Xin Liu's book is another instance of the excellent crop of ethnographies of China that have been appearing in recent years, facilitated by the opening of China to foreign scholars and to the renewed training of anthropologists in and from China itself. The book's title 'In One's Own Shadow' refers to 'poor and backward' parts of China that have 'remained in the shadow of the modernizing process' (p. xi). In places like Zhaojiahe village in northern Shaanxi province, modernity is something that is taking place elsewhere: in the cities and on the coast. Those who are left behind have become nostalgic for the Maoist era, when to be a poor peasant was publicly lauded (if nevertheless privately avoided if at all possible). This spatialisation of modernity is in interesting contrast...
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