

future discussions on the writings of Jia Pingwa should also consider including a feminist reading of his writing. A careful examination of the relationship between individual identity and sexuality as well as the relationship between gender and power will deepen our understanding of the literary scene in China. In this regard, Wang has made a significant contribution to the field and set a high standard for other researchers to follow. This book is extremely valuable as a main text to examine contemporary Chinese literature from the viewpoint of one author, as well as a supplementary text, which carries with it the breadth and depth of the richness of the field of contemporary Chinese literature as a whole.

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**Phillip F. WILLIAMS and Yenna WU**, *The Great Wall of Confinement: The Chinese Prison Camp through Contemporary Fiction and Reportage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. 248 pp. ISBN: 0-520-24402-8 (pbk). Price: US\$21.95.

Beijing's pride in securing its bid for the 2008 Olympics and China's protean economic growth contain a dark underside—unemployment, crime, corruption, and prison camps. Prison camps, or *laogai*, are the subject of Phillip F. Williams and Yenna Wu's new monograph which interweaves memoirs, fiction, and strands of social science and literary theory to uncover aspects of the contemporary Chinese prison camp. This text is not only important and innovative, it is glittering with details on a rarely revealed aspect of Chinese society.

Williams and Yu begin by outlining the cultural origins of China's prison camp system, hearkening back to the Shang dynasty and placing their book credibly within a wide stream of continuity. Ranging easily from emperor Sui Yangdi to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the authors enter into the evolving Chinese discourse on human rights. In emphasizing the cultural roots of the Chinese prison system, the authors avoid merely facile comparisons of the Chinese gulag to its Soviet counterpart. According to the authors, "the modern-day use of forced labor and prison camps has an ancient pedigree in China and cannot be accurately portrayed as merely a Soviet grafting onto a Chinese rootstock" (p. 28).

The second chapter focuses more tightly on the genesis of the Chinese communist prison system, examining criminal law codes of the 1930s' Jiangxi Soviet. Here, say Williams and Wu, communist prosecutors "enjoyed an

immense flexibility that allowed them to order the arrest and trial of a suspect for performing an activity that had not been specifically prohibited in any statute or decree” (p. 39). Analyzing the punishments meted out to alleged counterrevolutionaries, the authors debunk the very notion of profitable prison labor, and explain the communist disdain for defense attorneys by quoting the popular saying *xian pan, hou shen*—“first the verdict, then the trial” (p. 44).

The third and fourth chapters are extensive, and trace the typical convict’s demeaning journey from arrest to release (or death). Subjects covered include “Arrest,” “Tribunal,” “Vermin and Disease,” and the humorous and then gut-wrenching “Prison Argot.” The authors’ treatment of these stages is cogent, laying bare the prison camp experience with unflinching realism.

The fifth and final chapter brings into focus the authors whose works provided much of the book’s detail. The underlying basis for much of the text lies in the oeuvre of Cong Weixi, whose prose is threaded throughout the book, along with discussion of his counterpart in prison literature, Zhang Xianliang. Although their work is central to the book’s argument, Cong and Zhang are only properly introduced on page 156: readers would do well to briefly reference this page before wading into the book’s opening chapter. To their credit, the authors’ focus on memoir literature prevents the text from becoming bogged down into a generic tract on human rights abuses. Not surprisingly, however, the arbitrary authority of the Party comes in for strong criticism. As Williams and Wu conclude in a typically clarion passage: “The road of ascent to a Marxian utopia where exploitation was abolished and ordinary human needs were universally met had actually metamorphosed into a twisting and plunging Hobbseian path” (p. 92).

Although the book is situated at the juncture of two subdisciplines (law and literature), it can be read profitably by anyone seeking greater insight into the nature of the CCP regime. Moreover, university instructors could either incorporate the text to stimulate discussion of human rights in China, or more specifically, cobble together a course on the literature of PRC prison camps with the aid of the book’s comprehensive references. The handsome glossary, excellent index, and frequent use of pinyin all add to the book’s attractiveness.

The text is not without flaws; footnotes are often overburdened with paragraphs of prose, making for a fragmented reading experience that detracts from the book’s overall graceful presentation. Most curiously, the authors

never venture an estimate of the number, size, and geographical distribution of China's prison camps, leaving the reader to deduce the scope of the problem only anecdotally. However, as an interdisciplinary effort, the book succeeds brilliantly.

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**WU Yongping**, *A Political Explanation of Economic Growth: State Survival, Bureaucratic Politics, and Private Enterprise in the Making of Taiwan's Economy, 1950–1985*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005. xvii + 410 pp. ISBN: 0-674-01779-X. Price: US\$49.50.

The state-centered approach has been a prominent explanation for the economic development of East Asian regimes after World War II. Refuting the neoclassical arguments about free markets, this approach highlights the contribution of state intervention to rapid economic development in East Asia. In this book, Wu Yongping identifies the three main dimensions of the so-called “developmental state”—state bureaucracy with a strong and coherent steering capacity; selective industrial policy which enables a government to guide markets; and the cooperative relationship between the state and the private sector. Through close consideration of these three themes, Wu argues that Taiwan, in fact, was not a developmental state.

The analysis of the first dimension, the bureaucratic institution, is the most outstanding part of this book. Wu finds that Taiwan's economic bureaucracy was not “institution-based” but rather “individual-oriented.” In the early 1950s, the Kuomintang (KMT), as an émigré regime, placed political concerns and security at the top of its priorities and controlled almost all resources as a result of the wartime economy and shortages. In this context, Wu focuses on the power struggle between the two factions, the mainstream pro-command economy bureaucrats and emerging pro-market bureaucrats. The conflict not only stemmed from ideology but also from vested interests rooted in the control of resource allocation; finally, the top authorities chose the pro-market side. Wu demonstrates that the economic bureaucracy was full of divisions and conflicts, and the efficiency of the bureaucracy depended on the individual bureaucratic strongman backed by the highest leader—a phenomenon that epitomized Taiwan's bureaucratic politics before the late 1970s. To wit, the steering capacity of economic bureaucracy was fragile as it existed at the discretion of the political leader. By exploring the composition of the bureaucratic elites and explaining their views, personalities, and their