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**Feichang yu zhengchang: Shanghai wenge shiqi de shehui shenghuo
by Jin Dalu (review)**

Fei Yan

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Feichang yu zhengchang: Shanghai wenge shiqi de shehui shenghuo (Abnormality and Normality: Social Life during the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai), by Jin Dalu. Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe (Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House), 2011. 459 pp. 88 RMB (Paperback). ISBN 9787532632848.

This two-volume book provides a panoramic picture of Shanghai during the decade of the Cultural Revolution. The author explores deeper at the bottom of the social structure, with emphasis on the disorder of the time, and yet the fundamental unchangeable logic of everyday lives.

During the Cultural Revolution, young and fevered Red Guards were mobilized by their bonds and emotional attachment to a charismatic supreme leader. They formed various revolutionary rebel groups in the summer of 1966 and took over government offices in virtually every province-level unit in early 1967. Immediately afterward, these Red Guards broke into rival camps, resulting in rampant factional fighting in all walks of life. However, this book does not analyze the Cultural Revolution from a broad national political angle, but instead provides an excursion into the exploration of the base levels of society; it provides not only the skeleton of the political framework for the analysis of Cultural Revolution but also the organs of the sociological details of lives and production.

First, the author does not focus on major political figures during the Cultural Revolution, nor on “two-line struggles” among central elites, but rather dwells straight at the base level of the ordinary citizens of society. The practices of the ordinary people compose the foundation of a flesh-and-blood life history. Second, the author never relates directly to the social movement nor to the political process of the Cultural Revolution, but rather focuses upon the context and details of the daily minutiae of social life, such as population statistics, marriage management, family planning, incomes and careers, fashion changes, supplies of fruits and vegetables, and so on.

For example, in terms of population statistics (chap. 1), from 1967, the total population of Shanghai was declining. There was a total drop of 868,500 people over the course of ten years. This was largely due to the effects of the Down to the Countryside Movement. However, simultaneously, the total number of households in Shanghai was increasing, growing by 363,300 over the course of ten years. This means that amid the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, the everyday lives of the masses

were still going on securely, and the masses also had an adamant desire for a normal, undisrupted life. Registered marriages during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution in Shanghai numbered 279,365 (chap. 2). Even in the most ungovernable period of 1967–1969, there were as many as 91,958 registered marriages. This means that the chaos at the time did not possess a real threat to the stability and general framework of people's everyday lives—there were still romances going on across all the streets and avenues of Shanghai. Conversely, the total number of registered divorces for Shanghai between the years of 1966 to 1976 was 6,489. For a metropolitan city with millions of people, the average number of divorces per day was surprisingly no more than two. This was because the entire society was judged and measured by the standards of class struggle at that time. Even when marriages encountered problems, couples were unwilling to get divorced due to worries that their children would be labeled as “the remains of bourgeois ideology.” In reality, however, the marriage differences and problems did not simply go away with the tolerances and compromises of each couple.

This book contains rich historical materials and numerous primary archival documents presented in conjunction with the above-mentioned cases. Despite this, however, the author struggles with turning this evidence into effective analytical arguments.

For example, the author mentions several times that as China's largest city, Shanghai was the only place exempt from armed violence and that such relative peace created a stable social environment for people's everyday lives (chaps. 2, 11, 12). This observation is partially true in terms of factional conflicts. In Shanghai, direct confrontations between the radicals and the conservatives did not occur, as the conservative force was thoroughly disintegrated and suppressed by a strong trustworthy civilian official. Zhang Chunqiao 張春橋, the deputy head of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, who was also a senior member of Shanghai's party committee, successfully led Shanghai's mass rebellion in January 1967 to seize power. He also rebuilt and consolidated the new power structure after taking control of the municipal government and thus quickly won Mao's unwavering support.

However, according to Walder and Su, Shanghai also experienced intense bloody violence during some state-initiated political campaigns, such as the Cleansing of the Class Ranks Campaign in 1968 and the One Strike, Three Anti Campaign in 1971.¹ In Shanghai, many people died in these political persecutions and related repressions, and some suffered

arrest, imprisonment, lengthy interrogations, and often torture. Statistically, the national average number of deaths per county was 84, while in Shanghai this figure reached 334, the second highest among all the provinces (Guangxi province had the highest casualty rate). These radical political events certainly brought a much more damaging social impact to the masses than we could imagine. Unfortunately, the author does not touch on this fact. Therefore, the readers must ask, how did the ordinary local people balance themselves between normality and abnormality? How did structural characteristics of the local contexts (e.g., level of urbanization, ethnic composition, nonagricultural employment, party membership, number of local officials) and procedural dynamics of the political movement (e.g., power seizure, military intervention, participation of outsiders) shape the different levels of violence across localities?

Nonetheless, whether regarding order in abnormality or disorder in normality, the author fully implores the wit of a historian and combines these two perspectives to provide the reader with a detailed and nuanced picture of Shanghai society during the Cultural Revolution.

Fei Yan
University of Oxford

Note

1. Andrew Walder and Yang Su, "The Cultural Revolution in the Countryside: Scope, Timing, and Human Impact," *China Quarterly*, Vol. 173 (2002), pp. 82–107.