City versus Countryside in Mao’s China

The gap between those living in the city and those in the countryside remains one of China’s most intractable problems. As this powerful work of grassroots history argues, the origins of China’s rural-urban divide can be traced back to the Mao Zedong era. While Mao pledged to remove the gap between the city worker and the peasant, his revolutionary policies misfired and ended up provoking still greater discrepancies between town and country, usually to the disadvantage of villagers. Through archival sources, personal diaries, untapped government dossiers, and interviews with people from cities and villages in northern China, the book recounts their personal experiences, showing how they retaliated against the daily restrictions imposed on their activities while traversing between the city and the countryside. Vivid and harrowing accounts of forced and illicit migration, the staggering inequity of the Great Leap Famine, and political exile and deportation during the Cultural Revolution reveal how Chinese people fought back against policies that pitted city dwellers against villagers.

Jeremy Brown is Assistant Professor of Modern Chinese History at Simon Fraser University. He is coeditor, with Paul G. Pickowicz, of Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People’s Republic of China (2007), and he has published articles in Late Imperial China and the Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies.
City versus Countryside in Mao’s China

Negotiating the Divide

JEREMY BROWN
Simon Fraser University
Contents

List of Maps  vii
List of Tables  viii
Acknowledgments ix
Abbreviations xiii

Introduction 1

1 The City Leads the Village: Governing Tianjin in the Early 1950s 15
2 Eating, Moving, and Working 29
3 Tianjin’s Great Leap: Urban Survival, Rural Starvation 53
4 The Great Downsizing of 1961–1963 77
5 The Four Cleanups and Urban Youth in Tianjin’s Hinterland 108
6 Purifying the City: The Deportation of Political Outcasts during the Cultural Revolution 137
7 Neither Urban nor Rural: In-Between Spaces in the 1960s and 1970s 169
8 Staging Xiaojinzhuan: The Urban Occupation of a Model Village, 1974–1978 200

Epilogue 229
Appendix. List of Interviewees 235
Selected Bibliography 237
Index 247
Maps

1. Tianjin and Hebei  page 9
2. Tianjin Municipality, 1960 63
## Tables

2.1 Population Moving in and out of Tianjin’s Urban Districts, 1951–1957  
3.1 Population Moving in and out of Tianjin’s Urban Districts, 1956–1963  
6.1 People Deported from Tianjin during the Cultural Revolution  
6.2 Outcomes for 78 Deportees from Tianjin, through 1972  
7.1 Production and Profit at the Tianjin Ironworks, 1970–1991
Acknowledgments

My first thanks go to Joseph Esherick and Paul Pickowicz, the best mentors a budding historian of modern China could hope for. They encouraged me to pursue post-1949 history, pushed me to become a better writer, demanded that I find unique sources and use them carefully, and were my most loyal advocates and toughest critics. Readers will see their influence on every page of this book.

Michael Schoenhals taught me how to find the sources necessary to write a grassroots history of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Thanks to his encouragement, I got my hands dirty every weekend sifting through files at Tianjin’s used book markets. Michael also shared so many of the sources in his own collection that I cannot mention each one individually in the footnotes; instead I offer my appreciation here.

I offer heartfelt thanks to Sigrid Schmalzer, who became my role model the first day I met her, and whose detailed comments on the entire manuscript were incredibly helpful in the last phase of revision. I also very much appreciate extensive feedback from Takashi Fujitani, Joshua Goldstein, Richard Madsen, Nayan Shah, and Steve Smith, who read and commented on the chapters. Many others offered suggestions and pointed questions in classrooms and at conferences, symposia, and workshops over the years, and it is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge their help.

My fantastic colleagues in the history department at Simon Fraser University have been constant reminders of how fortunate I am to have ended up in Burnaby. Felicitas Becker, Andrea Geiger, Thomas Kuehn, Jennifer Spear, and Ilya Vinkovetsky provided valuable feedback on a draft introduction.
Acknowledgments

Liu Haiyan and Zhang Limin of the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences’ Institute of History opened many doors for me during my research in the city. Wang Hui provided many introductions and valuable knowledge from his time working in the Tianjin Municipal Party Committee. Zheng Wei helped me find my way around Nankai University, where Jiang Pei got me started on Xiaojinzhuhuang and provided influential advice along the way. I would also like to thank Huang Bo, Flower Zhao, Liu Bingxian, and Zhang Xiaoyan for research assistance.

I cannot name the many people who provided introductions and helped to navigate difficulties in Baodi, Shexian, Shijiazhuang, and the Tianjin suburbs. Their help was vital and I thank them here. I would also like to thank archivists and librarians at the Hebei Provincial Archive, Tianjin Municipal Archive, Hexi District Archive, Tianjin Municipal Library, the National Library in Beijing, and the Universities Service Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Research and writing were supported by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Award and a Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Field Research Fellowship with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, a Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, a UCSD Center for the Humanities Award, and a Simon Fraser University President’s Research Start-up Grant.

It has been a pleasure to work with Cambridge University Press. I am deeply thankful for Marigold Acland’s energetic advocacy and support, and I very much appreciate Joy Mizan, Sarika Nakula, and Mark Fox’s work in moving the book forward. Laura Lawrie has been a fantastic production editor and copy editor, and Enid Zafran worked her magic in creating the index. Funding for indexing was provided by Simon Fraser University’s University Publications Fund.

Acknowledgments


Not every writer is lucky enough to have a mother who also happens to be a professional editor. Carolyn Brown has shaped my writing since I first put crayon to paper, and she still edits everything I send her way, including e-mails about her grandsons. Thanks, Mom.

Laura Benson’s influence on this project is deeper than she knows. Her activism taught me to take notice when injustice and inequality are staring me in the face. That’s why I wrote this book.
Abbreviations

Frequently cited works are referred to in the notes by the following abbreviations. Whenever possible, I have indicated the repository or published collection. Documents, files, and manuscripts from my own collection are denoted by the abbreviation “AC,” for “author’s collection.”

Citations referring to documents from the Hexi District Archive, Hebei Provincial Archive, and Tianjin Municipal Archive look like this: 1–6–33C. The numbers indicate the batch number (quanzong hao), catalog number (mulu hao), and file number (juan hao), respectively. The letter at the end of the entry refers to the time limit for storage (baoguan qixian): “Y” means perpetual (yongjiu), “C” means long-term (changqi), and “D” is short-term (duanqi).

AC Author’s collection
HDA Hexi District Archive (Tianjin)
HPA Hebei Provincial Archive (Shijiazhuang)
MWG Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao [Mao Zedong’s manuscripts since the founding of the People’s
Abbreviations


NBCK  Neibu cankao [Internal reference]


RMRB  Renmin ribao [People’s Daily]


TJR  Tianjin ribao [Tianjin Daily]

TJWB  Tianjin wanbao [Tianjin Evening News]

TMA  Tianjin Municipal Archive

