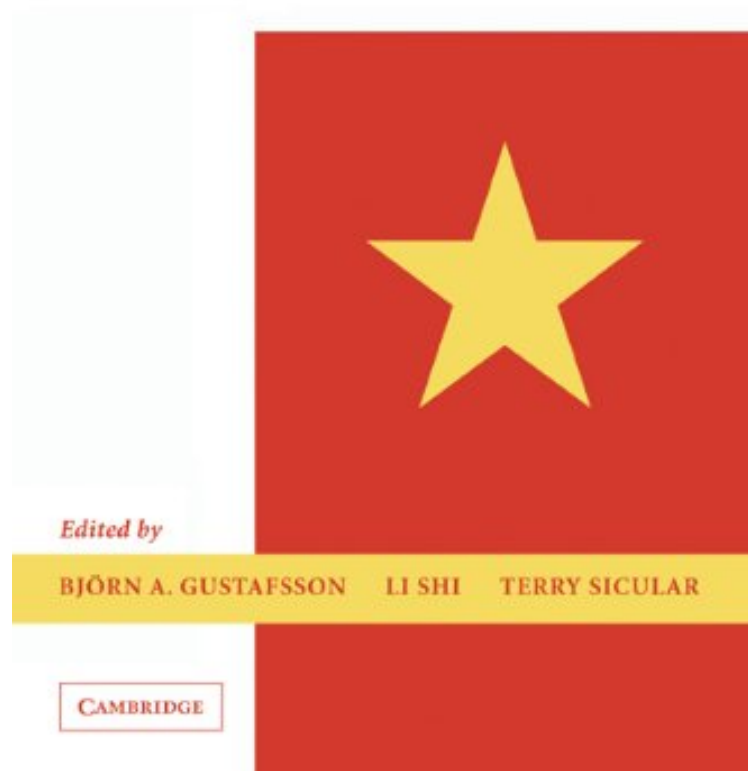


Inequality and Public Policy in China

BJouml;RN A. GUSTAFSSON, LI SHI, TERRY SICULAR

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BJouml;RN A. GUSTAFSSON, LI SHI, TERRY SICULAR : Inequality and Public Policy in China before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Inequality and Public Policy in China:

This volume examines trends in inequality in the People's Republic of China. It contains findings on inequality nationwide, as well as within the rural and urban sectors, with an emphasis on public policy considerations. Several chapters focus on inequality of income; others analyse poverty, inequality in wealth, and the distribution of wages.

Attention is given to groups such as migrants, women, and the elderly, as well as the relationship between income and health care funding and the impact of the rural tax reform. All contributors to this volume make use of a large, nationwide survey of Chinese households, the product of long-term co-operation between Chinese and international researchers that is unique in its scope and duration. Using these data, the contributors examine changes in inequality from 1988 to 2002.

"Although rapid widening income inequality in China is widely recognized as one of the country's foremost policy challenges, analysis of income distribution trends has been severely hampered by data weaknesses. This volume is a major step forward in providing policy-makers and analysts with the necessary reliable data on long-term trends in key indicators of income distribution from across China, including some particularly welcome new data from domestic migrants living in urban areas. That data provides the basis for a set of papers by an outstanding group of Chinese and foreign scholars, in which the linkages between recent trends and public policy - both the ways in which policy has influenced those trends, and the implications of these trends for current policy - are rigorously and imaginatively analyzed." Bill Bikales, UNDP, China

"This volume has been eagerly awaited by the entire community of economists and sociologists researching China, since it reports on the third phase of the China Household Income Project, the most important, as well as the longest-running, household research program in China. This superb volume fully delivers on the promise, providing the clearest and most detailed view of the dramatic changes in income distribution occurring in China into the current millennium. The results directly challenge key aspects of the popular wisdom about growing inequality in China. Moreover, the volume goes well beyond simply describing patterns of change, and for the first time shows and analyzes the impact on Chinese households of specific government policies on health care, social security, wage policy and taxation. Essential reading." Barry Naughton, University of California, San Diego

"Great books have three basic ingredients. They are based on high quality data, strong analysis and an understanding of the analyst of the issues. This edited volume, *Inequality and Public Policy in China*, is rare indeed because it has them all - in abundance. The editors, Gustafsson, Li and Sicular, should be congratulated on producing a piece of scholarship that not only provides the reader with a realistic and balanced view of income inequality, but also on putting China's case into perspective and beginning to explain the structural and policy bases for one the most important issues facing the nation's development today." Scott Rozelle, Stanford University

"China in the reform era has experienced not only extraordinary economic growth, but also dramatic increases in inequality. Rising income inequality and what to do about it has become a pressing concern for China's leaders. The present volume, which presents analyses by leading experts using the best available data on China's income distribution, represents a benchmark for judging these issues." Martin Whyte, Harvard University

"Highly recommended." - Choice

"As rightfully claimed by the editors of this book, an important feature of this book is that most of the chapters are based on high-quality and relatively recent data obtained from nationwide surveys of Chinese households. This book has a fairly wide coverage of various issues in relation to income distribution in China. It reexamines some old questions with new data, and it also analyzes some new topics, such as wealth distribution, inequality in health care, unemployment, and early retirement and urban China, the living arrangements of the elderly, and the redistributive impact of taxation in rural China." - *Economic Development and Cultural Change*

"The reader is presented with a capturing book that lends credible evidence to much of what we have already suspected (such as the fact that education mitigates inequality and that poverty has decreased since the late 1980s), provides important insights into under-researched topics (such as the impact of migrant incomes to rural and urban inequality), and challenges assumptions that we have taken as near-certain (e.g. that inequality has been steadily increasing)." - *East Asia: An International Quarterly*

"This is a rigorous and well-executed book by leading scholars of China's economic and social transformation. It provides a rare fusion of rigorous empirical analysis, clear presentation, good-quality data and thoughtful attention to public policy concerns.... It is a model of research, and of research collaboration, deserving support and emulation." - *The China Journal*

"[This book] excels [in] the provision of high-quality data, rigorous methods, and focused themes." - *Pacific Affairs*

About the Author Bjorn A. Gustafsson is Professor at the Department of Social Work, Goteborg University, Sweden. His research covers empirical studies on poverty, social assistance, the distribution of economic well-being and the welfare state, as well as the economics of immigration. He has published widely in scholarly journals and been commissioned by many public authorities to write special reports or contribute to special reports. Professor Gustafsson coedited *Changing Patterns in the Distribution of Economic Welfare, An International Perspective* with Peter Gottschalk and Edward Palmer (Cambridge University Press, 1997) and *Poverty and Low Income in the Nordic Countries* with Peder J. Pedersen (2000). Li Shi is Professor of Economics in the School of Economics and Business at Beijing Normal University. He is one of China's leading scholars on inequality and poverty. His past positions include Director of the Center of Economic Transition and Development Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Professor Li's publications include several edited volumes, including *China's Retreat from Equality* (2001, with R. Zhao and C. Riskin), and *Unemployment, Inequality and Poverty in Urban China* (2006, with H. Sato). He has also served as a consultant to international donor organizations and has been a key contributor to China's Human Development Report. Terry Sicular is Associate Professor in the

Department of Economics at the University of Western Ontario. She has also held posts at Stanford and Harvard Universities, and is a leading researcher on the Chinese economy. Her research has covered topics such as China's market reforms, rural labor and employment, capital flight, and inequality. She has published widely in scholarly journals, and served as a consultant to international donor organizations. Recent and forthcoming publications include *The Urban-Rural Income Gap and Inequality in China*, *The of Income and Wealth* (forthcoming, with X. Yue, B. Gustafsson, and S. Li), and *Why Do Revolutions Succeed? The Role of Rational Choice in the Chinese Communist Revolution*, *Homo Oeconomicus* (2004). Professor Sicular also edited *Food Price Policy in Asia: A Comparative Study* (1989).