Other fascinating inhabitants include karaoke performers singing as if they were celebrities; forgers producing fake certificates for migrants eagerly seeking work, and avant-garde artists proud of their creativity and nonconformity, and with an exquisite taste for foreign cuisine over old-fashioned socialist ideas. Taken together, these new men and the new values they embrace have produced, in the words of the authors, a "Bohemian Beijing," relegating the old Maoist world of permanent revolution to a distant memory.

The book is organized thematically and covers a range of familiar subjects such as work units, *guanxi* (connectedness) and neighbourhood committees, but the material is conveyed with immediacy and freshness. The writing style, though engagingly accessible, is journalistic and often repetitive. At times the authors provide too many sketches (as in chapter five) and seldom linger long enough to afford their subjects full treatment.

The book may have been hurried into print, and this may explain certain factual errors. For example, according to the authors, Mao ordered that the construction of Tiananmen Square should enable the area to hold "one billion" people (p. 24), but, in fact, Mao had ordered that it should hold "one million." The Great Hall of the People was not, as the authors claim, "designed by the noted architect Zhang Bo, with assistance from Zhang Dongri" (p. 70). Instead, the mammoth building was originally designed by the Japan-trained architect Zhao Dongri, with the assistance of a woman architect, Shen Qi, whereas Zhang Bo, a student of the renowned scholar Liang Sicheng, was later recruited by the Beijing Municipal Party to serve as the project's chief architect.

Earlier in the book we come across Liang Congjie, son of Liang Sicheng, who is a vocal critic of the government's unrelenting commercial redevelopment plan in the capital (p. 3). But the book does not probe deeply into the controversy surrounding the growth of the city: cultural conservation versus reckless commercial development, which is one of the themes of this book. Indeed, cultural Beijing is under threat. The fabled city is receding further into history as developers and officials march relentlessly to build yet another soaring skyscraper to exhibit the city's success. Without long-term balanced planning, Beijing will be remembered as a sad tale of unbridled development, cultural ignorance, and aesthetic blindness. *Beijing Time* is an entertaining read. But readers who want a more rigorous examination of the city's troubles and promises will have to seek other sources.

CHANG-TAI HUNG

The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution
MOBO GAO
London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2008
xi + 270 pp. £18.99
ISBN 978-0-7453-2780-8 doi:10.1017/S0305741008000970

The battle for China's past is a battle for China's future. Only if China comes to an adequate assessment of Mao and the Cultural Revolution can it solve the problems of the present and look into a bright future. This is the main argument Mobo Gao presents in his book. The argument is not new for those who read Gao's book "Gao Village," however, he presents it here in a more generalized form and explicitly links it to a critical assessment of ongoing reform.

In the first chapters of his book, Gao deconstructs the hegemonic discourse on the Cultural Revolution. He demands a radical turn away from the *haojie* discourse

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. IP address: 138.68.61.228, on 22 Aug 2017 at 06:07:52, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741008000970

which he sees as typical of intellectuals experiencing the Cultural Revolution as a catastrophe. It is wrong in two ways: On the one hand, it universalizes the intellectuals' approach to the Cultural Revolution and neglects the fact that peasants experienced the Cultural Revolution in a positive way; on the other hand, it submits Chinese history to the Western standards of Enlightenment and thereby perpetuates US hegemony over cultural and life values (pp. 15–16, 37).

Gao's discussion of Mao's historical contributions moves along the same lines. He criticizes the official CCP stand as well as Jung Chang and Jon Halliday's book *Mao: The Unknown Story* and Li Zhisui's *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*. According to Gao, all are inadequate because they either apply Western or traditional Chinese standards.

In the second part of his book, Gao refers to internet discussions to show that his assessment of Mao and the Cultural Revolution can be backed by reading what he believes most China specialists do not read: e-media both inside and outside China. One of the main arguments he finds in these articles is that the later Mao was more valuable to today's China that the early Mao (p. 123). It is from this argument that a counter-narrative on the Cultural Revolution emerges. This counter-narrative sees the Cultural Revolution in a positive light as it was aimed at capitalism in China and at those people inside the party which advocated capitalism for China. That China could develop without capitalism was proven during the Cultural Revolution as the living standard rose for the majority of the population – the third-line industrialization policy had a positive effect on bringing progress to remote areas of the PRC and agricultural production increased. All these achievements were possible without exploiting colonies and without exploiting the toiling masses in China. Also in the fields of arts, education and health care, the Cultural Revolution generated successes which are seen in a positive light in those e-media contributions Gao reads for his purposes.

Finally, Gao Mobo turns to the e-media in support for his critical attitude towards what is going on in China today. He admits: "Yes, China is wealthier", but qualifies this statement by saying: "For many, China is unstable and weaker when facing the global capitalist onslaught" (pp. 174–175). He agrees with Wang Hui who sees China caught between "misguided socialism and crony capitalism, … suffering from the worst of both systems" (p. 185) and refers to the deterioration of working conditions, to land seizures and to environmental destruction. In sum, Gao Mobo comes to the conclusion that China needs a reform that "can take root" and "absorb what is already there, including China's long tradition as well as its recent socialist heritage" (p. 201). Among the positive lessons to be learnt from the Maoist era are popular democracy, grassroots participation as well as cheap and locally adopted forms of healthcare and education.

Gao Mobo's book is interesting for everyone who does not read Chinese and is therefore cut off from ongoing Chinese language discussions on the internet. Much in contrast to what we read in our newspapers every day, Gao Mobo introduces the voices of those who are dissatisfied with the situation in the PRC and look back for advice at the Maoist past, especially the Cultural Revolution. We learn from his book that a younger generation is raising its voice that does not have any first-hand experience of what happened in the Maoist past and therefore imagines this past as better in terms of democracy, equity and equality. Its demand for a re-assessment of the Cultural Revolution is the first explicit interest this generation shows in understanding post-49 Maoist China. However, Mobo Gao only introduces part of the discussion. He repeatedly argues that there is no history without partisanship. He sees himself as the voice of the peasants and the poor, contrasting his stand with those of the intellectuals and the Party. In this sense he certainly learned his lesson

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. IP address: 138.68.61.228, on 22 Aug 2017 at 06:07:52, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741008000970

during the Cultural Revolution and instead of inventing a new vision for the future presents to us yet another case of "old tales retold."

SUSANNE WEIGELIN-SCHWIEDRZIK

Governing Hong Kong: Administrative Officers from the Nineteenth Century to the Handover to China, 1862–1997
STEVE TSANG
London and New York: I.B.Tauris
xii + 227 pp. £52.50
ISBN 978-1-84511-525-8 doi:10.1017/S0305741008000982

Also published by Hong Kong University Press in English (HK$325.00; ISBN 978-962-209-874-9) and in Chinese (*Guanzhi Xianggang: Zhengwu guan yu lianghao guanzhi de jianli*; HK$135.00; ISBN 978-962-209-875-6)

For nearly the past 150 years, administrative officers, originally called cadets, have held many of the most important positions within the Hong Kong government. There has been some excellent scholarly work on the composition of this elite, notably in John Burns's *Government Capacity and the Hong Kong Civil Service* (Oxford University Press, 2004). Until this study, however, there has not been a full account of the role of the administrative grade over the entire colonial period. Steve Tsang is eminently qualified to undertake this task and he provides a valuable history of the evolution of the grade, of its ethos and values, and of the practical problems encountered in its work. Much of the book is based on documentary research and interviews with key figures supplemented by the more recent reminiscences of former administrative officers.

The dominance of the grade within the Hong Kong government was a result of the deliberate intention of the British government to create an elite cadre of generalist administrators, with some knowledge of Cantonese, who would be able to assume senior positions at a relatively early age. They were not expected to be "too brilliant" – a good second class degree was considered sufficient – or too numerous, but they did need to show a willingness to work for the community and an ability to interact well with other members of the grade and with community leaders. Although the quality of the cadets seems to have declined in the immediate pre-war period, the grade went from strength to strength after the Second World War, aided by the expansion of the government and the recruitment of women and able local graduates. It was of critical importance in supporting economic growth and in maintaining stability in the transition to Chinese sovereignty.

An important question that Tsang addresses is: how was it possible for the ethos of a generalist tradition, founded on principles of political neutrality and acting in the best public interest, to be transmitted across generations, cultures and gender? He suggests that, although the values may have been vague, they were well understood and well communicated. In a government which, until the late 1970s, had high levels of syndicated corruption, administrative officers were respected for their integrity. None was ever convicted of taking bribes. They saw corruption as something beneath them and something that would not be tolerated in new recruits to the grade. Collegiality seems to have been another factor which promoted the transmission of values from generation to generation but which was also critical to the smooth running of government. In Hong Kong's strongly hierarchical system, administrative officers served as the bridge between the branches and departments and the

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. IP address: 138.68.61.228, on 22 Aug 2017 at 06:07:52, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741008000970