

BOOK REVIEWS

China for Women

EDITED BY THE FEMINIST PRESS TRAVEL SERIES
TRAVEL AND CULTURE

NEW YORK: FEMINIST PRESS OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY
OF NEW YORK, 1995
XV + 357 PAGES (PAPER)

This book is just a marvelous read for anyone. Secondary school and collegiate audiences will find it pleasantly accessible both in style and content. The editors divided the material into four parts: Part One on History and Politics; Part Two on Contemporary Life; Part Three on Women Today; Part Four on Landscapes and Cityscapes. There are fifty-three individually authored articles, succinctly written, full of human energy and color. Fourteen of the articles had been previously published in English, many had previously appeared in the German publication *China der Frauen*, a work and collaboration with the Feminist Press. There are also useful end pages on suggested readings, a chronology of Chinese history, and notes on the contributors. The reader should note that China in the title refers exclusively to mainland China.

Among the articles in Part One is an account of her life by the famous writer Ding Ling; a discussion of the intriguing phenomenon of "women's writing" from Hunan when they used their own script for poetry and communication among themselves; neo-Confucian

views of women; and three rousing early-revolution portraits of politically active grassroots women from Agnes Smedley's work.

Part Two includes such topics as the naming of women; legal and economic aspects of women's lives; love, marriage and sexuality; women in academe; and the appearance of women's studies.

Part Three contains short accounts of women working in different occupations, such as teacher, physician, singer, fruit grower, and others. While each story is interesting, my problem with this section is that most of the materials seem derived from the 1980s, but we are not given definite dates in order to place these accounts in the context of the present era.

Part Four includes helpful articles on travel: "China by Train," "Do's and Don'ts for Travelers," as well as scenic descriptions and an action account, "Facing the Yangzi Rapids in a Rubber Raft." This section should, however, also include information on foreigners who perhaps did not find travel in China to be an overall pleasant experience. Something could have been said about women who experienced their own sorts of problems as women while traveling in China. While the book is a worthwhile introduction to China for undergraduates and high schoolers, it would have been nice if there had been an entry that encouraged students to learn even a small amount of Mandarin. ■

Changing Lives

Life Stories of Asian Pioneers in Women's Studies

EDITED BY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S STUDIES IN ASIA

NEW YORK: THE FEMINIST PRESS AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY
OF NEW YORK, 1995.
XV + 225 PAGES (PAPER)

This book focuses on academic women, for the most part, and although the accounts are personal, they are also too concentrated on the institutional modalities of their authors' lives. General high school or college undergraduate readers will not find this book engaging enough to stay with it. I found it hard going myself simply because the creation, promotion, and institutionalizing of women's studies per se is not exactly crucial to the majority of women's lives in the various Asian countries under consideration here. Moreover, few of the women relating their stories actually bared specific examples of the harshness of women's struggles in their respective countries, nor did they boldly report on what actual, concrete political effects, if any, their own activities had on the situation of ordinary women in their respective countries. Thus, I cannot recommend *Changing Lives* to the readership targeted by this journal. ■

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