

opened up the field some 20 years ago with his *Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964), and scholars have been working it ever since. Nevertheless, Meyrowitz's study has two distinct virtues: First, he analyzes the vast literature on the subject; second, he extends McLuhan's analysis by showing *how* the media are transforming modern societies.

**MORALITY AND POWER  
IN A CHINESE VILLAGE**

by Richard Madsen  
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China's Communist revolutionaries claimed they were not only bringing social and economic justice but also creating a better sort of person, a "new man." Madsen, a University of California sociologist, takes a look at the results in Chen, a small village in Guang-dong Province. Between 1949 and the late 1960s, the people of Chen worked out a compromise between their ancient Confucian code of values and the new Marxist-Maoist ethos: They tempered family loyalty (the central tenet of Confucianism) with the principles of communist egalitarianism. Villagers expected party cadres both to work for the collective good of the community and to show favoritism to their own kin—allowing a relative to work on a productive piece of land, for instance. So the average peasant did the same himself. The Cultural Revolution (1966–76) upset the balance. Confused by changes in official ideology, peasants had to decide for themselves whether politically "correct" behavior was also moral. Should one denounce a relative whose attitudes were incorrect? Should individual or family self-interest be totally subordinated to the good of the community? The chaotic Cultural Revolution had, according to Madsen, two lasting effects: It exposed the absurd rigidities of Maoism (how could one divest oneself of all self-interest?), and it threw into doubt the virtue of family loyalty. By what star do the Chinese peasants steer their lives today? A selfish pragmatism, says Madsen, propped up with such fuzzy slogans as "Seek the Truth from Facts." Such a moral vacuum, he concludes, could lead to corruption—and, in turn, to a whole new cycle of drastic official remedies.