

REVIEWS

Ruth Rogaski . *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China*. xiv + 401 pp. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Howard Hsueh-Hao Chiang*

Hygienic Modernity traces the changing meanings of health and disease in China through the historical transformation of the concept of *weisheng* over the course of roughly a century, from the mid-nineteenth century to the rise of the Communist Party around the mid-twentieth century. The book incorporates transnational perspectives while detailing the political events and urbanizing processes in the city of Tianjin, which became a treaty port rather late in comparison to Shanghai. By the time European imperial forces arrived at the banks of the Hai River, which was among the key geographical features of Tianjin, Shanghai had already been a treaty port for twenty years. Nonetheless, Rogaski is careful to begin her analysis with the cultural understandings of health and disease in Tianjin before the arrival of Europeans, when the city remained one of the most important military and economic centres of the northern region of late imperial China. The geographical importance of Tianjin came from its location between the Yellow Sea and the Qing empire's capital, Beijing, on the North China Plain. When it turned into one of the most significant modern urban centres during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Tianjin—much like Shanghai, Canton (Guangzhou), and other Chinese treaty ports—was a distinct node of East-West cultural interactions, as well as an unique locus of powerful imperial influences (both European and Japanese).

In this complex historical context of treaty-port China, the meaning of *weisheng* gradually evolved from the traditional notion of guarding life to the modern idea of hygienic and sanitary practice under state intervention. According to Rogaski, this conceptual transformation was largely mediated through the Japanese idea of *eisei*, which itself underwent a significant metamorphosis during the late nineteenth-century Meiji Restoration through the effort of medical officials like Nagayo Sensai, Ogata Koreyoshi, and Gotô

* Howard Chiang is currently a Ph.D. student in the Program in History of Science at Princeton University. He received his B.S. in Biochemistry and B.A. in Psychology from the University of Southern California, and his M.A. in Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences from Columbia University. His research focuses on the history and epistemology of biology, medicine, and the human sciences, with an emphasis on the global dynamics of gender and sexuality. His dissertation, tentatively titled "Passionate Corporeality: A History of Sex-Alteration in Modern China," is a project that studies the changing meanings of sex, gender, and sexuality in modern East Asia by historicizing the practical and conceptual dimensions of sex-alteration in 20th-century China. He is a member of the program committee for the Joint Atlantic Seminar for the History of Medicine, and he maintains his own web site at <http://www.howardhchiang.com>.

Shinpei. As *eisei* became hygienic modernity, modernizing elites viewed the task of preserving health less and less as an exclusive mode of individual responsibility. Instead, they increasingly extended its cultural definition to include the involvement of the state, the administration of the government, and the maintenance of the nation as a holistic social organism. Being the Qing city most influenced by the Boxer Uprising and its aftermath, Tianjin was home to eight foreign occupying forces by the turn of the century, including German, Italian, French, British, Austria-Hungarian, Russian, American, and Japanese concessions. Two years after its capture, the city was administered by a committee that comprised representatives from these eight imperial forces: the Tianjin Provisional Government. Rogaski shows that *weisheng* turned into hygienic modernity for the first time through the establishment of this unprecedented international colonial administration at one corner of the Qing empire. In this process, as the Boxers came to resemble the deficiencies of Chinese culture, the Qing was forced to regain its sovereignty by embracing and adopting a definition of *weisheng* identical to the modern biomedical meaning of *eisei*. By the opening decades of the twentieth century, *weisheng* no longer meant merely nourishing life, but incorporated a distinctly new notion of hygienic modernity that encompassed government control of sanitation, disease prevention, and the detection and elimination of germs. The mediating role of Japanese imperialism in the transmission of Western bacteriological knowledge reached a crescendo during the Japanese occupation of Tianjin from 1937 to 1945.

Drawing on a sophisticated range of analytical tools from translation studies, urban history, and the history of medicine, Rogaski documents a growing global hegemony of Western biomedical conceptions of health and disease that accompanied the transition from the fall of empire to the establishment of a new Republic in modern China. Despite notable moments of resistance, as demonstrated in the writings of the Chinese medical physician Ding Zilang who challenged the Western germ theory of disease vociferously, a modernizing perspective that desired foreign values and saw traditional Chinese standards of health as inherently deficient lay beneath the meta-narrative of the engineering of the modern Chinese nation-state. Meanwhile, one of the key contributions of the book lies in the argument that the early establishment of public health administrations and hospitals at colonial outposts like Tianjin constituted an important aspect of the European organization of health. Rogaski convincingly demonstrates that both the development of public health regimes and the emergence of modern biomedicine critically relied on scientific reporting from the colonial outposts, and thus were never entirely domestic European projects. Ultimately, following a Foucauldian genealogical method, Rogaski's study builds on the changing discourse of *weisheng* from cosmological philosophy to a model of modernity and a symbol of civilization (difference). Constantly in conversation

with the works of important authors such as Gail Hershatter, Gyan Prakash, Mark Harrison, James Bartholomew, Lydia Liu, and Shu-mei Shih, this book is undoubtedly an original and insightful addition to the historiographies of modern China, colonialism and post-colonialism, and East Asian science and medicine.

HOWARD CHIANG
Princeton University
hchiang@princeton.edu
<http://www.howardhchiang.com>