its two 1600-Kilowatt generators) Fei tells us of the changes this has wrought for the Yao:

Forty-three years ago, when night fell over the mountains... I used a flashlight and this was always a signal for local urchins to rally around and follow me about. But now every home had electric lighting, every production brigade showed movies and every commune possessed a TV set. A project was even under discussion to publicize the use of electric stoves as a way to save on firewood.

Riveting stuff, perhaps, but inadequate for an anthropological audience.

In his Preface Arkush talks of the three different roles that Fei plays in modern Chinese intellectual history: as social scientist, political journalist and cultural intermediary. If the selection of the essays in his *Toward a People's Anthropology* can be taken as an indicator, Fei's rehabilitation is incomplete. Only his roles as political journalist and cultural intermediary have been reconstituted. It remains to be seen whether he will regain his stature in the international academic community. As long as the requirements of Marxism-Leninism and the Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung remain paramount and 'all other theoretical systems which have the capacity to interpret social realities are repudiated as reactionary or revisionist',²⁰ the prospect must remain in doubt. If Fei's current essays are, in fact, indicative of the current state of affairs in China then we see an anthropology reduced to providing 'proof' of Marxist axioms. In this light it would, perhaps, be no more contentious to observe that the Soviet and the Chinese rejec-

²⁰ King, *op.cit.*, p.58.

tion of Western anthropology on the grounds that it was a 'handmaiden' to colonialism in the West is mirrored by the use of anthropology as a handmaiden to Marxism-Leninism in the East. It would seem that we have some way to go before we discover a common ground for discourse.

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