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Preface

Between power and mass, a massive social change took place in rural China. Xiaoping mounted a hugely ambitious reform to modernize the entire nation and put its countryside, however, Deng and his fellow peasants had radical ideas of their own. The state's plans up against a disorganized but energetic power. My subject is this struggle between control over the transformation that swept

In seeking to understand the contest for the peasant, I have used evidence from the end of interviews in China that I did for this book of 1990. But the book concentrates particularly on the period of reform, from 1979 to 1985. It was then that the most startling changes occurred—communes, the beginnings of family farming, and movement toward privatization and free markets.

These changes eventually reached all corners of the country, from the earliest to southern China, in an atmosphere of reform and creativity. By focusing on the origins of the reform, this book reflects the experience of the south, where the influence is all the stronger because the book was written in a south-central province at about the same late stage as the reform in Hubei at the height of its reform, in 1985.