

An Industry in China

Technological Innovation in China. The Case of the Shanghai Semiconductor Industry. DENIS FRED SIMON and DETLEF REHN. Ballinger (Harper and Row), Cambridge, MA, 1988. xviii, 206 pp. \$29.95.

Socialist economies have established a poor record both in stimulating technological change and in achieving satisfactory productivity growth. Their institutional features and incentive systems strongly discourage risk-taking and innovation. They also hinder the effective utilization and diffusion of advanced Western technology that socialist economies import in part to compensate for the shortfall in indigenous technological change.

Could China prove the exception? By some economic criteria China is already the most successful reforming socialist state. Real national income more than doubled in the past eight years, and China's foreign trade, overwhelmingly with market economies, now exceeds that of all but a handful of industrial market economies. However, the evidence on productivity growth in the still-dominant state-owned manufacturing sector is ambiguous, with specialists disagreeing on whether or not there has been significant improvement over the past decade compared to the lackluster performance of the pre-reform era.

Denis Simon and Detlef Rehn's study of technological innovation in the Shanghai electronics industry is thus particularly welcome for the insights it provides on an emerging sector in China's major industrial center. Electronics, especially semiconductor and computer technology, has been a priority sector for China for more than a decade. Based on a combination of documentary analysis and extensive interviews, *Technological Innovation in China* traces the process of decision-making in the electronics industry from the early 1970s to the present, discussing integrated circuits, consumer electronics, computers, and telecommunications.

The record set forth by the authors is complex but on the whole does not lead one to believe that China will soon prove to be an exception to the general socialist pattern. The rationale of selecting electronics and computers as the leading sector of industrial development in an economy with a per capita income of only \$300 U.S. (World Bank estimate) is unclear. And, as the au-

thors vividly point out, after more than a decade, no coherent strategy for the sector has emerged. Major new programs are announced, organizational structures are endlessly realigned, and the supporting technology import strategy is repeatedly overhauled. But the effects of these changes are difficult to judge, and the authors focus largely on process, not outcome.

The organizational and administrative reforms described in this study likely will prove inadequate to meet China's ambitious technological goals. The absence of competitive markets to both stimulate and reward technological progress of domestic firms, the continued separation of research and development on the one hand and managerial decisions with regard to production on the other, the domination of both research and production by units that are too large to respond flexibly to rapid change, and the continued reliance on centrally directed programs to promote technical innovation all suggest that in electronics and perhaps other fields the technological gap between China and the West may continue to expand.

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Benedict as Feminist

Ruth Benedict. *Stranger in This Land.* MARGARET M. CAFFREY. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1989. xii, 432 pp. + plates. \$24.95. American Studies Series.

Ruth Benedict (1887–1948) wrote two anthropological classics, *Patterns of Culture* (1934) and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), which place her among the greatest of American anthropologists. After her death her close associate, Margaret Mead, published (in 1959 and 1974) selections of Benedict's writings, woven together with extensive biographical commentary. In 1983, Judith Modell published the first full-scale biography of Benedict. Margaret Caffrey is thus Benedict's third biographer. But unlike Mead and Modell, who focused on Benedict's inner life and on her anthropology, Caffrey emphasizes Benedict's relation to those 20th-century social and intellectual trends outside anthropology that most influenced her: modernism, progressivism, feminism, psychoanalysis. Thus Caffrey's work complements that of her predecessors, though her feminist reading of Benedict's life is at times problematic.

According to Caffrey, Benedict took Boasian anthropology from modernist doubt to a new modernist paradigm, formulated in

Patterns of Culture. Boas and his first students had destroyed the 19th-century absolutes of progressive social evolution. Benedict, one of Boas's later students, became the leading theorist of cultural "integration," her 1934 book providing a model of cultural order linked to an acceptance of cultural diversity and relativity: "She, more clearly than any of her contemporaries, managed to reconcile the philosophical opposites of her day, . . . suggest[ing] the possibility of a philosophy of the coexistence of Chaos and Order in the integration of seeming cultural dissonance" (p. 211). Moreover, Benedict sought a wide audience for her ideas, hoping that an understanding of the relativity of culture would lead to progressive social reform. She spent the last decade of her life using anthropology to combat racism and promote intercultural understanding.

Benedict was also, according to Caffrey, a feminist: "Unlike Mead and Modell, who do not see Benedict as a feminist, I explore Benedict's life as a case history in cultural feminism" (p. vii). Caffrey examines Benedict's struggle to balance marriage and career in the light of the feminist ideas of her time. She also explores Benedict's romantic and intellectual relationships with other women, effectively relating these aspects of her life to her anthropological writings on deviance, homosexuality, and gender roles. Caffrey sees Benedict as a "cultural feminist" because Benedict shunned political action in favor of the power of writing and ideas to change people's values. Benedict sought "to carry feminism internally into society" and "to free society from conventionality and conformity" (p. 117).

That Benedict struggled throughout her life with the dilemmas of being a woman in a sexist society is clear from her private writings published by Mead. Yet, Caffrey's decision to make Benedict a feminist brings an ideological undertone to her narrative that clashes with the historical and biographical evidence. For example, by using a rhetoric of scientific discovery—phrases like "breakthrough" and "earliest signal event" (pp. 154, 215)—Caffrey depicts Benedict as a lone scientific innovator. Such language perhaps suggests a place for her in a pantheon of feminist greats, but it oversimplifies the history of American anthropology in the 1920s, which was characterized more by ongoing discussion among Benedict and her colleagues than by isolated discoveries attributable to individual hero[ine]s. Caffrey also claims that some of Benedict's important works represented "academic risk-taking of the highest order, first because they theorized as well as described, and second because they theorized in the direction of the new psychology which Franz Boas

frowned upon" (p. 158; cf. p. 263). Here Caffrey depicts Benedict as an innovator struggling against repression, but to do so creates an overly dramatic intellectual history. Most good anthropology theorizes as well as describes. And Caffrey herself indicates that Boas early approved the new directions that Benedict explored (p. 156). Finally, in a book that exhaustively footnotes its sources, Caffrey makes large claims, on apparently slim evidence, for the influence of feminist writings on Benedict's thought. Benedict's last great undertaking, the Research on Contemporary Cultures project, is described as explicitly feminist in spirit and organization. Yet to make this case, Caffrey must insert the writings of feminist Ellen Key into her narrative (pp. 346-347), as if they represented Benedict's own philosophy, even though Benedict's acquaintance with Key's work is only vaguely documented (p. 85). Ironically, Caffrey concludes her book with a celebration of this cooperative, egalitarian research organization, though she had earlier celebrated Benedict as a lone scientific discoverer.

In general, Caffrey's work has the plodding thoroughness of a doctoral dissertation. She summarizes enormous amounts of material from a number of disciplines. Her reviews of trends and ideas that influenced Benedict are revealing, and they explore

themes in intellectual history overlooked by Benedict's other biographers. But, like her discussions of the history of anthropology, Caffrey's summaries are sometimes simplistic and, like her reviews of feminist thought, mechanically inserted into the narrative. Ruth Benedict taught that every culture has the vices of its virtues, and the same might be said of biography.

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Ancient Mesopotamia

The Early History of the Ancient Near East, 9000-2000 B.C. HANS J. NISSEN. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988. xiv, 215 pp., illus. \$34.95. Translated from the German edition (Darmstadt, 1983) by Elizabeth Lutzeler with Kenneth J. Northcott.

The greatest achievement of ancient Near Eastern civilization, in the view of Hans J. Nissen, was the creation and elaboration of universally valid forms of political organization. In *The Early History of the Ancient Near East*, Nissen traces the development of those forms of organization from the first permanent settlements in the area to the establish-

ment of regional states under dynasties centered at the southern Mesopotamian cities of Akkad (about 2334 to 2154 B.C.) and Ur (about 2112 to 2004 B.C.).

The book opens with an introductory chapter, "Sources and problems," that includes a provocative discussion of the respective characters of archeological and written sources. Ancient Near Eastern political developments are then treated according to phase: the time of settlement (roughly 9000 to 6000 B.C.), the evolution of isolated settlements into towns (6000 to 3200 B.C.), the periods of early high civilization (3200 to 2800 B.C.), rival city-states (2800 to 2350 B.C.), and the first territorial states (2350 to 2000 B.C.). There are a short conclusion, headed "Prospects," and a bibliography organized chapter by chapter.

Without any doubt, *The Early History of the Ancient Near East* is an original and coherent synthesis of 7000 years of political evolution, but it is also idiosyncratic. As Nissen admits in his preface, the book is one of several possible historical reconstructions. As such, it is not primarily for a general audience. It can be most effectively used by those with some background in the archeological and textual sources for the area and time periods in question and the ability to evaluate Nissen's arguments and interpretations, which provide a balance to the stock

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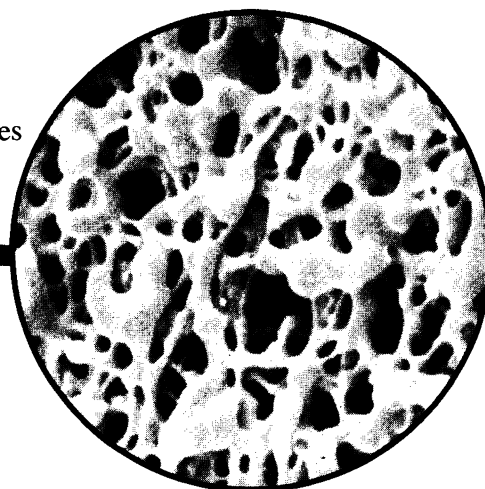
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