



The Gender of Memory: Rural Women and China's Collective Past (Asia Pacific Modern)

By Gail Hershatter

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What can we learn about the Chinese revolution by placing a doubly marginalized group—rural women—at the center of the inquiry? In this book, Gail Hershatter explores changes in the lives of seventy-two elderly women in rural Shaanxi province during the revolutionary decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Interweaving these women's life histories with insightful analysis, Hershatter shows how Party-state policy became local and personal, and how it affected women's agricultural work, domestic routines, activism, marriage, childbirth, and parenting—even their notions of virtue and respectability. The women narrate their pasts from the vantage point of the present and highlight their enduring virtues, important achievements, and most deeply harbored grievances. In showing what memories can tell us about gender as an axis of power, difference, and collectivity in 1950s rural China and the present, Hershatter powerfully examines the nature of socialism and how gender figured in its creation.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A landmark in women’s history and the history of China.”
(James C. Scott *London Review Of Books* 2012-12-06)

“Remarkable. . . . Hershatler has a complicated story to tell about women’s experiences in mid-twentieth-century China.”
(*Ms Magazine* 2011-09-02)

“If you want to be reminded of how moving history can be, then read this book.”
(*New Books In Gender Studies* 2012-05-23)

“The Gender of Memory is not only a story of China’s past but a gift of restless questions for the present.”
(Ellen R. Judd *China Quarterly* 2012-03-01)

“Hershatler offers a breathtaking interrogation of her sources and methods, rendering elegantly transparent the thought processes behind her book’s production.”
(*Cross Currents: East Asian History & Cultural Review* 2012-10-19)

“Arresting and engaging. . . . *The Gender of Memory* is a work of outstanding scholarship and significance.”
(Louise Edwards, The University of Hong Kong *The China Journal* 2013-02-12)

“This book should be on the reading list of global historians interested in China.”
(Ellen R. Judd *China Quarterly* 2012-03-01)

From the Inside Flap

“Hershatler’s volume is devoted to bringing to life women’s experience as it diverged from both men’s history and the national story. Her portraits, based on the lives of 72 women from four villages in Shaanxi Province, are a landmark in women’s history and the history of China; no future account of the [Great Leap Famine] can ignore them.”—James C. Scott *London Review of Books*

“Remarkable. . . . Hershatler has a complicated story to tell about women’s experiences in mid-twentieth-century China.”—*Ms. Magazine*

“If you want to be reminded of how moving history can be, then read this book.”—*New Books In Gender Studies*

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"I was swept into the world of Hershatter's *The Gender of Memory*. Each of these oral histories is riveting and astonishing, giving a human -- and often, heartbreaking -- dimension to history. As this book shows, history is not simply recorded facts, but what is remembered by those who were once silent." —Amy Tan

About the Author

Gail Hershatter is Distinguished Professor of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of many books, including *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* and *Women in China's Long Twentieth Century*, both from UC Press.

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