

Oil and Water: Being Han in Xinjiang, by Tom Cliff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. ix+252 pp. US\$90.00 (cloth), US\$30.00 (paper), US\$10.00 (eBook).

The study of contemporary Xinjiang has been overwhelmingly concerned with state-society and interethnic dynamics. This scholarship tends to characterize Han Chinese in Xinjiang as the Chinese government's vanguard in promoting Xinjiang's development while presenting Uyghurs as subjects in a narrative of resistance. *Oil and Water*, Tom Cliff's ethnography of Han in Xinjiang, demonstrates both the importance of the "pioneer" imaginary for Han subjectivities in the borderlands and the complexity of socioeconomic distinctions within the Han community. The result is a rich study of how people navigate an environment of economic transition on a developmental frontier.

Cliff's finely grained ethnography is based on three years of fieldwork in the small city of Korla. Korla is a center for two "era-defining institutions": an agro-industrial complex of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, which dates to the PRC's efforts to secure Xinjiang in the 1950s, and the Tarim Oilfield Company, which is a product of the 1980–90 developmental state. Both of these Han-majority organizations have been central to the attempted "normalization" of Xinjiang into the Chinese core. However, the shift in influence from the pseudo-military Corps to the state-owned company has changed how Han in Korla conceive of themselves and their structures of opportunity. *Oil and Water* tells the stories of Han settlers as they attempt to establish themselves in a culture and community profoundly shaped by these institutions.

Han in Korla situate their autobiographical narratives within a collective historical memory, which provides models for behavior as well as metaphors to explain the individual's relationship to the state project. The Han in Korla understand the "backwardness" of the borderlands as an opportunity to gain economic advancement and personal meaning. The identity of a "constructor," similar to a "pioneer," confers status upon Han who have left their home communities to contribute to the state's development of the west. This contribution is envisioned as entailing sacrifice, which in turn implies credit for what has been built and demands a reward from the state. Han thus stake claims to Xinjiang and to special protection from the government. This expectation, echoes of which were on display in the July 2009 Ürümqi riots and reprisals, is central both to membership in the Han borderland community and to its members' strategies to secure stability or advancement. While Uyghurs are pushed to the margins of this study, it is because, for the Han of Korla, Uyghurs are part of the background, an element of danger in one's self-imagination as a pioneer constructor.

Representation and advancement are mediated by an ongoing process of social differentiation through *guanxi* (關係), the pervasive Han Chinese practice of "making personal connections." Despite the image of Xinjiang's normalization as

a totalizing state project, *Oil and Water* demonstrates that it actually operates in significant ways through these informal practices. *Guanxi* allows people both to circumvent and implement regulations, and it determines the distribution of resources in a network of exchange that leads through the company and all the way to Beijing. Uyghurs lack the necessary cultural tool kit to access *guanxi* effectively, but so do marginal Han subjects in Korla, who must acquire it through demonstrations of loyalty or strategic marriages. That the state operates through personal networks of patronage is intentional, Cliff suggests, as these networks bring familiar Han modes of social differentiation and competition to the borderlands.

The book's broader contribution lies in its analysis of power relations in Xinjiang, which have as much to do with economic inequality as identity politics. Cliff applies recent scholarship on empire to demonstrate how the Chinese government constructs Xinjiang as an exceptional zone within Chinese sovereign space. The analysis advances an argument as to how internal exceptions are produced and maintained. Cliff demonstrates that, first, Beijing incentivizes local officials to promote the image of Xinjiang as a wild frontier in the Han imaginary. This both inspires Han looking for advancement to settle there and legitimizes ongoing securitization and development projects, government funding for which feeds local *guanxi* networks through corruption. The paradoxical interdependency of aspirational stability and the specter of instability promotes Han demands for personal and communal economic advancement. These demands are in turn justified by a "partnership of stability," the implicit alliance between Han settlers and the government.

Any scholarship as richly theorized as *Oil and Water* inevitably advances some questionable analyses, and the book sometimes introduces more theoretical machinery than necessary. As two examples, at one point the book overanalyzes a translation error in a propaganda poster (35), and its gestures toward James Scott's *Seeing Like a State* imply much more than they reveal. A critical reader also wonders: given that Korla's Han live in an island of normative Chineseness, often work for companies undergoing a shift from state to private ownership, and perceive themselves to be benefiting unevenly from the promise of development, how different is their story from that of many Han in China proper? The answer lies in the peculiar hierarchy of Han identities at play in Korla, which depend on one's time of arrival and employment status. However, we may suspect that interregional migration and privatization have produced similar effects elsewhere. Further comparison with other case studies would be useful.

Scholars of modern China, economic anthropology, and comparative colonialism will all find much of value in *Oil and Water*. The separateness of the Han world that Cliff describes contributes to the book's value, as so little work has been done on contemporary Han life in the region. Cliff radically reorients our perspective on Xinjiang and challenges our assumptions about the ways in which its people align with or against the government. Han settlers may imagine them-

selves as powerful pioneers, but they, too, are colonials in China's developmental project: struggling, hopeful human beings who use the resources available to them to find stability in an uncertain world.

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Building New China, Colonizing Kokonor: Resettlement to Qinghai in the 1950s, by Gregory Rohlf. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016. 301 pp. A\$201.75 (cloth), A\$139.90 (eBook).

This book is a remarkable account of the Chinese Communist Party's grandiose effort to integrate multiethnic Qinghai into the new People's Republic by sponsoring the resettlement of Han Chinese farmers into the frontier zone. Between 1955 and 1960 approximately 100,000 Han and Hui Chinese farmers were relocated to Qinghai to develop new agricultural lands. The resettlement was a "civilizing" and "modernizing" mission designed to integrate parts of the Sino-Tibetan frontier into the Chinese state for the first time. Settlers from the east were to bring modern skills and thinking to a region inhabited largely by ethnic Tibetans but also by ethnic Mongols and Hui, and were also supposed to contribute to the development and extraction of the region's vast resources. According to Gregory Rohlf, the resettlement scheme was "integral to the spatial reinvention of the nation that was launched with the first Five Year Plan 1953–7" (14).

Rohlf tells the story from the perspective of the volunteers, many of them youthful, who resettled in Qinghai as part of the scheme. His research is based on careful analysis of documentation as well as interviews with settlers from the period. Hailed as heroes and vanguards of the revolution, many of the settlers felt motivated to serve the Party and the country, but many, especially those from impoverished backgrounds, were lured by the promise of improved livelihoods and state stipends that were available for up to three years.

The book's information and analysis is well organized. The first chapter provides background for the agricultural resettlement policies by examining the earlier periods of 1920–55, and the second chapter documents the evolution of resettlement as frontier policy. Subsequent chapters use a combination of documentary and ethnographic sources to describe the resettlement scheme from the perspective of those who lived it. Rohlf handles his politically sensitive materials deftly. Chapter 5 deals with the ethnic and social problems that arose from the mass influx of Han and Hui into the largely Tibetan region. Chapter 6 examines a second wave of resettlement that centered around the construction of youth farms.