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 **Red Capitalism in South China: Growth and Development
of the Pearl River Delta (review)**

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REVIEW

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

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In this clearly written and well-researched book, Dr. George C. S. Lin has provided an in-depth analysis of the economic development and spatial transformation of the Pearl River Delta region in South China since China's adoption of pragmatic reforms and an open door policy in the late 1970s. His explanations are always linked to Western economic theories, which he critically evaluates, and in many cases he suggests that development in the Pearl River Delta cannot be explained by Western theories alone. His most important conclusion is that local initiative has been the main driving force behind the transformation of the rural economy and the establishment of an economic infrastructure. Three processes have been involved: the industrialization of rural areas, the development of a **[End Page 127]** transportation network, and the influence of Hong Kong, all of which have contributed to the transformation of the spatial economy of the Delta region.

The nine chapters of this book are very well planned. The first introductory chapter explains the book's objectives and organization. The author makes the important observation that despite rapid industrialization in the Delta region, there has been no concentration of population or manufacturing facilities in the large cities. Industrialization and urbanization have taken place primarily in the countryside, particularly in the areas between or around major metropolitan centers (areas with mixed rural and urban characteristics, referred to as "extended metropolitan regions").

Part 1, "National Context," consists of "The Operating System of Spatial Transformation" (chapter 2), "Maoist Plan-Ideological Space" (chapter 3), and "Post-Mao Market Regulatory Space" (chapter 4). These chapters detail the economic ups and downs of the Delta, focusing on the bipolar contrast between Mao Zedong's ideology and Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism, as embodied, respectively, in centrally planned (top-down) versus locally motivated (bottom-up) development

strategies; in state control versus market orientation; and in equality versus inequality. Peppered with insightful observations and theoretical ramifications, part 1 offers an excellent overview of China's economic development trajectories since 1949. The impact of economic development on spatial transformation is constantly emphasized.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 form part 2, "Development of the Pearl River Delta." Chapter 5 presents an overview and a discussion of the changes in the Delta's economic and spatial characteristics between 1980 and 1990, while the next three chapters are all case studies, each with a particular theme. Chapter 6, "Rural Industrialization," is a detailed study of the county of Nanhai, illustrating the complex process of agricultural restructuring and industrialization that has occurred in the countryside there. Nanhai offers a successful model of local development on a par with the famous Sunan and Wenzhou models. Chapter 7, "Transport Development," reports on the role of transportation networks in the economic and spatial development of Panyu County. The author points out the importance of the roadway infrastructure in strengthening the economic linkage between Panyu and the central city of Guangzhou; this has encouraged industrial and commercial activity in the suburban areas. Chapter 8, "Influence of Hong Kong," offers the third case study, on Dongguan County, which sheds light on how its proximity to Hong Kong has made Dongguan a favored site for Hong Kong industrialists to relocate their factories. Hong Kong has provided the external forces that have influenced not only the economic and spatial development of the Delta region, but also the social and cultural changes taking place there.

The concluding chapter 9 offers a graphic model to illustrate the importance of the interaction between the local and global forces that has led to the economic [End Page 128] restructuring and spatial transformation of the Pearl River Delta in the post-reform years, and the theoretical and planning implications of this phenomenon are further explored. The author correctly observes that it is impossible to predict accurately the future of the Pearl River Delta because the region is now



George C. S. Lin. *Red Capitalism in South China: Growth and Development of the Pearl River Delta*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997. xii, 219 pp. Hardcover, \$75.00, ISBN 0-7748-0616-8.

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