SPECIAL FOCUS: CHINESE CAPITALISMS

GUEST EDITOR: CHU YIN-WAH
INTRODUCTION: FROM DESTITUTE TO XIAO KANG (WELL-BEING), MAYBE DA GUO (GREAT NATION):
EXPLORATIONS OF CHINESE CAPITALISMS AND CAPITALIST ACTIONS*

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Issues pertaining to the emergence of capitalism in China have captured the attention of scholars for generations. Some have examined why, despite the prevalence of commerce and the emergence of banks, trademarks, and other seemingly capitalist institutions, a fully fledged capitalist system has not emerged in the country. Others have queried the Western centered concept of capitalism and contended that Chinese business actions are no less capitalistic in essence. Amid these debates, China’s religion, imperial rule, state-bureaucracy, legal system, trade, commerce, industrial enterprise, currency, population, migration, and war-making have been subjected to detailed scrutiny. All of these have oftentimes intertwined with the nation’s quest for wealth and political prowess. The rise of the so-called East Asian economic miracles fueled the debates in the 1970s, and so has the emergence of new theoretical perspectives or historical data. The literature is extensive; it is beyond the capacity of this short introduction (not to mention me) to recapitulate the empirically rich and theoretically complex debates.²

Of the five essays collected in this special issue, Ku Chung-hwa’s is the only one to allude to the longstanding debates about why China has failed to develop capitalism on its own. Most contributors have

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