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"Reconstructing the History of Forestry in Northwestern China, 1949–98"

Liu, Jinlong

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This paper reconstructs the history of forestry and changing patterns of forest tenure rights through the case study of Hui county, in the northwestern province of Gansu in 1949-1998. It focuses on the environmental impact and social effects of constantly changing forest policies, and examines conflicts between different stakeholders, including private owners, collectives, and the state at different administrative levels. The research draws on accounts of historical events available in unpublished official documents, as well as the recollections of a number of elderly informants from the northwestern region, to look for patterns of social and economic change. The author maps out shifts in forest policy during the periods of the collectivization of agricultural production and household responsibility system. These policies led to China's "opening up" in the 1980s and 1990s, when changing relations between the state and an expanding market economy began to impact the country. A series of cases are used to illustrate the types of conflict and forms of negotiation that occurred at particular junctures. (Author's abstract at The White Horse Press)

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