The Mirage of China

Good books capture critical moments. Liu has captured one here, Asian Anthropology.
The book as a piece of writing is fluid and graceful, Liu’s ethnographic accounts are
indeed masterly—deftly weaving dialogue, observation, metaphor, and analysis in a way
that would make many writers (of both fiction and nonfiction) sigh with envy. Liu
juxtaposes characters and incidents in such a way as to subtly highlight the themes at
hand, using humor, irony, and understatement to bring to life the world of 'making up numbers.' Liu effectively suggests that the rise of statistics and the objective mode are, like the rise of Maoism and the ideological mode, a phase in history that may or may not appear equally ridiculous in years to come. Can we see outside our own spot in history, Liu asks, and should we (and the people of China) give up dreaming and utopias merely because our current historical moment favors the narcissistic, corporeal statistic? H-Ideas Today's world is one marked by the signs of digital capitalism and global capitalist expansion, and China is increasingly being integrated into this global system of production and consumption. As a result, China's immediate material impact is now felt almost everywhere in the world; however, the significance and process of this integration is far from understood. This study shows how the a priori categories of statistical reasoning came to be re-born and re-lived in the People's Republic - as essential conditions for the possibility of a new mode of knowledge and governance. From the ruins of the Maoist revolution China has risen through a mode of quantitative self-objectification. As the author argues, an epistemological rift has separated the Maoist years from the present age of the People's Republic, which appears on the global stage as a mirage. This study is an ethnographic investigation of concepts - of the conceptual forces that have produced and been produced by - two forms of knowledge, life, and governance. As the author shows, the world of China, contrary to the common view, is not the Chinese world; it is a symptomatic moment of our world at the present time. Xin Liu is Professor of Anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley. He is the author of In One's Own Shadow (UC Press) and The Otherness of Self (U. of Michigan Press) and the editor of New Reflections on Anthropological Studies of (greater) China (IEAS Monograph Series, UC Berkeley).

作者介绍:
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标签
社会学
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评论

终于看完了一本刘星的书，果然很非主流。作者开篇就树立了自己“非主流”的民族志定位。尽管前几章的一些民族志和访谈片段（在北京计程车里和计程车司机打趣，在国家统计局和官员聊天等）极其有趣。但此书并不是传统意义上的民族志。

作者说这是一本对“concept”进行研究的民...

书评

看了介绍中的评价，就想找书来看。之前一时心痒，看了另一个评论，居然给了这么低的评价。贴一点评价在这里，由REBECCA E. KARL写的，方便大家参考：This ambitious, but ultimately slight, book asks some interesting questions and attempts to stake out some important ...

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