BENJAMIN L. READ, *Roots of the State: Neighborhood Organization and Social Networks in Beijing and Taipei.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012. 356 pp.

In this wide-ranging and potentially important study, Benjamin Read, a University of California at Santa Cruz professor of politics, explores the "territory between the extremes of societal and state corporatism" (p. 15). From the streets of Beijing and Taipei, he questions the existing framework by which ultra-local level hybrid organizations are categorized and attempts to offer an alternative theoretical model as a successor to previously overlapping and broadly defined conceptual classifications.

Mr. Read sets out to show three things: first, that strong states, with a tradition of collectivism, develop and proliferate state-sponsored networks of organizations in order to facilitate governance and maintain control in the second half of the 20th century; second, that these organizations survive their authoritarian masters and successfully evolve in democratic society; and third, that such networks, in their current forms, are used by both authoritarian and democratic regimes to channel community participation and provide general responsiveness.

Government authority and "community-level associational life" (p. 258) has been examined by many comparative studies. As indicated in the book, the existing literature has mostly focused on clientelism as it relates to hierarchy, and voluntary organizations. The author, however, suggests "hierarchy – inequalities of status and power – does not always entail clientelism, and need not undercut horizontal solidarity" (p.19). Instead, he refers to such hybrid networks, at the center of this study, as "Administrative Grassroots Engagement (AGE)" and finds that they are predominantly "mutual obligation" (p. 19) organizations.

Employing qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study compares the divergent AGE organizations that evolved historically in two ethnically Chinese societies, thereby offering insights that further develop theoretical context concerning the "state-society relationship embodied in these institutions as it plays out in practice" (p. 4). In contrasting AGE institutions in Beijing (Resident Committees or RCs) and Taipei (li-lin), the author draws attention to varying levels of democratic accountability, the degree of state intervention, and the nature of their respective political systems.

Chapter 2, traces the history of AGE organizations that began during the Qing Dynasty and carries through to the present. During the time of the Qing emperors, similar organizations were used to extend the state's "small bureaucracy into a relatively large amount of revenue collection" (p. 39). The Japanese colonial administrators on Taiwan and later occupying forces on mainland China adopted and "implemented this system far more effectively than had the Qing" (p. 41). After World War II and subsequent Chinese Civil War, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) replaced these organizations, in their Japanese form, with RCs in "an effort to integrate the many urbanites who did not belong to schools, factories, or administrative institutions" (p. 43). Likewise, the Kuomintang (KMT) similarly transitioned

these Japanese precursors into li-lin in an effort "to bring locals of some stature into semiformal work on behalf of the government" (p. 45) on Taiwan.

By examining the origins, functions, and outcomes of the divergent organizations in Beijing and Taipei, this book reveals that despite their differences, "a common logic of ultra-local politics and everyday life underlies the similarities between neighborhood institutions in the two capitals" (p. 259).

Mr. Read writes with intelligence and inspiration, if occasionally with an ambiguity that becomes repetitive. That said, this is a relevant book – one that stimulates and challenges. Anyone who wants to better understand the vertical and horizontal relationship of urban governance and popular participation should start here.

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