

sincerely hope that it will be translated into English so that a broader readership can also have access to such a meticulous and illuminating study.

Eurasian: Mixed Identities in the United States, China, and Hong Kong, 1842-1943.

By Emma Jinhua TENG

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Mixed racial heritage has often been obscured by legal and historical records, especially in the United States, where race was sometimes assumed to have been a definite and often biological category (e.g. p. 170). Emma Teng demonstrates that Chineseness was historically defined not only in terms of blood quantum and phenotype, but also in terms of community and kinship relations. She illustrates the choices that biracial couples and children made to choose particular identities within the legal, social, and cultural parameters of the U.S., China, and Hong Kong (e.g. p. 63, p. 197). Teng ends her book by concluding that racial mixing may help to ossify new categories rather than to blur old ones (p. 245). Nevertheless, by successfully demonstrating the latitude by which people could fashion their identities in history, given their particular situations (p. 215), Teng also opens up a greater degree of flexibility by which we may discuss race and multiculturalism today.

For the purposes of this book, Teng defines “Eurasian” in terms of Chinese and Caucasian (especially American and British) relationships. The book therefore does not include issues

concerning other Asian or other non-White mixes, and thus tends thus to focus on relatively privileged or otherwise noteworthy families. Such definitions do allow Teng to follow the unions of poor Chinese immigrants and Irish women and their progeny, such as the poor, mixed-race criminal George Appo. Given historian Noel Ignatiev's 1995 book *How the Irish became White* about the social construction of Whiteness in the nineteenth century, it is noteworthy that the handsome half-Irish George Appo was seen as "virtually white" in the early twentieth century (p. 93). Teng acknowledges that the term "Eurasian" is problematic, especially given that many of her subjects would not identify as such (p. 5). Part of Teng's larger point, perhaps, is that such terms are arbitrary and *should* be somewhat problematic, as well as problematized.

Teng demonstrates the ways that class and gender could influence public perceptions and sociological studies of mixed race. In "Part II: Debating Hybridity," Teng deconstructs discourses of race, both as a local problem concerning assimilation in the United States and as an international phenomenon in the context of uneven power dynamics around the world (pp. 118-119). Through the work of Wu Jingchao and Herbert Day Lamson, Teng deconstructs Robert Park's universal model of the "marginal man" (pp. 140-141). Each sociologist disaggregated Chinese vs. Caucasian fatherhood and examined social acceptance in specific cultural environments.

Teng analyzes discourses of both "hybrid vigor" (p. 95, p. 104) and "hybrid degeneracy" (p. 97) in ways that complicate historical narratives of Chinese development of race theory at the turn of the century. Reformer Kang Youwei disaggregated whiteness as color and as racial category, and thus allowed for non-Whites to achieve Caucasian physical characteristics through both racial mixing and daily habits of diet and exercise (p. 121). Despite opposition by some (p. 46), such reformers hoped to achieve the supposedly superior physical strength of whiteness while retaining Chinese intellectual and cultural traits (p. 119), thus recapitulating notions of racial hierarchies without presuming Caucasian superiority in all things (pp. 131-132). Such "idealization of the Eurasian hybrid can thus be read as one re-

sponse to the problem of negotiating Chinese identity in an age of Western dominance, an alternative to the type of visceral Han Chinese racial nationalism espoused by leading Chinese revolutionaries like Zou Rong” (p. 133). Indeed, ethnic nationalism seemingly narrows categories of identity (p. 216).

In Part III: Claiming Identities, Teng illustrates the ways in which Eurasians could “consent” or choose ethnic identity. For example, Eurasians could paternal lineage and Chinese surnames, emphasize Chinese linguistic and cultural capital, or, from a base abroad, could support Chinese minorities and Chinese patriotism. In Hong Kong and Shanghai, privileged Eurasians often became a half-caste colonial elite, their own special category. Teng offers an intimate portrait of the small world of Eurasian elites in Shanghai and Hong Kong (p. 228) in ways that illuminate the importance of legal environments for creating certain sets of choices (p. 197).

It is historically appropriate to approach Eurasians as a mixed-race group rather than a colonial elite because they advocated on behalf of the poor and illegitimate offspring of mixed racial unions. In Chapter Eight, “No Gulf between a Chan and a Smith amongst Us,” Teng traces political activism, on the part of the Eurasian elite, for poor progeny through the Welfare League. By examining mixed-race as a shared socio-political experience, she explores the possibility of cross-class solidarity and political activism among mixed-race peoples.

Elegantly written, *Eurasian* draws readers to reconsider major questions of race through the lens of personal stories. One of Teng’s major contributions is to bridge Asian and Asian-American studies, and this book will be an asset in undergraduate classes in both history and ethnic-studies departments. Teng’s book culminates in a series of questions that will challenge students’ assumptions about multiculturalism (pp. 258-259). These questions are increasingly urgent and important today. With special sections that focus on intimate portraits of historical actors, *Eurasian* will be accessible to popular audiences and undergraduate classrooms.