Chapter 11

Spatial Profiling

Seeing Rural and Urban in Mao’s China

Jeremy Brown

People in all societies judge, categorize, and differentiate. During China’s socialist period (1949–1978), one of the main sites of differentiation and discrimination was place-based: urban versus rural. Like racial, ethnic, and gender difference in North America today, rural-urban difference in Mao Zedong’s China was socially constructed and historically contingent. But it was also very real. The way people saw and experienced rural-urban difference had real consequences. Under Mao, people who lived in villages ate different food, spoke a different language, wore different clothes, and had a different skin color from people who lived in cities. A peasant’s typical day was different from that of an urban worker. The economic gap was also huge: urban people earned guaranteed salaries and had money to spend while village incomes were miniscule and tenuous.

When we consider that the Communist revolution was based on peasant support and aimed to bridge the economic and cultural chasm separating city from village, it seems puzzling that difference between urban and rural people remained so persistent during the Mao era. According to orthodox Marxism, the countryside was backward and stagnant, and only the urban working class could effect revolutionary change. China under Mao, however, appeared to point toward a new path, with peasants as the main revolutionary force offering the utopian promise of equality between city and countryside. But reality was more complex. After the Communists established the People’s Republic in 1949, China entered a period of “learning from the Soviet Union” and Soviet-style heavy industrial development became priority number one. In order to finance urban industrialization, peasants were forced to sell grain to the state at artificially low prices and were restricted from leaving their villages. At times, Mao expressed dismay at the anti-rural implications of this policy orientation. As historian
Maurice Meisner writes, Mao responded by promoting the “resurgence of an ideology that spoke on the peasants’ behalf and the pursuit of policies that tended to benefit the countryside rather than the cities and their ‘urban overlords.’” This ideology was most evident during the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960), which called for irrigation projects, rural electrification, and small-scale village industry, and again during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when more rural youths attended school than at any other point in Chinese history.

Yet while the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution were ambitious and ultimately cataclysmic experiments, neither event significantly changed how rural and urban people saw each other. Why not? One significant factor was the two-tiered household registration, or hukou, system, which classified every individual in China according to rural or urban residence. Household registration was institutionalized after the starvation and massive population dislocations of the Great Leap famine (when tens of millions perished), and it guaranteed food rations, housing, health care, and education to urban residents. Rural people were expected to be self-reliant and were officially restricted from moving to cities, although many peasants still migrated illicitly. Mao may have periodically questioned the anti-rural nature of China’s Stalinist development model, but because he never wavered from its institutional underpinnings (the hukou system and grain rationing), rural and urban people remained unequal.

While scholars have documented the details and consequences of the hukou system, the visual dimension of rural-urban difference is less well understood. Rural-urban difference endured under Mao because of an ingrained culture of seeing that predated the Communist takeover of the mainland. I call this culture of seeing “spatial profiling,” which means determining someone’s background as rural or urban at first glance and treating him or her differently based on appearance. When we analyze place-based identity in China in terms of how people saw one another, everyday exchanges and local practices seem more powerful and lasting than Maoist ideology or shifting national policy.

How old was spatial profiling in China? Historians differ on the extent of the rural-urban divide in Ming (1368–1644) and Qing dynasty (1644–1911) China. Some scholars hold that there were no significant cultural differences between the two realms, while others argue that a distinct urban identity emerged. Most agree that by the Republican era (1912–1949), the gap between town and country had sharpened significantly as the rural economy stagnated and as urban centers—particularly coastal treaty ports like Shanghai and Tianjin—witnessed an upsurge of modern industry and print culture.
As modernization fueled the growth of cosmopolitan cities, urban dwellers increasingly came to view villagers and rural life as inferior. Historian Xiaorong Han has shown how during the first half of the twentieth century, urban intellectuals, even those who had been born and raised in villages themselves, saw peasants in contradictory and contemptuous ways: for example, ignorant yet sweetly innocent, or poor yet disturbingly rebellious. As Han writes, this engendered a process of mutual alienation: “No matter how strongly the intellectuals sympathized with the peasants, in the eyes of the peasants they were often strangers with strange ideas as well as members of the ruling class.” By the time the Communists assumed national leadership in 1949, rural and urban people spoke different languages, wore different clothes, and had distinct conceptions of work and labor. Migrants brought customs and rituals from their native places to the metropolis. And throughout the Mao era urban people were sent to live in the countryside for “reeducation” by the peasants and to provide expertise needed for building the socialist countryside—including millions of “sent-down youth” during the Cultural Revolution (see Zheng’s chapter in this volume). Nonetheless, cities and villages continued to diverge in architecture, infrastructure, and social geography.

Communist policymakers and propagandists were well aware that villagers and city-dwellers held potentially troublesome preconceived notions about each other. But official efforts to reshape urbanites’ views about peasants, both in the immediate post-takeover period and throughout the 1960s and 1970s, ended up reinforcing difference rather than eliminating it. Spatial profiling—seeing others as rural or urban in everyday interactions—proved to be remarkably durable.

In 2004–2005, over the course of a year of research in and around Tianjin, I asked almost everyone I met about rural-urban difference, logging ninety interviews. When I was in Tianjin, north China’s largest port city and home to more than ten million residents, I asked if people had ever been to a village during the Mao years, and what they thought of peasants and villages. When I went to the countryside, mostly to Baodi County, a rural area about forty-five miles north of Tianjin, I asked the opposite. Whether in the city or in villages, I asked how people could determine the rural or urban identity of someone they were meeting for the first time.

The people I interviewed assumed that, as a foreigner, I knew little about China and the Mao period. My perceived ignorance was an advantage because respondents were forced to explain in detail things that they usually took for granted. Differences in clothing, food, and language might be too obvious and natural to mention to an insider. But these everyday distinctions get us closer to understanding how people have seen and experienced rural-urban difference.
SEEING PEOPLE

As economic networks between city and countryside were reestablished in the early 1950s after years of war and strife, propaganda images clarified that cities would remain China’s locus of civilization and economic development. In Figure 11.1, a cartoon celebrating renewed rural-urban ties, shopping in the city is presented as a happy event for peasants, but in order to mark the shoppers as rural, they are drawn as yokels, with wrinkled faces, big hats, and baggy, rumpled clothes. One is clutching a long pipe, the other toting a gunny sack. They have plenty of time on their hands as they happily pose while indifferent townspeople go about their regular business in the background.

Figure 11.1  This cartoon comes from a travel montage featuring the Communists’ efforts to rebuild the city of Yantai in Shandong province in 1950. The cartoonist’s message was that peasant shoppers belonged in a healthy socialist city, but they were nonetheless clearly identified as wide-eyed, bumpkin-like outsiders. From: Shang Yi, “Nongminmen xiao mimi de jincheng lai mai dongxi” [Peasants smilingly enter the city to buy things], Manhua yuekan 6 (November 1, 1950): 20.
The cartoonist was playing up to readers’ imagined notions of what rural people should look like. Worn clothing and wrinkled faces remained surefire markers of rural people well after 1950.

Figure 11.1 suggests that peasants would still be easily identifiable as hicks in Mao’s new China. Almost all of my respondents claimed that they were able to tell whether someone was rural or urban during the Mao period without hearing them speak a word. Even in a first encounter on the street or at the market, clothing, bearing, and skin color were clear indications of place-based identity and helped people mentally categorize others. One Tianjin man visited his ancestral village for the first time as a young boy in the 1970s. He said that the main difference he noticed between city people and peasants was that peasants “looked old” because they worked outside all day long.10

Other city people said that they could tell a person was rural because of his or her darker skin. City people who spent a lot of time outside felt stigmatized as rural by their urban peers. A Tianjin-born teenager who was sent to work at a state-run farm on the outskirts of the city in 1963 was annoyed by the constant comments of his family during his weekend visits home: “you’re tanned black,” they kept saying.11 In Figure 11.2, a photograph taken in 1968, compare the face of model sent-down youth Xing Yanzi (right) with the face of her conversation partner (left). The elderly woman’s dark, wrinkled face identifies her as a peasant. Even in images meant to celebrate rural-urban togetherness, the city was represented by youthful vigor and light, while the countryside appeared dark and old by comparison.

Clothing was another important marker of rural difference. Respondents described urban clothing in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s as fashionable, new, and made from tailored fabrics. Village attire was dirty, tattered, and made of homespun cotton. Even in images meant to publicize the interconnectedness of cities and villages in 1950s China, dress and adornment identified people as urban or rural. Figure 11.3 accompanies a written passage about how cotton and food from villages enter the city and help factory production to flourish. On the left, a woman with short hair, a floral-print top, and a work apron attends to a machine in a textile factory. On the right, a woman with braids and a plain, striped top picks cotton by hand. The factory worker’s modern hairstyle and showy clothes mark her as urban.

City and village people looked different before the Communists assumed power, and this would continue in the new society, as Figure 11.3 suggests. Tianjin residents noticed differences in clothing as soon as the mostly rural soldiers of the People’s Liberation Army occupied the city in January 1949. A Communist official who followed the soldiers into Tianjin remembered that city people were surprised by the conquerors’ rustic attire and asked, “How can you wear such tattered clothing?” The new rulers
of Tianjin explained, “We wear these clothes all day long to march and fight battles, so of course they are tattered. We aren’t particular about such things.”

Tianjin residents also worried that the new regime might prohibit urban fashions. Indeed, as Christian Hess’s contribution to this volume shows, transforming urban environments to render them visibly more revolutionary was a key priority for Communist leaders. People in Tianjin spread rumors that the Communists had prohibited urban-style gowns and leather shoes, and some clerks stopped wearing glasses to the office because spectacles were a clear marker of an urban intellectual identity. This particular symbol persisted throughout the Mao era, as shown in Figure 11.4, a photograph taken in 1975 of city youth collaborating with peasants on scientific soil management. Even without reading a caption, viewers would be able to immediately identify glasses-wearing Hou Jun, front left, as a woman from the city sharing her specialized knowledge with rural people.
Shortly after the Communists occupied Tianjin, female workers asked the Party cadres taking over their factories if they were still allowed to perm their hair or wear lipstick and high heels.\textsuperscript{14} The officials replied that people were free to wear whatever they wanted, but the regime was much stricter toward its own officials than toward urban factory workers. In 1949, a woman cadre at the newly founded \textit{Tianjin Daily} newspaper found an old pair of high heels on a windowsill at the office. In the rural areas under Communist control before 1949, she had loved to dance and always wanted to wear heels, so she was elated to find a free pair. She began wearing the shoes, which had probably been discarded by a more cautious co-worker, but her colleagues criticized her for violating the image of frugality that the Communists wanted to present. She had to get rid of the shoes and do a self-criticism.\textsuperscript{15} In policing what the woman newspaper cadre could wear, the new regime was acknowledging urban-rural difference. High heels were an extreme symbol of urban leisure and frivolity, and because the party was striving to uphold its hard-working image in the immediate takeover period, it was a serious ideological lapse for the dance-loving woman to wear them.

The concern over ideological correctness gained renewed emphasis in the mid-1960s, when in the wake of the Great Leap disaster, Mao became concerned that the revolution was dying. In the years leading up to the Cultural
Revolution, the Party launched the Socialist Education Movement and Four Cleanups Movement to root out corruption and re-instill commitment to socialist revolution. And so, more than fifteen years after the high heels flap, official documents again criticized urban clothing styles as unacceptably decadent, and in so doing, implicitly recognized the continued salience of difference between city and village styles.

A 1966 article, “The Revolutionary Crucible Gives Birth to a New Person,” chronicled the multiple transformations of a girl named Jinxia, who left her village in Hebei Province to attend a university in Tianjin. When she first got to Tianjin, Jinxia wore rural clothes and her classmates derided her as a hick.
She decided that it was a loss of face for her to wear her coarse cloth gown in the city, so she borrowed money and had a fashionable skirt and blouse made. She also traded her old cloth bookbag for a faux leather handbag. During summer break, Jinxia visited her home village. Jinxia’s mother had died shortly after childbirth, and a fellow villager had nursed her. As soon as she got off the bus, Jinxia ran into her old wet nurse, who cried out a happy greeting, but Jinxia pretended not to hear her. A friend with Jinxia said, “Somebody is calling you.” Jinxia looked back, saw the old woman’s dirty tattered clothing, and coldly replied, “I don’t know her.” Later when she was sent to another Hebei village on a work assignment, Jinxia realized her errors and apologized for “forgetting her roots.” Her story confirms that clothing was still a crucial marker of rural-urban difference in 1966.

According to my interviewees, even new city clothes were not enough to cover up someone’s rural identity. Four people, all village-born, said that rural people carried themselves differently, no matter what they wore. A Baodi woman who first went to the city in the late 1950s said that “even if a village person has good clothes,” he or she “cannot wear it well, it will not look clean.” Another Baodi man who spent many years in and around Tianjin agreed, saying, “Even if a peasant puts on city clothes and goes to the city, you can tell that he’s a peasant from his bearing.” A rural bearing (fengdu) was hesitant and dazed, he explained, not confident and spirited like that of urban people. As this man’s comments and Jinxia’s experience as a new college student attest, when villagers went to the city or came in contact with urban people, they became acutely aware of their inferior status. For the first time, their clothes seemed dirty and threadbare. One villager who first went to Tianjin in 1949 seeking work remembered: “I felt I was an idiot and that I knew nothing.”

In addition to outward markers of urbanity or rusticity, most of the people I interviewed were convinced that villagers and city people had distinct personalities. City residents often called villagers laoshi or pushi, terms that mean “honest” or “down-to-earth” but also imply “naive and simple-minded.” Communist propaganda actually encouraged such descriptions of rural personality shortly after the takeover of Tianjin. For example, a 1949 report about an industrial exhibition in Tianjin remarked that the presence of peasants at the meeting had transformed city residents’ “incorrect viewpoint of treating peasants as unimportant.” By meeting villagers, city people learned about “the peasants’ hard work, plain living, and sincere and frank feelings.” The report emphasized post-1949 changes, but still assumed difference and hierarchy.

Rural people I talked to readily agreed that they were laoshi, and had an even broader vocabulary to describe themselves as honest or straightforward: shizai, tanbai (real, honest, dependable), chengshi (honest and trustworthy),
and *hanhou* (simple and honest). But villagers also had negative impressions of urban personalities. If rural people were honest and straightforward, then urbanites were the opposite: *jian* (treacherous), *jianhua* (crafty), or *hua* (slippery).

These place-based descriptions were not limited to everyday conversations. They also appeared in official documents throughout the Mao era. A 1951 report on a trade exhibition in Tianjin noted that peasants, afraid of city thieves and cheats, held on tight to their wallets after getting off the train in Tianjin. Before the 1951 meeting, some Tianjin people still thought that “peasants were tattered, casual, and impolite.” But after meeting rural people at the trade exhibition, Tianjin residents supposedly realized that peasants were actually “honest and considerate, plain and simple, well-behaved and courteous.” Yet these apparent ideological transformations were fleeting. In advance of a peasant representative meeting in Tianjin in 1965, urban shopkeepers admitted that they judged rural people solely by their appearance (*yi yimao qu ren*) and tried to pawn off their dull, low-quality items on gullible rural shoppers. After hearing propaganda about the peasant representative meeting, the shopkeepers pledged to change their ways and treat peasants better.

Why were such stereotypes so persistent throughout the Mao era? Ideas about rural-urban difference predated the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949. Afterwards they were either impervious to propaganda or buttressed by official messages that implicitly reinforced difference even as they outwardly criticized discrimination and ostentation. Alongside new institutional barriers like the *hukou* system that separated city and countryside, a longstanding culture of seeing differentiated between rural and urban people, both in everyday interactions and in official propaganda.

**SEEING PLACE**

Ideas about difference went beyond appearances and purportedly innate characteristics. People linked distinct notions of food, labor, and cleanliness to the urban sphere or the rural sphere. All of these issues arose from economic differences between privileged cities and struggling villages.

How food was obtained and prepared—and, not insignificantly, how it tasted—loomed large in respondents’ ideas about rural-urban difference in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. For many in the Tianjin region, the difference between village and city came down to coarse grain (*culiang*) versus fine grain (*xiliang*), meaning cheap cornmeal versus expensive processed wheat flour. Villagers wanted to make sure I understood that although noodles and dumplings made out of wheat flour are relatively common in northern Chinese villages nowadays, they were rare luxuries forty years ago. My hosts
in villages made a point of feeding me fried cornmeal cakes or steamed corn buns so that I could get a taste of what rural life was like during the Mao period.

One elderly Baodi woman gave me a plate of watermelon slices and told me that she had never been to a city in her life. Tianjin was just over an hour away by bus, and Beijing was only two hours to the west, but she had never had the chance to visit. She had heard that the city was great, especially compared to her village, with its bumpy dirt roads. In 2005, the uneven potholed lanes remained, but as she understood it, the rural-urban gap had closed in terms of food. “We used to eat corn buns here,” she said, and that was all she needed to say about rural-urban difference in the Mao era. To her, eating coarse grain was the main thing that distinguished her village from Tianjin—before and after 1949.

Rural women who had the chance to visit Tianjin in late-1960s and early-1970s remembered the wheat noodles and dumplings more than anything else. One Baodi teenager made friends with a Tianjin girl who had been sent to live in her village in the late-1960s. The sent-down youth’s parents heard about their daughter’s new friend and invited her to visit Tianjin. “When we got to Tianjin, I thought that everything was new and fresh,” the country girl said. “Her family treated me very well, they boiled noodles and made dumplings for me. Where could you find wheat flour in the village back then?” She went on to praise the beauty of Tianjin’s colonial buildings, relics of the city’s days as a treaty port, but the architecture was secondary to her memories of special food.

The corn/wheat gap was one of the most glaring manifestations of rural inferiority. Rural people knew that urbanites ate wheat regularly, and city residents were aware of the difference too. I spoke with an eighty-year-old Tianjin-born man who asserted, “The food that peasants make tastes bad.” Switching into English, he added: “No taste, no odor; tasteless, odorless.” He remembered that in the 1940s and 1950s, food-based distinctions were used to curse people. “You cannot afford to eat wheat flour” and “corn brain” were two of the most stinging insults of the era, he said. In everyday interactions, such anti-rural slurs were as prevalent after 1949 as they were before.

While rural people acknowledged the high quality of city food, they disparaged the quantity. Rural visitors to Tianjin in the 1950s complained that portions were too small. They felt that this stinginess reflected poorly on city people. Offering small portions was not laoshi. One old man I met in the Baodi town square said that whenever he went to the city for family visits or for work meetings, he did not like to eat out or in city people’s homes because the dishes were too small and everything seemed too formal. At restaurants, he paid what seemed like a lot of money but never got enough to eat. He preferred going to a relative’s house in the city for home-style meals.
Rural men complained about tiny platters of food in Tianjin, but women envied the conveniences of city cooking. When a village teenager visited her sister’s city home in the late 1970s, she immediately noticed that meals were prepared on a gas stove. It seemed so easy and fast. In villages outside of Tianjin, families heated their food over fires fed by dried corn stalks and other kindling, a practice that has continued in the twenty-first century today, as seen in Figure 11.5 (see website). While the concrete base shown in the photograph is a relatively recent innovation, the use of organic fuel is not.

For rural people in the 1960s and 1970s, cooking on a gas stove was an unattainable luxury. That city people cooked with gas instead of burning dried corn stalks also exemplified how divorced they had become from agricultural production. Both villagers and city people agreed that urbanites did not understand where their food came from. One running joke that three people independently mentioned to me was the inability of urban youth to distinguish between chives and young wheat stalks. When one Tianjin youngster first arrived in a Baodi village as a sent-down youth in April 1964, he assumed that the surrounding fields of green sprouts swaying in the breeze were full of the tasty chives that he enjoyed in his dumplings back at home. He wondered aloud why there were so many chives growing there. A villager on the welcoming committee cleared up the confusion. “After [the sprouts] grow up, we harvest and process them into the wheat that you eat in the city,” the villager explained.26

Another Tianjin boy assigned to a village even closer to the city made the same mistake in 1977. “You sure have a lot of chives,” he told the villagers who greeted him. Probably tired of correcting confused city kids, the peasants stayed quiet. A few days later, the group of newly arrived sent-down youth used wheat sprouts as filling for a batch of what were supposed to be chive dumplings. They tasted terrible.27

The issue of where food came from was connected to another major place-based distinction: city work versus rural labor. Villagers toiled in the fields from dusk until dawn and made hardly any money, while salaried urban employees had set work hours and a day off on the weekend. There are two different words for “work” in Chinese: one refers to employment with regular hours (gongzuo), the other to farm work and other non-salaried physical labor (ganhuor). Peasants doing farm work do not gongzuo, they ganhuor. The main difference was that city workers had guaranteed salaries, while village incomes depended on the harvest and how much grain the state requisitioned in a given year.

Not only was farm work virtually unpaid, but it involved incredibly tough physical labor. City people who tried their hands at farm work invariably described the experience as arduous, while rural dwellers derided the inability of urbanites to work hard. One Baodi villager had the opportunity
to compare rural and urban people after he joined the army in 1968. His unit was stationed in coastal Fujian Province and included recruits from cities and villages throughout China. He noticed immediately that the city soldiers had trouble with physical labor. The city people lacked toughness, he said. The Baodi soldier explained that indoor and outdoor plants grow differently, meaning that the city soldiers were like delicate house plants. 28

Sent-down youth or visiting urban officials openly admitted that they were not as good at farm work as the locals. This seemed natural to them, but they found it troubling that villagers judged visitors based on their ability to toil in the fields. A Tianjin teen sent to Baodi in 1964 said that he was unhappy during his first two years in the village because he was so much slower and weaker than his rural peers. Nobody appreciated his middle school education. All they saw was how poorly he did farm work. He earned less than half of the upper limit of daily work points, less than an average local woman made. The teenager was adept at repairing machines, better than local villagers but even when he did repairs, he still made fewer work points. The standard for assigning work points was field labor, not repair work, he was told. 29

Officials stationed in villages made a point of trying to work hard in the fields. One Tianjin cadre was sent to a Baodi village in 1975 to mediate a dispute. In order to gain the trust of people in the village, his first task was to do farm work. “When a peasant is checking out what an official is really like,” he said, “he checks how you labor, if you shirk work or if you are lazy. Whoever works with him and leads the way on a job gets along best.” The official worked hard and reached the level of the strongest female farm worker. This was enough to earn the respect of the locals, he said. 30

While some urbanites at least attempted to work in the fields, others openly scorned agricultural labor as dirty, unpaid grunt work. City children adopted this attitude at a young age. One man born in a Hebei village in 1962 moved to Tianjin as a small child along with his parents and three siblings. His father had a factory job, but his mother and the children lived in Tianjin illegally, without urban hukou. (In the Mao era, children inherited hukou status from their mother. This rule limited urban population growth in an era when many families lived apart, with migrant men working city jobs while their wives and children remained rural residents.) The Hebei man said that as a child, he was teased because he was from a village. One day, in a fight with an older neighborhood bully, the village boy managed to beat up his tormentor. The humiliated loser told his rural-born nemesis, “When we grow up you will have to hoe the dirt in a village and I will become a factory worker.” 31 Even children knew that village labor was inferior to city work.

This association between dirt, filth, and villages remained strong throughout the Mao period. One man from a mountain village was convinced that
city people looked down on peasants because “villagers have bad hygiene, they smell bad.” For this reason, he said, it was “natural” that outsiders would scorn peasants. Rural people who went to the city felt self-conscious about their dirtiness. They associated hygiene with urbanity, and saw dirtiness as a sign of inadequacy. Two Baodi women who visited Tianjin remarked that the city seemed exceptionally clean and that everyone emphasized hygiene there. They felt that constant remarks about hygiene might be targeted at them. One woman who was in Tianjin in the early 1960s told people in the city, “Don’t dislike us because we are dirty. If it were not for us, what would you eat?” She explained in an interview, “Actually they did not look down on me. Because I was young at the time, my clothes were clean and quite nice. They all said that I did not seem like a village person.”

SPATIAL PROFILING

Spatial profiling in Mao’s China marked individuals as rural or urban. People saw others’ clothing and skin-color and coded them as belonging to the countryside or the city. The same place-based encoding applied to everyday practices, from cooking and eating to labor and hygiene. This everyday culture of seeing was so ingrained that policy and propaganda during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, far from eliminating rural-urban difference, actually reinforced it.

Spatial profiling in Mao’s China occurred in both official settings and in non-official interactions at the grassroots. Everyday place-based profiling stigmatized rural people and led villagers to internalize a sense of inferiority vis-à-vis city people. This sense of inferiority was bolstered by backhanded praise in official propaganda (peasants as “honest and simple”) and also by the socialist planned economy, which offered a package of exclusive rights and benefits to urban residents and attempted to lock villagers to rural communes. Yet while the hukou system was an important part of the rural-urban divide, it did not make all of the difference. Rather, an entrenched way of seeing that stemmed from genuine economic and cultural differences greeted the mostly rural Communist soldiers and cadres who took over Chinese cities in 1949. As long as the economic and cultural gap between cities and villages remained, so would spatial profiling.

NOTES

1. Research for this chapter was assisted by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Award and a Social Science Research Council International
Dissertation Field Research Fellowship with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. For a concise overview of the planned economy under Mao, see Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 55–84.


10. Interviewee 33 (author’s numbering system).

11. Interviewee 57.

12. Zhonggong Tianjin shiwei dangshi ziliao weiyuanhui and Tianjin shi dang'anguan, eds., *Tianjin jieguan shi lu* [History of the takeover of Tianjin, hereafter cited as TJJG], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi chubanshe, 1994), 259.


17. Interviewee 86.

18. Interviewee 18.

19. Interviewee 43.

20. Tianjin shi dang’anguan, ed., *Jiefang chuqi Tianjinchengshi jingji hongguan guanli* [Tianjin urban macroeconomic management in the initial stage following liberation] (Tianjin: Tianjin shi dang’an chubanshe, 1995), 326.

21. When journalist Peter Hessler befriended a rural family in the early 2000s, laoshi was the only word the parents used to praise their young son. Peter Hessler, “Kindergarten,” *New Yorker* 80, no. 7 (April 5, 2004): 58–67.
23. Hexi District Archives (Tianjin), 1-6-26C, 9.
24. Interviewee 65.
25. Interviewee 88.
27. Interviewee 64.
28. Interviewee 22.
29. Interviewee 6.
30. Interviewee 5.
32. Interviewee 86.