

Preface

The economic changes since 1978 in China have been widely regarded as having brought significant social and political change. Although it might once have seemed almost self-evident to examine social and political change in China from the perspective of class and class consciousness, this has not, for the most part, occurred with respect to the last three decades. A workshop held at the University of Sydney's new China Studies Centre in late January and early February 2011 discussed the impact of the Reform Era in China on the development of class and class consciousness. In particular it highlighted the need for greater understanding and analysis of the changes involving manual, semi-skilled and skilled labourers.

This volume brings together new research by leading scholars concerned with class formation and class consciousness among and between the peasantry, migrant workers and the urban working class. It highlights how economic growth has changed class relations and class consciousness in villages and in the urban workplace. Most importantly this research addresses issues related to the extent to which migrant workers form a new working class, are absorbed into the old working class, or simply remain as migrant workers. It is also concerned with how changes in the urban economic environment have led to changes in the urban working class, and most dramatically for workers in state-owned enterprises (SOEs), many of whom have been adversely impacted by economic restructuring. Overall there are a number of complex trajectories of change for different social categories that are of interest to social historians and social analysts generally, as well as to those seeking to understand change in China.

In the organization of any workshop and the production of any edited volume there are always acknowledgements to be made to those whose names do not appear in the following pages. In this case, we would like to thank all those who attended the workshop on 'Class and Class Consciousness in China' in Sydney in January and February 2011 and gave generously of their time and ideas. We would also like to thank Zoe Morrison, Nisha Brooks and Megan Barry – the administrative staff of the China Studies Centre – for their admirable organization.

Beatriz Carrillo and David S.G. Goodman
China Studies Centre
University of Sydney