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Rapid population aging and rural-urban migration are two sociodemographic phenomena that strongly impact support systems for older adults living in rural China. These phenomena increasingly draw attention from researchers and policymakers who rely on quantitative data to make sense of the transformation of older adult support systems. In *Elderly Care, Intergenerational Relationships and Social Change in Rural China*, Fang Cao traces the emergence of this transformation from 1949 onwards and combines ethnography and semi-structured interviews to shed light on the impact of socio-political-economic changes on elderly care and intergenerational relationships in rural China.

One of the great strengths of this book is its research methodology. Cao spent around five months between 2014 and 2015 in Dougou, a village in Henan Province in the middle of China, conducting participant observation and interviews. This immersive ethnographic approach allowed Cao to delve into the everyday family life of villagers as a 'member' of the community. Another strength of this book is its systematic attention to multiple perspectives across a broad historical scope. Elderly care and intergenerational relationships in China's rural families are discussed within the extended family system, communities, and broader structural contexts of China, covering the period from Mao's reign (1949-1978) to the post-Mao period (1978-).

The book is well-structured, which makes it easy for readers to grasp its content. The first two chapters introduce the background of the research, the methodology, theoretical frameworks, and the context of Dougou village (including history, culture, geography, and governance). In Chapter 2, Cao provides a detailed introduction of Dougou, illustrated with maps and photos. This is helpful, especially for readers who are not familiar with Chinese geography and culture. Chapters 3 to 7 report the ethnographic findings, with each chapter presenting one main theme. Chapter 3 focuses on cultural guidelines for filial piety and filial behavior, and Chapter 4 discusses the parental obligation to help sons establish their own families (e.g., building a new house, paying a bride-price, and providing material assistance to their own families). These two chapters together illustrate how mutual obligations between parents and children have changed since 1949 and how they are now practiced in the local community. For instance, although elderly care is consistently viewed as the adult sons' and their wives' obligation, the adult daughters' roles in elderly care have changed considerably. In the past, it was considered a shame to be cared for by adult daughters because this would lead people to believe that sons are not filial. Nowadays, however, it is normal that adult daughters contribute considerably to elderly care in rural areas, including through emotional and financial support. The author thus asserts

that filial piety is still a key norm for social behavior in rural China but is constantly reinterpreted in the context of China's rapid socio-political-economic changes (e.g., if listening to parents indicated filial piety in the past, quarreling with parents is not seen as unfilial nowadays).

Chapter 5 demonstrates the effects of migrant work and economic change on elderly care and intergenerational practice. The material life of older adults has improved compared to their wealth during Mao's period because of increased family income from migrant labor. However, today, the geographic distance caused by migrant work creates new challenges for families providing elderly care. For instance, adult children may face the conflict between staying at home to care for older parents and doing migrant work to make money. In chapter 6, Cao further analyzes the declining social status of rural elders and attributes it to their declining monetary contribution to the family in a migrant economy. The author concludes that despite the persistence of the moral obligation of filial piety, older adults in rural China are largely marginalized and more vulnerable to the negative side-effects of rapid socio-political-economic change. Chapter 7 depicts the negotiations about elderly care practices among adult siblings and between adult couples (i.e., the son and his wife) in the era of urban-rural migration. The division of caregiving responsibilities among adult siblings is mainly based on their resource availability (e.g., adult children who work outside the village provide financial support, and children who live in the village provide instrumental support). The negotiation between the couples mainly depends on their marital relationship and their relationship with the older parents or parents-in-law.

Chapters 3 to 7 are well written, with ethnographic data presented in a narrative style. Many vivid, sometimes opposite stories are presented in each chapter, immersing the reader into daily life in Dougou. Some comparisons between the lives of older generations and younger generations are particularly impressive. For instance, younger people nowadays have a much better living standard than older adults (see Chapter 6.1), and the role of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has been reversed (see Chapter 6.4). These changes demonstrate that the uplifted social position of women and younger adults compared to the communist era parallels the marginalization of older adults, who are left-behind in the rapid socio-economic changes of contemporary China. The author uses local proverbs to indicate the changes that have occurred over the past decades. For instance, she contrasts the older proverb "A young wife finally becomes a mother-in-law after many years' suffering" (多年的媳妇熬成婆) with the more recent proverb "To wait on your daughter-in-law is like providing for and respecting your grandmother in old times" (伺候媳妇得像过去伺候奶奶一样) (123) to indicate how the social prestige of the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law have been reversed in rural China. The use of proverbs provides readers with an accessible way to understand family practice and intergenerational relationships in Dougou through its local language.

Chapter 8 analyzes the ethnographic data through three theoretical frameworks, namely social exchanges theory, Carol Smart's (2007) personal life approach, and David Morgan's (2011) family practices approach. Although the author convincingly motivates her use of three different theories, her analysis would have benefited from a tighter integration of data and theory. Reading the discussion in Chapter 8, close to the end of the book, one might disregard the connections between these theories and the rich ethnographic examples presented in the previous five chapters. In Chapter 9, the author concludes with a comprehensive and constructively critical summary of the book's key findings and offers some brief suggestions for policies and recommendations for future research. For instance, the author recommends exploring the intergenerational exchange between younger rural people (in their 20s) and their parents and the changes in their attitudes regarding caring for their older parents in the future.

In addition to the separation of theory from ethnographic data, there are other minor shortcomings in the book. Regarding elderly care, I expected to see rural older adults' experiences represented, but the author places adult children's voices in the center. Furthermore, the overall tone of Chapter 7, which describes "caring for ageing parents in the migration era" (133) is very positive and optimistic about the ways adult children successfully adapt to a changing labor market and adjust their ways of caring for older parents according to new possibilities and demands. This is important to acknowledge, but it also leaves the voices of those who receive care unreported. Older adults' perceptions and needs that come with shifting intergenerational relations should not be ignored in a book on elderly care.

Despite these shortcomings, the book enriches the existing literature on family life and elderly care in rural China. This book will be of great interest to students and researchers working on intergenerational relationships and elderly care in rural China in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and social gerontology. In addition, it will be an engaging read for a lay audience interested in the lives and cultures of rural China.

References

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