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In contrast to much work on gender and development in the Global South, which has emphasized the influence of Global North-oriented capitalism, my research demonstrates that the gendering of labor and identities as well as the collective mobilization of subalterns in southern China are the outcomes of the articulation of both former socialist development projects and current neoliberal discourse. Gender, in my dissertation, is a necessary category of analysis to understand the workings of state power, technologies of governance, and subaltern oppositions. A gendered approach makes evident the ways in which former workers personalize and skillfully utilize discursive logics from different historical junctures to protest the current conditions of their lives. Grounded in gender studies, anthropology, and critical development studies, my project is also in dialogue with environmental studies, geography, political science, and studies of law and society. My dissertation is a historical and ethnographic examination of workers' lives and labor amidst the reforms of the forestry industry in China since the 1950s. The dissertation demonstrates how, through the use of development projects, the Chinese state institutionalized the gendering of labor and social welfare. It also shows, however, that the forestry workers were able to re-purpose this same gendered institutionalization in order to create space for their own political voices. My work, based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in a mountainous area of Fujian Province in southern China between 2008 and 2015, illustrates gendered difference in the treatment of workers in the realm of labor divisions, state pensions and legal institutions as well as workers' subsequent effective cultivation of a gendered legal consciousness to contest economic injustices from decades earlier. I use discursive analysis of state documents, oral histories with multiple generations of workers, and ethnographic attention to still-unfolding protests in order to make sense of these dynamics.