

Regarding Victor LOUZON's Review of LIN, Jacqueline Zhenru. 2024.
Making National Heroes: The Exemplarist Production of Masculinities
***in Contemporary China.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.**
 Published in *China Perspectives* 138: 93-4.

Erratum

The editorial team of *China Perspectives* would like to acknowledge two factual errors in the book review: Jacqueline Zhenru Lin is not Assistant Professor but Research Assistant Professor in the Centre for China Studies; her monograph is not based on her doctoral dissertation but on her M.Phil. dissertation, defended in the gender studies programme and the Department of Anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in July 2016.

Response from Jacqueline Zhenru Lin

I thank Victor Louzon for promptly reviewing my book. But the inaccuracies reflected in the erratum above make me doubt how rigorously the book was read before the review was written. Louzon suggests that the book's focus on gender politics is my pragmatic "token of loyalty" to feminist cultural anthropology, as foregrounding state politics instead would be "unwise for a Chinese scholar." I reject these suggestions. In this response, I would like to reiterate the value of the anthropological approach, the ethnographic method, and feminist analysis. All these intellectual endeavours enrich the examination of what motivates people in bottom-up nationalism, the production of alternative understandings of the past in contemporary China, and the social orders and futures they envision for their communities. Louzon's main concern seems to be why gender/masculinity/feminism really deserves to be front-and-centre in a study of KMT veterans. This focus is not "downplay[ing] the most explicitly political implications" of my interlocutors, as Louzon suggests, but rather capturing what I saw on the ground (through 14 years of on-the-ground fieldwork), and how the politics of commemoration unfold in multifaceted ways, beyond more intuitive state politics (i.e., the CCP-KMT rivalry) alone.

Whilst Louzon describes this focus as "artificially forced," I believed that it was essential to focus on what is significant to my interlocutors – i.e., those who create and revise the past in the redress movement – rather than imposing my own agenda as a researcher as to what "the most explicitly political implications of [my] subject" should be. What I saw on the ground was not "the danger faced by an authoritarian regime" or an aim to "outdo" or express "outspoken dislike" for the Chinese Communist Party, as some readers might prefer, but rather the complex

ways in which local activists interact with veterans, their ethical practices to address political stigma, and how they construct the meanings of the past, present, and future for their communities. To study KMT veterans only in terms of their relationship to the CCP, as Louzon may have preferred, would be to overlook the care they have received from people in their villages, towns, and cities for decades. These caretakers choose to honour these forgotten soldiers as a means of seeking justice and creating male heroes for their regional and national communities. In the same spirit, I do not believe that the book "strangely neglects" the role of class in these processes, as Louzon suggests; the book's chapters on male activists in rural areas and female activists in urban settings describe socioeconomic statuses. The Marxist framework fails to explain how these groups have managed to cooperate for decades. Their shared masculine fantasies towards KMT veterans and the shared imagination of nationhood shaped by identical gender structures connect them. Despite significant economic differences among KMT veterans in various regions, their symbolic status markers and hero identities remain consistent. Therefore, my analysis emphasises cooperation beyond class to understand social movements and policies in China more effectively. The state, I argue, is not "eerily absent," as it relates to the redress movement in nuanced ways. Activist leaders may promote slogans such as "our actions shape the future for our state," while grassroots activists may assert, "we are doing what we can; I never care what the state does." The presence and influence of the state fluctuate constantly. In my book, I aimed to articulate how activists reimagine the state in their lives, aligning with or challenging official histories. I did so because academic and public discourses often treat the Chinese state as a monolith.

I note and accept all criticism and will make the relevant improvements. However, I reject any suggestion that my work is simply a "token of loyalty" to a niche or inferior subfield, a pragmatic insertion into a book series, or a shying away from "what really matters" (for Louzon, the "authoritarian regime" and attempts to "outdo" it), simply because I am a Chinese scholar.

Jacqueline Zhenru Lin, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong (j.zr.lin@cuhk.edu.hk).