

Joel Andreas. *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. xvi, 344 pp. Paperback \$27.95, ISBN 978-0-8047-6078-2.

The students in my Olympic science class in Changsha, Hunan Province, did not stand out visibly from their peers at the keypoint middle school where I was an English teacher in 2000. Yet the special science class was the elite of each grade; the students were recruited by competitive exam, they had the best teachers, and their accomplishments were feted by the school administration. The school's publicity materials headlined "Olympic" gold medals in computer science, university entrance exam scores were posted at the school gates, and every year an even more select few would be offered direct admission to key universities. A less obvious marker of elite status was the science students' Communist Youth League pins; though their politics classes were sometimes omitted in favor of extra math, almost every science student sported a Youth League pin.

During the tender age of their early teens, my students were being funneled through the two systems of credentialing that form the backdrop of Joel Andreas's *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class*. Andreas refers to these two systems as the "academic credentialing system" and the "political credentialing system." In the former, students in China pass through increasingly selective keypoint schools for which the state devotes significant resources. In the latter, parallel system, increasingly selective organizations—Young Pioneers, Communist Youth League, and Communist Party—choose their members. In today's China, Andreas explains, it is the engineers who occupy the highest positions in Party leadership and state bureaucracy, and they have come to their positions through their academic and political credentials. Eight out of nine members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau are such "Red Engineers," and it is this class that rules China today (p. 1).

The goal of Andreas's study is to understand class transformation in China since the Communist Party came to power in 1949. How did China's technocratic class come to be, and what does this historical trajectory tell us about the twentieth-century Communist experience in China and beyond? In his preface and introduction, Andreas presents us with a paradox. China's Communist Revolution, though rooted in an agrarian revolution and premised on the destruction of class hierarchy, created a technocratic class. While George Konrad and Ivan

Szelenyi have argued that Communist parties intended to build a technocratic society, Andreas argues that China's history does not follow the same pattern (p. 3). Rather, the Communist Party attempted to eliminate class distinctions, and the experience of class leveling in the Cultural Revolution—with its attack on the Party itself—shows that the Party dramatically changed course to become the technocracy that it is today (p. 4).

Rise of the Red Engineers uses Tsinghua, China's premier engineering university, as its case study. It begins with the way in which new China had two classes of elites: an old educated elite and a new political elite. Borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu's class distinctions based on economic, cultural, and social capital, Andreas explains that in the early People's Republic of China (PRC), the old elite (with economic and social capital) was undermined by a new elite (with political capital). Despite conflicts, however, old and new elites coexisted, and a new elite of Red experts came into being. Andreas argues that the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) was a turning point, an attack on cultural capital, but also on the political power of the Party elite. Because Mao and his followers attacked both cultural and political capital, the two kinds of elites were ultimately brought together (pp. 11–14) and later formed the basis of the post-Mao technocratic elite. Andreas brings his final chapters into the era of reform, when economic capital had reentered the picture. In a study that is thoroughly researched, well argued, and persuasively written, Andreas traces the arc of shifting class changes in the People's Republic of China.

Rise of the Red Engineers proceeds chronologically, divided into four parts: 1949–1966, 1966–1968, 1968–1976, and 1976–present. In the first part, Andreas explains the political and cultural foundations of class power, showing how old and new elites converged to create a class of Red experts. With the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) takeover, Reds were to supervise experts, and to that end, the party built a system of recruitment based on political performance and family background (p. 27). Jiang Nanxiang, a former Tsinghua student and underground CCP member, became president and Party secretary, building a system of Party organization that would dominate Tsinghua politics. Although Tsinghua instituted many policies in an attempt to create a more egalitarian university community, the student body was still made up of those with political and cultural capital. Jiang's administration also offered Party membership to faculty and sought to create a Red and expert generation (p. 73).

In part 2, which focuses on the early years of the Cultural Revolution, Andreas compares the experiences of Tsinghua's affiliated middle school and Tsinghua University to show how political and cultural capital became an axis of contention. However, the outcome was not necessarily proscribed. In the case of the middle school, students factionalized along the lines of political and cultural capital. The Red Guards (children of Communist cadres) attacked educational elites, and the Jिंगgangshan group (children of intellectuals) attacked political privilege. At

the university, however, the Red Guards (children of cadres) defended the work team sent to moderate revolution against another Jingtangshan group who attacked the authority of the work team, ultimately giving way to a moderate group called April Fourteenth. Here, class did not necessarily dictate faction, as each faction had members from all groups (a situation influenced by a student body with 40 percent workers and peasants), and because Mao's attack on political and cultural capital brought students from different classes together. Andreas's analysis of these two institutions changes the way we think and teach about the Cultural Revolution; the middle school pattern, he shows, is not necessarily representative, and coalitions are as important as fractures.

In the third section, "Institutionalizing the Cultural Revolution," Andreas evaluates the radical policies of the period up until Mao's death in 1976. The introduction of a Workers' Propaganda Team to supervise the university replicated the Red-over-expert power structure from the 1950s, with a twist: rebellion was institutionalized, but the propaganda team brooked no opposition, so that "in practice they remained inextricably bound up with the political culture they were criticizing" (p. 159). Under this new regime, policies to eliminate the distinction between mental and manual labor—having students labor, opening factories on campus, creating a system of agricultural schools—revisited the class-leveling campaigns of the Great Leap Forward (chapter 7). Perhaps the most significant of these policies was the system of "mass recommendation," which replaced college entrance exams with a system to recruit worker and peasant children for university placement. Although this system resulted in a significant change to the demographics of the student population (p. 206), the system was still vulnerable to political clientalism and the persistence of backdoor admissions for children of revolutionary cadres; Xi Jinping was one of those students recommended to Tsinghua in this period, showing that even in an era that denied any form of class privilege, political capital could still be transferred into cultural capital.

Rise of the Red Engineers concludes in the post-Mao era, with the arrival of a new leadership team, the denunciation of radicals, and Deng Xiaoping's appointment of Jiang Nanxiang as the leader of the Cultural Revolution investigations. The political and academic systems of credentialing were rebuilt in ways that suggest that they are more systematized—and more elite—than before. With Deng Xiaoping's call for all Reds to be experts, Andreas argues, room for the laboring classes in positions of power has decreased dramatically (p. 235), and, instead, a new Red and expert class has come to power, "although the former had been drained of its original ideological meaning" (p. 234). In addition, the exchange of political and cultural capital has been expanded to include the currency of economic capital, with businessmen relying on political networks and the Party recruiting entrepreneurs. Tsinghua remains, as Andreas convincingly shows, at the apex of political, economic, and cultural capital (p. 259).

Joel Andreas's masterful study contributes to the literature in multiple disciplines and is bound to become required reading for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars in China studies and beyond. It engages with historical studies on economic development in twentieth-century China, and specifically the role of engineers. William Kirby, for example, has studied how the fates of Western-trained engineers in mainland China and Taiwan diverged. Andreas not only picks up the narrative; he adds complexity and nuance to the position of engineers in New China and positions us to ask questions of other types of intellectuals as well.¹ Andreas's work also invites us to revisit sociological studies of the Cultural Revolution, most notably Lynn White's *Policies of Chaos*. By offering a specific case study and by introducing a new way of categorizing elites and the exchange of capital, the factions at Tsinghua's middle school and the university provide new inflections to White's "labeled status groups" and what that status meant.² Anyone interested in class in China today will want to read the final section of *Red Engineers*. For example, Andreas's description of the post-Mao reconfiguration of the education system as a heightened pyramid (which reproduces the urban elite) calls to mind Yasheng Huang's observation that China's policies since the 1990s have left a new generation of peasants illiterate.³

The research for *Red Engineers* is thorough and carefully presented, although in a few cases more attribution in the text would be helpful to remind the reader whether the quotation comes from a contemporary source or from a recent interview. The origin, for example, of certain surveys could be explored (pp. 121, 123) to explain how one uses data collected during the Cultural Revolution vis-à-vis data from recent years. Another practical suggestion would be to include in a future edition an appendix with significant documents (for example, the 1961 Sixty Articles) to facilitate the use of the book in a source-based history class.

Some readers may find it surprising that Andreas does not dwell on political violence in this book, although I would argue that it is really outside the scope of his analysis. More relevant, perhaps, may be a treatment of students who were *not* political; was there room for this sort of student in either Tsinghua's middle school or the university, and if so, what was their experience and how was it understood? It may also be worth a further gender analysis; in examining the student population after the system of mass recommendation, Andreas notes that the gender imbalance remained much unchanged (except among the rural students) (p. 206). As Red engineers now form the center of China's political leadership, that they remain predominantly male is significant. Finally, Andreas's presentation of engineers as Red experts invites us to reflect on other kinds of experts. The importance of engineers' expertise is, in many ways, self-evident (building bridges, increasing production, and developing systems are all useful to the state); what happened to experts in literature and culture, for instance, and how was cultural capital defined and exchanged in their experiences?

Joel Andreas's *Rise of the Red Engineers* is ambitious in scope and analyzes the "transformation of China's class structure since the 1949 Revolution" with rigor and style. The experience of Tsinghua University reflects both how class and understandings of class have changed over time, and although the case study may not be representative, it is no less important. Andreas's work brings fresh perspective to our understanding of class in China, of the machinations of the Cultural Revolution, and of twentieth-century experiments in Communism in comparative perspective. Finally, by establishing the basis for today's class structure (and also explaining why it is devoid of ideology, pp. 219–223), this book is a point of departure for anyone wishing to understand China in the here and now.

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1. William C. Kirby, "Continuity and Change in Modern China: Economic Planning on the Mainland and on Taiwan, 1943–1958," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 24 (July 1990): 121–141.
 2. Lynn T. White III, *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China's Cultural Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
 3. Yasheng Huang, *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics: Entrepreneurship and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).



Jack W. Chen. *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010. 468 pp. Hardcover \$49.95, ISBN 978-0-6740-5608-4.

Imperial cultural production has elicited scholarly interest across time. Han Gaozu's short poem written in nostalgic praise for the men of his native Pei, Tang emperor Taizong's instructions to his heirs, Song emperor Huizong's paintings and calligraphy, and the prolific oeuvre attributed to Qing emperor Qianlong are but prominent examples in a persistent tradition that seeks to highlight the cultural achievements of emperors. Earlier research has examined the meaning of imperial authorship and the social, political, and cultural functions of imperial productions in representing the sovereign to different kinds of audiences (see especially Ebrey and Maggie Bickford, eds., *Emperor Huizong and Late Northern Song China: The Politics of Culture and the Culture of Politics* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University