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Anthropologist Bregnbæk (Univ. of Copenhagen) explores the pressure-filled lives of students at two top Chinese universities in the context of China's attempts to transform itself into the world's next high-tech knowledge economy. The author investigates this generation's need to establish some degree of separation from family, whether that "family" consists of parents or the state. Yet at the same time, students acutely feel the pressure to conform to familial desires and tell poignant stories of this conflict in several interviews throughout the book. Based on fieldwork carried out between 2005 and 2007, and briefly again in 2012, the book includes these interviews with Chinese university students as well as classroom and outside observation. One of the difficulties of conducting ethnography in a tightly controlled state appears in the first paragraph of the introduction, which mentions a student's suicide. Lack of reliable statistics or other information turns what might be everyday experiences into unsubstantiated rumors, making it difficult for the researcher to triangulate her findings. In spite of this obstacle, the book gives Chinese students an opportunity to voice their compelling struggles as they attempt to negotiate lives worth living in a high-pressure world.