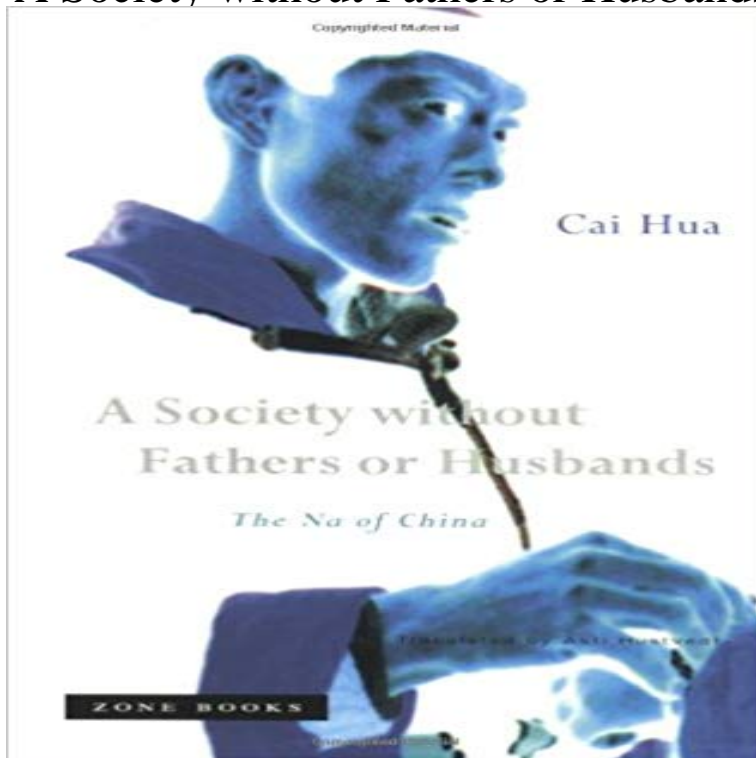


# A Society without Fathers or Husbands: The Na of China



The Na of China, farmers in the Himalayan region, live without the institution of marriage. Na brothers and sisters live together their entire lives, sharing household responsibilities and raising the women's children. Because the Na, like all cultures, prohibit incest, they practice a system of sometimes furtive, sometimes conspicuous nighttime encounters at the woman's home. The woman's partners--she frequently has more than one--bear no economic responsibility for her or her children, and fathers, unless they resemble their children, remain unidentifiable. This lucid ethnographic study shows how a society can function without husbands or fathers. It sheds light on marriage and kinship, as well as on the position of women, the necessary conditions for the acquisition of identity, and the impact of a communist state on a society that it considers backward.

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