

# CHOOSING

Family Change in Rural China

# DAUGHTERS



# LIHONG SHI

"*Choosing Daughters* is a persuasive, eloquent study of changing gender roles. Full of surprises and new vistas for investigation, it is ethnography at its best."

**WILLIAM JANKOWIAK**, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

"*Choosing Daughters* gives us key insights into the complexity of reproductive choices in rural China. Through meticulous ethnographic research and a firm grasp of big issues, Lihong Shi shows us not only why some Chinese families choose—in fact, desire—to have only one daughter, but also how ideas about son preference, elder care, familial intimacy, and filial piety are being redefined."

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"With rich ethnographic detail, beautiful writing, and rigorous marshalling of evidence, *Choosing Daughters* presents a nuanced portrait of how and why gender roles and family life have changed in a Chinese village. Lihong Shi offers a bold challenge to widespread assumptions about bias against daughters in rural China."

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China's patrilineal and patriarchal tradition has encouraged a longstanding preference for male heirs within families. Coupled with China's birth-planning policy, this has led to a severe gender imbalance. But a counterpattern is emerging in rural China where a noticeable proportion of young couples have willingly accepted having a single daughter. They are doing so even as birth-planning policies are being relaxed and having a second child is now a possibility. In *Choosing Daughters*, Lihong Shi delves into the social, economic, and cultural forces behind the complex decision-making process of these couples, the changing family dynamics and gender relations, and the intimate parent-daughter ties that have engendered this drastic transformation of reproductive choice. She reveals a new social force that fosters China's recent fertility decline: the pursuit of a modern family and, relatedly, successful childrearing. Thus, Shi refutes the conventional understanding of a universal preference for sons in China and counters claims of continuing resistance against China's population control program.

**LIHONG SHI** is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Case Western Reserve University.

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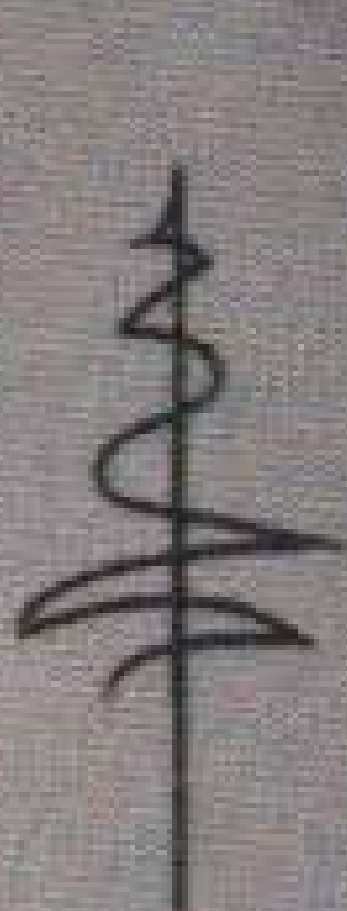


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SHI CHONG SING DAUGHTEES FAMILY CHANG EILIN RURAL CHINA



Stanford

# **Choosing Daughters**

*Family Change in Rural China*

**Lihong Shi**

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## Choosing Daughters



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