

The weaknesses of the book are, in some cases, a byproduct of its strengths. To begin with, Rasor never clearly explains to the reader what he means by “The Southwest Pacific Campaign.” (He appears to mean everything that did not happen in the Central Pacific or the China-Burma-India theaters.) The short “historical overview” is discursive, poorly organized, and unlikely to be of much use to the beginning student of the subject. By far the greatest weakness of the book is one characteristic of many Greenwood Press bibliographies and that is the use of numbers in the essay section to refer to full citations listed in the alphabetical bibliographical section. This is little problem when the author and title are both mentioned in the essays, but when they are not the reader will find himself constantly flipping back and forth between the two parts of the book. For example, the researcher interested in the New Guinea campaign will learn that there are books on that subject by Nathan Prefer, Edward Drea, Lance Zedric, Charles Anderson, and Stanford Smith. However, it is only after flipping to the appropriate pages in the rear that one finds that these works range from a memoir to a U.S. Army commemorative pamphlet, to a book on MacArthur’s code-breaking operations to a monograph on the Battle of the Driniumor River in April 1944. However, the richness of Rasor’s sources well repays these efforts.

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CHINA

Women and Property in China, 960–1949. By KATHRYN BERNHARDT.
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. viii, 236 pp. \$45.00.

The Republican Civil Code, put into effect in 1931, radically revised Chinese property law. The Western concept of individual property took the place of the Chinese notion of family property, and women were granted the same inheritance rights as men. This meant that the link between succession to the ancestral cult and transmission of property was severed. Daughters, even if already married, received shares equal to those of their brothers and their widowed mothers. Widows for the first time were given full ownership of a share of the estate, but no longer any veto over what their sons did with their shares. Concubines were denied any legal status as mates but were given rights as mothers. The only way to distribute the property entirely to sons or adopted sons was to do it before the father died, letting him die intestate. Naturally, family goals and behavior were not as easily altered as the law, and those newly entitled to inherit frequently had to go to court to get their shares, which led to numerous lawsuits, especially in cases of sizable estates. In *Women and Property in China, 960–1949*, Kathryn Bernhardt draws on court records of 370 inheritance disputes from the Republican period to explicate how judges thought their way through the implications of these new laws and their unintended consequences.

Although two-thirds of the chapters are devoted to the well-documented Republican period, a particularly impressive contribution of this book is its sketch of long-term trends in Chinese inheritance law from the Song through Qing periods.

Bernhardt positions herself in opposition to the Japanese pioneers of the field of Chinese property and inheritance law who paid little attention to change over time. Arguing that the trajectory of Chinese property law looks different when viewed from women's vantage point, she underscores two major changes. In the early Ming the widow of a man without sons was required for the first time to appoint a posthumous heir from among his agnatic nephews, a ruling that hurt both daughters and widows. It not only eliminated the possibility of daughters inheriting in default of a brother, but also the possibility of a widow either gaining full rights of her husband's property or choosing a more distantly related young child with whom she could form a mother-son bond. Its impact on widows, however, was mitigated by the second major change. Beginning in the late Ming, as the cult of widow chastity grew, judges came more and more to protect the right of a chaste widow to choose an heir she liked, seeing her as in need of more protection than the principle of patrilineal transmission of property. Bernhardt's findings here are important and raise many questions for social and cultural historians to tackle, both concerning the cultural environment that led to these legal innovations and the impact of them on the choices families made as they maneuvered around the law.

Long parts of Bernhardt's historical sketch are devoted to arguing against the common view that daughters had stronger claims to property in Song times than before or after, requiring the author to dispute the interpretation of a series of legal cases. Bernhardt usefully points to the legacy of the Tang equal field system and the Song government's interest in appropriating land of extinct households. Her interpretation rests primarily on her conclusion that one key author was mistaken in his understanding of the law. Specialists will want to work their way through this material carefully, consult the newly available translation of key source material (Brian E. McKnight and James T. C. Liu, trans., *The Enlightened Judgments: Ch'ing-ming Chi*, SUNY Press, 1999), and the forthcoming book-length study by Bettine Birge.

This fluently written book could easily be assigned to students. Bernhardt has immersed herself in Chinese legal writings and excels at explicating judges' decisions. Moreover, her long historical sweep provides ideal material for discussion. My only real complaint is that I would have liked more. It may seem unfair to ask that a book that already surveys 989 years cover another decade, but I would have appreciated an epilogue on the connections between the legal rulings of the Republican period and the better-known changes in the law after 1949, both in the mainland and in Taiwan. Since, as she notes, during the Republican period the new code had nearly no impact outside large cities and even in the cities was not well understood, I was left wondering whether I should be interested in the rulings of the 1930s and 1940s strictly as examples of the difficulty of mixing principles drawn from two radically different legal systems, or whether they were a necessary stage in the transformation of the legal basis of the Chinese family over the course of the twentieth century, which would make them much more important in Chinese social history and women's history.

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