

*Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China.* By David Faure Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007. Xiii, 464 pp. \$50.00 (cloth).

Doi: 10.1017/s0021911809990143

David Faure addresses a central question of Chinese social organization: How did lineages become the core institution interfacing between local society and the imperial state? Chinese lineage studies have a venerable literature, starting with the work of Maurice Freedman (1920-75), and Faure aims to set Freedman's argument in a historical context. In an ambitious sweep from the Song to the twentieth century, Faure offers an innovative reconstruction of the 1520s to the 1580s, arguing that when the Ming commercial transformation came together with the sponsorship of Neo-Confucian ritual and ideology by the emperor and literati, the specific juncture enabled the consolidation of the lineage as the primary local social organization. While the study focuses on the Pearl River Delta, the concluding chapter cites several studies from other provinces indicating that, local diversities notwithstanding, economic power and ritual authority joined elsewhere in China as well, and not only in the south. Unfortunately, this comparative dimension is not pursued in the body of the text.

The evolution of the lineage institution came about in two stages, first in the Yuan-Ming transition and then in the mid-Ming. Yuan-era Guangdong saw numerous warlords and vassals running the countryside, and several translated their fiefdoms into earldoms when they surrendered to the Ming. The imposition of the Ming household registration (*lijia*) system into this warlord society facilitated the emergence of the lineage as a fount of authority and legitimacy. Lineages adapted examples of monastic estates, accumulating vast lands through donations and reclamation, and they revived their claims to common ancestry through genealogical compilations. The explicit ritual-legal structure of lineage affiliation with the powerful provided opportunities for sheltering land-holdings and tax-evasion. Ultimately, *lijia* registration was implemented, "not because the Ming government had a sufficient staff to impose it on its population" (p. 73), but rather because manipulation of the *lijia* and lineage succession rules allowed for the control of landed estates.

The rise of Confucian orthodoxy further benefited several eminent Guangdong lineages when officeholders from their ranks played a leading role in the "Great Rituals" controversy. In 1522, a cousin of their heirless Zhengde emperor ascended the throne as the Jiajing emperor and insisted on performing filial piety rituals for his birth parents, rather than the collateral Ming ancestral line. Heated debate on ritual propriety erupted. Guangdong based officials supported the Jiajing emperor and his new imperial Confucian orthodoxy while participating actively in nationwide anti-Buddhist mobilizations. Guangdong-based proponents of Confucian orthodoxy led the charge on "religious cleansing" (p. 102), closed down monasteries, and seized the lands and halls of "illegal temples" for Confucian schools. The land of shuttered monasteries fell into lineage hands. Although religious practices, including Buddhist prayers, did not disappear easily, these were incorporated into village covenant rituals at earth God shrines. Ritual community iteration by ceremonies at earth god shrines and the closed down monasteries and seized the lands and halls of "illegal temples" for Confucian schools. The land of shuttered monasteries fell into lineage hands. Although religious practices, including Buddhist prayers, did not disappear easily, these were incorporated into village covenant rituals at earth god shrines. Ritual community iteration by ceremonies at earth god shrines and the *lijia* reiteration of the lineage village as a tax unit were overlapping processes. When military and labour service provisions of the *lijia* were commuted into the

monetary payments of silver, lineages producing degree holders became part of the local administrative and tax-collecting machinery.

The second half of the volume tracks Qing conditions enhancing the lineage institutions through numerous case studies of lineage gentrification, their cultural and economic activities, and their role in developing local militia in the post-Opium War period, which furthered their already considerable political power. In 1911, the symbiotic relationship between ancestor and emperor came to an end for the “lineage could not readily fit into a state where no emperor reigned” (p. 346). Summing up the causes for the decline of the lineage in the twentieth century, Faure points to the new theory that “taught the working classes were rising in the cities” and that the “people who had been members of lineages and villagers were the remnants of a feudal society ... [m]odernity taught that China was to be looked at from a view adopted in Shanghai” (p. 347). Elsewhere, Faure finds that perception of the lineages and their operations as “sources of backwardness by the rising intelligentsia, nurtured on Western ideas via the city” (p. 14) who favoured the business company rather than the lineage led to its displacement in rural China. This is a problematic juxtaposition of lineage/ancestor/village as “tradition” and city as “foreign” modernity, as if the gun-toting lineage toughs of the delta (pp. 312-16) were anything but modern entrepreneurs facilitating accumulation. Rather, as the case of the Man lineage of Shatin (Hong Kong), which has members comfortably residing in England, suggests, the lineage as social institutions survived in one form or another, “as long land is held in common” (see James Watson, “Virtual Kinship, Real Estate, and Diaspora Formation – The Man Lineage Revisited,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 63, no. 4 [November 2004]:906). Arguably, then, it was the process of privatization of land that made the lineage irrelevant as an institution, a starkly economic process of commodification that had little to do with “Western ideas”.

SUCHETA MAZUMDAR

*Duke University*

[skmmaz@duke.edu](mailto:skmmaz@duke.edu)

Source from Mazumdar, Sucheta. *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 68, No. 3 (Aug., 2009), pp. 932-934.

<<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/20619803?uid=3738672&uid=2134&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&sid=21102516326917>>