

### **Book review: Hajo Frölich: Des Kaisers neue Schulen - Bildungsreformen und der Staat in Südchina, 1901-1911. Berlin/ Boston: Walter de Gruyter 2018. ISBN 978-3-11-055617-9**

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HAJO FRÖLICH, *Des Kaisers neue Schulen. Bildungsreformen und der Staat in Südchina. 1901–1911*. Berlin / Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2018. 433 pages, €69.95. ISBN 978-3-11-055617-9

In his tale *The Emperor's New Clothes*, Danish author Hans Christian Andersen uses the figure of the naked, deceived emperor to show how vanity, when combined with gullibility and insecurity, can lead to disaster. Hajo Frölich, in this comprehensive archival study, asks whether the emperor's new schools in early 20th century southern China were likewise a web of lies, woven by alleged experts, but failing to deliver what they set out to promise. What kind of reality lies behind the aspirations of the educational reformers who intended to create both new schools and new, modern people who would identify as loyal citizens of an emerging nation state? At the beginning of the 20th century, China was to be transformed fundamentally. The new schools, Frölich argues, were to play a "pioneering role in intensifying state control and permeating society" (p. 12; this and all further quotes translated from German by the reviewer).

The study seeks to answer two questions: firstly, to what extent were certain actors able to build a modern education system – in a region far from the capital of a weak nation state; secondly, in which ways were modern technologies of administration – surveys, statistics, curricula, organisation charts, photographs and architecture – effective in implementing educational reform. Frölich's study is novel: not only does it contribute new insights as to how central reforms were implemented, or failed to become implemented, locally; it also directs attention to a hitherto little researched aspect of modern state-building – the use of new administrative technologies to assess and govern the Chinese populace in a scientific, professionalised way. As Frölich emphasises, these new methods did not merely constitute minor bureaucratic changes but can be understood as internal civilising missions, which at times also used physical force.

*The Emperor's New Schools* focuses on Guangdong province, a fascinating region. For many contemporaries – particularly those near Beijing – Guangdong symbolised the uncivilised periphery; at the same time, its port cities and the ensuing international trade exposed the region to Western modernity in particularly intensive ways. The study focuses on three cities in eastern Guangdong province (Jiaying, Chaozhou and Shantou) and is based primarily on material from the municipal archive of Shantou; the First Historical Archives in Beijing; the provincial library of Guangdong; local newspapers and official gazettes; local chronicles; various compendiums, laws and educational regulations; as well as the journal published by the Educational Association of China.

Following the introduction, which illuminates the interrelationship of school, state and nation in China primarily from the perspective of govern-

ance theory, Chapter 2 provides an excellent overview of the development of Chinese education prior to 1900. Chapters 3 and 4 can be regarded as the study's core parts: Chapter 3 investigates the state's new technologies of administration and governance by education; while Chapter 4 focuses on the extent to which the state was present and effective in every-day school practices.

Frölich investigates the new technologies by looking at four different dimensions: educational statistics, school inspection, training of educational personnel and the "Bureaus for Promoting Education". These technologies contributed to professionalising the local administration, but they also hierarchised the relationships between centre and periphery, and between state and society (the latter represented by the local gentry).

The first dimension – the introduction and professionalisation of educational statistics – showcases how the history of the modern Chinese nation can also be understood as the history of emerging, modern Chinese statistics, which extended well into the bodies of individual students. In fascinating detail, Frölich reveals the problems when doing statistics: overburdened personnel, lack of infrastructure and training, overlapping responsibilities and the lack of standardisation with regard to both the data to be gathered and its method of collection. Street-level bureaucrats at the level of the school needed to be trained in these technologies. Hence, these new ways of administration resulted both in a transformed perspective on the subjects to be governed (citizens and institutions) and in a re-education of the educational agents themselves. Statistics, it is shown further, served also as a demonstration of state control and expertise. On the flip side, the lack or incompleteness of statistical data also revealed to the public the limits of state agency and competence.

School inspection, modelled after its Japanese equivalent, served as an instrument of micro-management, which was not implemented comprehensively, however. On the one hand, school inspectors became increasingly independent of local county officials; on the other hand, they would encounter considerable resistance from both local elites and the students. In contrast, the training of educational personnel to acquire skills in modern administration was generally welcomed: the increasing professionalisation of educational administration was associated with new, prestigious career opportunities for those who were aspiring to become civil servants. The new Bureaus for Promoting Education were to establish and inspect primary schools; they were often run by representatives from the local community – however less as a form of self-governance and more as locally extended governance by the central state.

As Chapter 4 summarises, to establish and run schools was a state enterprise; however, this enterprise was heavily dependent on the local population's sense of community. The Chinese state had simply too few resources for implementing educational reform. Instead, the state would use "governance by

education” (p. 194) and thereby urge the gentry to financially support state reforms. While the great bulk of previous research has focused on intended curricula and hence the ideals of educational reforms, Frölich concentrates on local deviations and appropriations resulting from cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences; the lack of teachers, students and resources; and also on the actors’ different collective and individual experiences and values. Nonetheless, Frölich concludes, schools largely attempted to follow state directives.

The primarily descriptive account of the various local deviations would have benefitted from a comparative analysis as well as from a more thorough conceptualisation. That is, firstly: to what extent do the three cities on which the study is based – and whose differing points of departure are emphasised by Frölich – really constitute different examples of the practical implementation of educational reform? Is the observed variation in the end due only to idiosyncratic differences across the individual schools and actors, or can we see structural patterns? And secondly: how can the various deviations and appropriations as shown in the empirical analysis be used to contribute to a better theoretical understanding of how reforms were implemented, and translated, locally? Here, a more systematic differentiation of the school as a representative object (e.g. architecture, school exhibitions) and the school as everyday practice would have been helpful. Moreover, a more systematic consideration of the type of historical material could provide more insight. Historical material does not merely serve as a source of information; rather, it possesses its own voice, and represents particular interests and agendas. (Only with regard to school photographs is this aspect taken into consideration.)

Finally, as a last critical question to this otherwise extensive and informative study: Can we clearly assess whether educational reform failed or whether it was successful? Frölich’s study provides ambivalent answers to this question. When the “fiction” of a “global model of the modern state” (p. 350) becomes an aspiration – does this already qualify as a success? Again, one may wonder whether the three selected cities constitute cases of sufficient variation: Were there specific structures and constellations that proved particularly conducive or detrimental to successful implementation? To what extent was the state capable of forming desirable agents of education, and to what extent were these agents instead able to push the state? More case variation might have provided more precise answers than the three selected cities in eastern Guangdong province were able to offer.

As the educationist Zhu Qile said in the 1920s in his endeavour to promulgate an empiricist approach to education: it is insufficient “to watch the flowers only from the back of a horse” (Zhu Qile: *Yanjiu xiangcun jiaoyu de tujing yu fangfa* [“Paths and Methods of Research on Agrarian Education”], *Jiaoyu Zazhi* 15(9), 1923, pp. 6–15, here p. 9). With Frölich’s study, we descend from the horse twice. On the one hand, we learn about empirical variation when

central reforms were implemented locally; on the other, we become witness to how the educational agents of the early 20th century exchanged the horse for the journey by foot – and how they did this in very different ways: cooperatively and reluctantly, with more or less coordination, and as both professionals and laymen. *The Emperor's New Schools* lets the reader participate in this journey.

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ASSA DORON / ROBIN JEFFREY, *Waste of a Nation. Garbage and Growth in India*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018. 416 pages, 4 maps, €27.00. ISBN 978-0-6749-8060-0

Assa Doron and Robin Jeffrey have set themselves the ambitious goal of delving into the many facets of India's waste issue. *Waste of a Nation* is the result of their tireless exploration, spanning an impressive range of spaces, practices and streams of waste across the subcontinent. The book presents a mosaic of outlooks on waste and its handling that carefully unfolds the complex challenges that India faces in its "encounter with the detritus of consumer capitalism" (p. 12). In doing so, it comprehensively portrays the extent of the problem, reflecting on both its magnitude and the variety of relations it involves, which are in several aspects particular to India.

The journey across India's waste material landscapes invites us to consider the formidable expansion of consumer goods that is eroding the country's traditions of frugality, taking us down manholes with sewer divers and along value chains as diverse as ship breaking and hair recovery. Emblematic trades of the informal economy of waste such as plastics and electronics are also described in detail. The authors discuss multiple aspects of India's waste and sanitary infrastructure, from the deadlocks in meeting the abysmal sewage challenges and the current government's struggles to end open defecation, to the recently built plants which attempt to deal with solid waste in accordance with the new legal frameworks. Actors and institutions are also subject to scrutiny. The historical, political and cultural difficulties of local governments are thrown into the balance, before the book concludes with an examination of the lifeworlds and narratives of various groups of actors involved in waste: first, its professionals – the engineers and managers entrusted by public administrations; second, the vast number of its handlers, toiling at the very bot-