

surrounded by a majority black population dispossessed by colonial conquest, necessarily has different historical options from a settler society concerned with subjugating a black minority of former slaves imported from elsewhere, especially when it constitutes a region of a larger federal polity? Evans alludes several times to the anxiety of the white authorities in South Africa about potential black resistance, but never relates this to the larger historical picture.

At a more detailed level, the DRC in South Africa comes across as relatively benign, especially compared with the virulent racism and violence of Southern evangelism in the US. Evans does not make strongly enough the point that its support for segregation constituted a theological justification for systematic structural violence on a vast scale. He also tends to blur structural violence and the coercive violence of the South African state. To what extent did the repeated massacres of defenceless blacks by the armed whites of the state apparatus which, as he notes (p. 7), was an ongoing feature of the white state in the twentieth century, constitute a specific form of communal white ritual, drawing on colonial repertoires and reproduced *within* the state rather than in civil society as in the American South? Turning to the US, I was surprised to learn of the extent to which whites were lynched both before and after the Civil War, but disappointed not to find the relationship between this and the lynching of blacks discussed.

These caveats are a minor. Evans's book is thought-provoking, and productively suggests fresh lines of research. For example, while the white population in South Africa turned to the state rather than resorting to communal violence, the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1980s gave rise to communal and ritualized violence against collaborators on the part of the popular movement. Campaigns of popular justice in revolutionary South Africa bore certain similarities to the tradition of popular justice in the American South, although in the context of vastly differing power relations. Even more interesting, this tradition of extra-legal popular justice continues into the new South Africa in vigilante actions against suspected criminals as well as the repertoires of xenophobic violence that have emerged in the past few years. How do state-society relations in post-apartheid South Africa bear on these forms of collective violence?

Like all the best books, this one not only sheds light but generates new questions and new lines of enquiry.

*Karl von Holdt*

HUA, SHIPING. *Chinese Utopianism. A Comparative Study of Reformist Thought with Japan and Russia, 1898–1997*. Stanford University Press, Stanford [etc.] 2009. xvi, 186 pp. £28.94; doi:10.1017/S0020859011000095

Utopianism is a form of historical idealism that has existed throughout history. Utopias, ancient or modern, from the East or from the West, are expressions of social criticism that can be used by reformists of various kinds as blueprints or inspiration for making radical social reconstruction or transformation, despite the fact that utopias are by nature unrealistic and unattainable. Because of this, revolutions or reforms inspired by utopianism tend to end in dismal failure, and very often, utopianism causes more damage to society than the benefits it promises to bring about. Western scholars are familiar with classic utopian thinkers like Plato, Thomas More, or B.F. Skinner. Very few of them,

however, are aware of the richness of utopian literature in ancient or modern Chinese history, and especially of the distinction between utopianism in China and other countries. Shipping Hua's new book on Chinese utopianism fills an important gap in Chinese political culture studies and can be used a good reference book on Chinese political culture.

The timeframe selected for this study begins with the Hundred-Day Reform led by Kang Youwei (who later became a utopian thinker), to 1997, when the chief architect of China's successful economic reform, Deng Xiaoping, died. This is a period in Chinese history that is filled with revolutions, wars, and reforms. During this 100 years of turbulence, China, after experiencing a tremendous amount of pain and suffering, managed to have a rebirth: it transformed itself from a decaying empire to a modern republic. According to the author, all of the reforms "were implemented as responses by ruling elites to structure problems, but the direction that the reforms took were heavily influenced by cultural traditions" (p. xiii). The central argument developed in this book is that cultural determinants played an important role in reforms in Japan, Soviet Russia, and Maoist China. The author argues that, although culture may not tell us exactly where China is heading, it can certainly help us to understand why the future development of China will not be the same as that of the United States, especially because of the evolution of a Chinese development model, the so-called "socialism with Chinese characteristics".

This concise book contains seven short chapters. Chapter 1 briefly elaborates the theory, basic variables, and methodologies used in this study. This chapter is used to explain what reforms are compared, why they are compared, and how they are compared. The study adopts the contrast-oriented comparative case study as its basic approach. The author aims to make three pairs of comparisons: the Late Qing Reform and Japan's Meiji Restoration; China's communist radical reform programs, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and Soviet Russia's New Economic Policy under Lenin and the Thaw under Khrushchev; Deng's Reform and Gorbachev's Reform.

Chapter 2 gives a summary account of the development and characteristics of utopianism in Japan, Russia, and China. The author reveals that Japanese utopianism is "reflected in their inclusive attitude toward religion, which is conducive to a pluralistic society." (p. 14). Readers may also find the vivid description of a fascinating, typically Japanese, situation, in which "an individual will get married in a Christian church, relate to other people with Confucian principles, worship nature in the spirit of Shintoism, and treat animals in accordance with Buddhist beliefs" (p. 14). Russia, on the other hand, has a much weaker tradition of utopianism due to its Christian roots. For Chinese political culture, the chapter identifies strong utopian elements from both Confucianism and Taoism. The Confucian manifestation of utopianism is reflected in the *datong* (great harmony) idea, and the Taoist idea of *Wuwei* (laissez-faire), embracing the creation of the paradise of small egalitarian communities.

In chapter 3, the author attempts to look at the different fate of reforms in Late Qing China and in the Meiji Era. The argument developed here is that political elites in the two countries were influenced by different cultural values and adopted different strategies: one adopted moderate strategies with limited goals while the other adopted ambitious strategies and unrealistic goals (pp. 36, 41). While Japanese political thinkers, such as Fukuzawa, shared a particularistic, pluralistic, and moral relativistic view of the world, Chinese political thinkers, such as Kang Youwei, held universalistic, monistic, and moralist views. Though this analysis is generally accurate, one may argue that classifying all these cultural values as utopian ideas, as the author is trying to do, may be an oversimplification.

Fukuzawa's ideas are far more pragmatic and realistic. Therefore, these ideas kept him at distance from being a utopian thinker. Kang Youwei was indeed a utopian thinker, but his utopian ideas were reflected mostly in his later writings, such as *Tatongshu* (written between 1901 and 1902, and published in 1935), written well after the failed reform. At the time of the Hundred-Day reform, the utopian elements of his thinking had not fully developed and played no major role in his recommendations to the Guangxu Emperor. One can agree with the assertion that culture is a factor in shaping the differences in political development in the two countries, but that is very different from making a case that links utopianism with the failure of the Late Qing Reform. To make that argument convincing, more evidence would be needed.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the difference between communist China and the Soviet Union and the two chapters should definitely be read together. Chapter 4 focuses exclusively on the period of New Economic Policy (NEP, 1921–1928) and the Thaw (1953–1964). The argument developed here is that since Russians did not have a strong utopian tradition, they tended to move away from radical communism during these two reform eras. Chinese communists, as shown in chapter 5, were deeply influenced by the traditional utopian idea of *datong*, and transformed Stalinist communism into a more radical form during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. These are valid and interesting observations. Indeed, no one can deny the fact that Maoism can be seen as a form of modern-day utopianism in China. As the author has discovered, Mao considered Kang Youwei's *datong* world as a model for communist social transformation.

Chapter 6 compares Deng's Reform and Gorbachev's Reform. Both are remarkable transformations of communism, albeit in a very different direction. As the author notes, there are significant strategic differences in the two reforms. While the Chinese reform focused primarily on economic change, the Soviet Union took on the old economic and political systems simultaneously. Once again we see cultural differences at work. While Chinese reformers, influenced by their monist world view, tried to redefine communism for the purpose of preserving it, Gorbachev and his followers tried to break away from communism and to return to a liberal and pluralistic past. According to the author, "[the] Chinese emphasized collectivist values more than their Soviet counterparts", and "[t]he Chinese holistic way of thinking which sees politics and economics as inseparable, also had an impact on the reform agenda" (p. 96).

Though these are all compelling points that help to explain the importance of political cultures, one cannot see any strong link between strategic choices and utopianism, since culture is not necessarily synonymous with utopianism and Chinese culture is not by nature utopian, even though elements of utopianism are to a certain extent present in Chinese culture. On the contrary: Chinese culture has a strong tendency toward "this-worldness". Confucianism as an official governing ideology has helped the creation of a long-lasting Chinese civilization and a unique Chinese political system. Utopianism, however, is aimed at creating a non-existing, perfect place.

Overall, the book makes a good case for explaining "how political culture impacted on the political strategies and philosophical perspective of reform in Japan, Russia, and China in the twentieth century" (p. 97). Political culture, after all, defines proper boundaries between the government and the people, and can help foster political consensus based on a shared paradigm. Chinese and Japanese cultures are essentially cooperative and collective; they are quite different from the competitive and individualistic nature of Western culture. Yet, the Japanese still embrace Western democracy while Chinese communists have not. Even among the Chinese, the people of Taiwan have

adopted Western liberal democracy, despite the fact that it shares the basic beliefs of the Chinese political culture.

One must realize the limits of the usefulness of a cultural explanation, even though culture does have an indisputable role in shaping a country's developing strategies and reforms. As the author notes, Chinese culture is not monopolistic (p. 106). Utopianism is part of traditional Chinese culture, but Chinese culture cannot be characterized as all utopian. Therefore, the author may have overstated his case about the real impact of utopianism on China's modern-day reform movements from the Late Qing to the Deng Xiaoping era. If indeed the argument can be taken at the face value, one will still have to face the dilemma about future direction of China's political reform: will China forever be trapped by its utopian version of the past and never be able to engage in a liberal reform? Can political culture be changed by the march of modernity and globalization?

*Baogang Guo*

SEIFERT, ANDREAS. *Bildgeschichten für Chinas Massen. Comic und Comicproduktion im 20. Jahrhundert.* Böhlau Verlag, Köln [etc.] 2008. viii, 309 pp. Ill. € 46,20; doi:10.1017/S0020859011000101

Increasingly, visual materials are being seen as primary sources for the study of aspects of the recent history of the People's Republic of China. When researching visual images, or more specifically in the case of the study reviewed here, pictorial stories or comics, we need to know more about the dynamics of the production of those images. Moreover, as they were designed and produced to provide information, change attitudes, or even behaviours, we have to look at the reception of such images and the effects they may or may not have had.

So what is it exactly that we see when we analyse comic books, as Seifert has opted to do? What do we know about the broader communication strategy that guided their publication at the time? What do we really know about the actual production process of any given pictorial story, from design to print, to distribution to consumption? Were specific artists commissioned for certain topics because of their artistic abilities or political standpoint? Were the original stories and accompanying artwork selected from a much wider offering of similar or comparable pieces? Who decided on the number of copies to be printed? Who gave the final imprimatur? Were specific themes produced for specific target groups? How and how widely were they distributed? Do large numbers of editions and copies also mean that the comics in question were in huge demand?

These and other questions are addressed in the very thorough analysis by Andreas Seifert of this erstwhile omnipresent, but academically largely overlooked, genre of the pictorial storybook. After delineating the historical roots of comic books and the developments in style and content that can be observed after the collapse of the empire in 1911–1912, he considers the didactic functions that the booklets were increasingly seen to have. With both children and the less literate as their main target groups, pictorial stories were considered excellent vehicles to spread literacy, normative knowledge, and even political propaganda. The writer and essayist Lu Xun, one of the most influential cultural voices in Republican China, was among the more forceful proponents of this view. Even the lowest levels of society could be reached using this medium, mainly through the