



**David S. G. Goodman.** *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China: The Taihang Base Area in the War of Resistance to Japan, 1937-1945.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000. xxxii + 345 pp. \$41.95 (textbook), ISBN 978-0-7425-0865-1; \$108.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7425-0864-4.

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## War and Revolution in Southeast Shanxi Province

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a very small scale.

David S. G. Goodman's *Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China* is an important contribution toward a fuller understanding of the processes of the Chinese Communist revolution at the local level. Goodman, director of the Institute for International Studies at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, has written a meticulously researched and scholarly analysis of three counties within the Taihang base area, a portion of Southeast Shanxi Province which served as an important locus of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) military and political administration during the protracted conflict with Japan.

This work is primarily of interest to those students and scholars working in the field of modern Chinese history and the sociology of revolution. It challenges some fundamental assertions about the nature of the communist revolution during this critical period; furthermore, the base area became an important source of cadres who would later serve prominently in the party, state, and military after the establishment of the PRC in 1949. Deng Xiaoping served as the political commissar of the Eighth Route Army stationed in the base area during the war, and so the book will provide readers with a sense of the issues he and other high-ranking officials faced. Those with an interest in China's foreign relations, even Sino-Japanese relations, may find it of little value, as it focuses exclusively on the processes of revolutionary change on

The analysis of revolution at the county level challenges the tendency in previous scholarship to develop deterministic monocausal "grand theories," which variously favored socio-economic, nationalistic, or organizational factors to explain the ultimate success of the revolution after the founding of the People's Republic. Goodman finds that at the local level grand theories tend to break down, and that more complex theories, which accommodate often conflicting multiple factors, are needed. Grand theories, like Seurat paintings, deceive with distance. Just as an expansive blue sky or a green lawn is revealed as small dabs of a much wider palette upon close examination, so too does Goodman's analysis of this vast revolution defy a monocausal theory.

*Social and Political Change* is, then, a significant contribution toward a broader view of the Chinese revolution written from the local level on up, rather than the other way around. He does this using a case-study approach with three counties in the Taihang base area. The first section provides analysis of the very different local conditions the communists encountered in each. The second subsequently examines the nature of the social reform the CCP attempted, with varying strategies and degrees of success.

The author concludes that CCP success in implementing its program of social reform depended in large part on the social landscape the communists encountered when

they first established themselves in the base area. The degree to which each county had been modernized was most important in determining the amount of resistance the CCP encountered. Licheng County, whose villages had not yet been transformed by commercialized agriculture to the degree of the other two, proved to be the source of the most violent and best-organized resistance to CCP reforms. CCP efforts had greatest success in villages where the chaotic upheavals caused by the commercialization of agriculture had recently taken place or were currently underway. It was in Licheng that one of the more remarkable episodes of resistance took place, in which young women from local elite families joined the Sixth Trigram Movement in a failed attempt to stop CCP reform.

Developing reliable local contacts was vital in the effort to win over the villages, as the author makes plain: a “peasant or farmer ... would probably have found it difficult to differentiate between a soldier speaking Japanese and a soldier speaking Fujianese” (p. 269). Thus it was that teachers played a crucial role in the revolutionary process. Their intellectual abilities, established positions as community leaders, and prior experience with conditions and ideas from the outside world explain in large part why they often became the first to join the CCP and how they subsequently rose to prominent positions within the local party structure. Appeals to the various socioeconomic strata subsumed under the “middle peasant” class label helped the party attract a wider following during the War of Resistance through the promise of landownership to poorer elements, while simultaneously relying upon the wealthier elements to lend local legiti-

macy and support.

Finally, the theme of incrementalism in explaining the ultimate effectiveness of CCP reform is highlighted, which the author defines as “a complex process of social and political change managed by the CCP, which at the end of the day judged its success more by its continued presence and ability to develop, than by its creation of new structures of wealth, status and power” (p. 273). Thus it appears the party’s success in the Taihang Base Area stemmed from its ability to diffuse its goals and ideology rapidly while blending them with the aspirations of the majority of the local population. Implementation of CCP reform was not an entirely uniform process; Goodman paints a picture of a revolution which was carried out in a manner that varied slightly from village to village.

*Social and Political Change in Revolutionary China* illuminates the immensely complex processes at work in three counties of the Taihang Base Area during a pivotal period in the history of the communist revolution. Goodman’s findings tend to challenge previous theories, particularly those which privilege monocausal nationalistic or socio-economic factors. The author intends his study to be the starting point for further research on the local level, and acknowledges that more work is needed before firm conclusions can be reached. Thus, his reluctance to work out the significance of his findings is understandable, but an expanded conclusion that defined clear questions as to the direction of future studies of the Chinese revolution at the county or village (which the author suggests is the proper unit for such micro-studies) would have improved the book.

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