

cadres from various locations and levels in the hierarchy are rare insights. Friedman also discusses a number of well-known labor incidents, from Walmart “unionization” to the Honda strikes, and he provides interviews and viewpoints, which are often more nuanced than media reports.

However, the problems of characterizing the macro within the Polanyi framework becomes apparent. The fragility of relying on a series of anecdotes of albeit key cadres to construct a view of the ACFTU as being awash with internal turmoil and hoping for a progressive form of representation to emerge is best illustrated by the discussion in chapter 3 of the Guangzhou trade union federation, particularly the admiring description of its leader, Chen Weiguan (63–68). Friedman puzzles over how Chen gained his position, being “elected” (69) as a maverick in an otherwise conservative organization. I was puzzled at Friedman’s puzzlement, given his own description of the appointment system to ACFTU posts (54), as is customary with all Chinese posts. The transience of iconic individuals is clearly shown in Chen’s replacement in 2014 by a former trade development bureau chief, who promptly moved past a much-vaunted collective bargaining law of Chen’s era, which was now being used instead as a law to prohibit strikes, marking perhaps the least progressive law in the ACFTU toolkit. The story does not detract from the fascinating discussion presented in the book but questions the point of seeing the ACFTU as an integrated, coherent organization with its own internally cogent agenda. If there is a word of caution, it is to ensure triangulation and verification of research data by cross-referencing alternative data, more critical and less embedded in the official line.

Nevertheless, Friedman’s work is a major contribution to the field both theoretically, by getting readers to think beyond either “evil empire” or the triumph of global capitalism, and empirically, among other things by introducing the internal tensions and ideas among Party oligarchs. Although the empirical elements of the book might best be seen in the context of the 2005–10 period, this is itself significant.

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Hegemonic Transformation: The State, Laws, and Labour Relations in Post-Socialist China, by Elaine Sio-ieng Hui. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. iv+266 pp. US\$100.00 (cloth), US\$79.99 (eBook).

Over the past two decades, global discussions of Chinese labor have been dominated by stories of exploitation, wage arrears, long work hours, and outright slav-

ery. In the midst of such harsh denunciations, relatively little attention has been paid to the fact that since the early 1990s the Chinese authorities have been developing a comprehensive—and in many ways impressive—body of labor laws and regulations. Even less notice has been taken of the fact that knowledge of this labor legislation was widely disseminated among the Chinese public through the official media, or that these laws have regularly elicited widespread internal discussion. A draft amendment to the Labor Contract Law that was released in 2012 received more than half a million comments in just one month's time.

How can we reconcile this remarkable legislative activity with the global image of a government that apparently does not care for the well-being of its workers? In *Hegemonic Transformation*, Elaine Sio-ieng Hui tackles the paradox head on. Drawing from Antonio Gramsci's theorization, she convincingly argues that the Chinese authorities have resorted to the labor law to build consent to a set of capitalist worldviews that represent a clear break with previously dominant ideological discourses, in order to ensure the continuation of the Communist Party's rule. In Hui's analysis, the economic reforms that began in China in the late 1970s were nothing more than a "passive revolution" backed by coercion by the dominant elites, with little input from the subordinated classes, including the workers. More recently, acknowledging that rule built upon force remains rather precarious, the party-state has adopted a new strategy that seeks the active consent of the workers. The labor law has played a fundamental role in this shift, "endorsing, inculcating, and reproducing capitalist hegemony" (6) within the working class. In other words, to simplify Hui's sophisticated argument, the labor law has allowed the Chinese authorities to more readily shape the worldviews, demands, and expectations of the workers, establishing discursive boundaries that delimit their perception of what is licit and desirable and what is not.

In order to understand how this mechanism works in practice, Hui explores through the workers' own voices how they view and experience the law. While there is no lack of scholarship on the relationship between Chinese workers and the law—one just has to think of Mary Gallagher's pioneering studies—Hui is the first to offer a complex taxonomy of Chinese workers based on such a relationship. By considering an innovative set of subjective criteria that includes the workers' level of knowledge of labor laws (and their motivation in acquiring such knowledge), the degree of acceptance or rejection of the labor law system, and whether they have identified any defects in the labor legislation, Hui identifies five categories of workers. First, there are affirmative workers who have never had direct experience with a labor dispute and have granted active consent to legal hegemony without posing any questions. Second, there are indifferent workers who have rendered passive consent to legal hegemony, as they do not see any alternative to the status quo and are relatively submissive in the face of any impositions. Third and fourth, there are ambivalent workers and critical workers who are skeptical of the legal discourses and

practices but attribute the shortcomings of the system to individual acts, without fundamentally questioning the hegemony of the state and capitalist class. Finally, there are radical workers who reject legal hegemony altogether.

Such a framework might sound exceedingly deterministic, but Hui takes care to explain that “workers categorized into different modes under the typology are not stationary,” as “their positions may shift from one mode to another over time as a result of changing life experiences and class consciousness” (112). Indeed, in her theorization it is this very possibility of transformation that “hints at the instability of legal hegemony and highlights the fact that it remains a product of continuous class struggles between classes in conflict” (112). Simply put, once the workers’ fascination with legal hegemony is put to the test by facts, it can easily give way to feelings of betrayal that lead to disgruntlement and possible radicalization, as anybody with any familiarity with the workings of Chinese labor NGOs can attest.

After a general introduction that outlines the argument and offers a literature review, the second of the book’s seven chapters elucidates Hui’s theoretical approach, which is built upon a wide array of texts that go well beyond Gramsci. The third chapter outlines how the Chinese party-state has employed the labor law system to build up legal hegemony. The chapter explains not only how these laws emerged, but also what they tell us about the relations between Chinese authorities, the capitalist class, and workers. The following three chapters are dedicated, respectively, to the affirmative workers who have given active consent to legal hegemony; the indifferent, ambivalent, and critical workers who are lumped together in that they all have conferred passive consent to legal hegemony; and the radical workers who remain unconstrained by legal boundaries and capitalist common sense. The book’s conclusion summarizes the major arguments.

While the first three chapters are mainly theoretical, the second half of the book contains a wealth of individual stories and comments by Chinese workers that give readers a glimpse into life and work in the “factory of the world.” Although there are some repetitions that could have been avoided, *Hegemonic Transformation* represents an important contribution to the field of Chinese labor studies. Not only does it convincingly address the fundamental paradox of labor in contemporary China (i.e., the coexistence of blatant labor abuses with well-developed labor legislation), it also indicates promising new avenues for future research. I highly recommend it.

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