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Essays on Chinese Identity in an Age of Anti-Asian Racism and #StopAsianHate

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The *British Journal of Chinese Studies* is a biannual, peer-reviewed, fully open access e-journal published by the British Association for Chinese Studies. We publish research on China, broadly defined, spanning the disciplines of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. We are interested in work on all time periods but encourage contributors to establish contemporary relevance in their arguments. Engagement with Chinese language sources is essential to all research published in the journal. We are particularly committed to supporting gender and ethnic equality in Chinese studies and welcome submissions from PhD students and early career researchers. Until issue 9.1(2019) we published under the name *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*.

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Editors' Introduction

This issue comes out during a continuing global pandemic, carrying a mixed sense of hope, despair, and frustration. As we are witnessing the surge of a new COVID-19 variant, world politics cannot have been more polarised. China is at the centre of many contemporary political debates, including quarantine measures, telecommunication security, human rights and international relations. Outside China, Western governments' trenchant criticism of China has led to the formation of AUKUS, a security pact among Australia, UK and US to counter China. Inside China, we see a wave of surging nationalism advocating an essentialised notion of Chinese culture and values. Meanwhile, in the Chinese diaspora, people of Asian origins – whether they are Chinese-identified or not – have been scapegoated as virus carriers, and even physically and verbally attacked. Being "Chinese" has become a stigmatised and even life-threatening identity category. At the same time, people in the Asian diaspora have mobilised themselves and rallied against Sinophobia and anti-Asian racism under the banner of #StopAsianHate, and this has been accompanied by a community celebration of Chinese identity and heritage. How do we understand this historical moment when opportunities and challenges coexist for Chinese communities across the world? If China and Chineseness are among some of the keywords for Chinese studies, what does Chinese studies have to say about the current moment?

Following the successful first round of intervention using the format of position papers surrounding the question "What use is Chinese studies in a pandemic?", we launched another round of call for position papers in Summer 2021, inviting Chinese studies scholars to reflect on the issue of "Chinese identity" at this historical juncture. We have been pleasantly surprised with the enthusiastic responses from our readers and contributors, in particular the range of submissions from across the globe. The position papers presented in this issue showcase a broad spectrum of geographical locations, personal and collective experiences, and a range of political positions. This collection therefore demonstrates the variegated impacts of the pandemic and global geopolitics on Chinese communities in different parts of the world; they also underline a plethora of creative and critical strategies to deal with racism, nationalism and cultural essentialism. All these position papers show that Chinese identity – despite being a cultural construct – is still alive and relevant to many people's lives and therefore should not be easily dismissed. This identity has been strategically mobilised by different interest groups to achieve a wide range of hegemonic and anti-hegemonic purposes. In other words, identities matter and they do not have to be essentialised or hegemonic. This discussion of the different uses of Chinese identity is highly relevant for the field of Chinese studies today, as the ten essays in this issue clearly demonstrate.

They are preceded by five research articles which once again speak to the breadth and diversity of our discipline. We start with the winning article of the 2021 BACS Early Career Researcher Prize authored by Coraline Jortay, who looks at the intersection of class, gender, and disability in Xiao Hong's work through the lens of *feiwu* (rubbish), a frequently used slur in the Republican period to refer to disabled individuals, people of lower socio-economic status, and women. Jortay particularly impressed reviewers and prize judges with her extension of existing scholarship concerned with literary representations of disability in China into the

Republican period and by doing so, in the words of one of the peer reviewers, "brings to the fore a range of new and exciting ideas about what makes a 'human'… [and constitutes] the very type of novel early career research that should be showcased by our scholarly community."

Bobby Chun Tam's article also deals with the language of the Republic, examining the vocabulary used to express the meanings and emotions attached to dead bodies in the late Qing and early Republican periods. His is a sinological paper par excellence through its focus on the vocabulary used to talk about corpses during this period of transition and gradual impact of western ideas on the Chinese language. Modernisations in the field of medical science as well as political and religious developments provided new meanings and perspectives on dead bodies, leading to a reconfiguration of words and adaptations of meaning. However, as Tam shows, this did not lead to a change in the emotions attached to dead bodies, which continued to be respected and sanctified in new ways. Translation work by missionaries in the 19th century was a key factor influencing the development of this new vocabulary. Paul Kendall's piece in this issue looks at translation of a different kind. He turns the light on feature films set in the Third Front context and their "translation" into works on the Cultural Revolution as a result of English-language subtitlers' and reviewers' assumptions and lack of understanding about the Mao era. By examining the subtitles as well as English-language reception of Wang Xiaoshuai's "Third Front Trilogy", Kendall shows that through reviewers' limited understanding of the Mao era they unwittingly reproduced the Chinese Communist Party's judgment on the "ten years of turmoil", thus hindering the emergence of alternative and more historically accurate and nuanced accounts of the Mao era. Indeed, the Cultural Revolution remains the dominant historical period by which many outside our field of study try to understand China.

Situated more within the social sciences, two further papers in this issue engage with a question of how digital technology facilitates decision-making and what role it plays in social relations. Da-Chi Liao and Hsien-Ming Lin pose a different interesting question about historical figures (famous dead bodies) to Bobby Tam's: what happens to them when there is no longer agreement about the degree of respect they are due? The year 2021 saw many statues of contentious historical figures fall, but what makes the fall happen, in particular when it is not the spontaneous act of a protesting crowd, is less understood. Liao and Lin present two case studies of Taiwanese universities where Chiang Kai-shek statues were removed; through quantitative and qualitative data, they document in detail how this decision was taken, greatly enriching the discussion of fallism in the current literature. Edward Schmitt's focus, on the other hand, lies with digitalisation and environmentalism. Building on field work in Chengdu, Schmitt analyses what impact the replacement of human actors with digital platforms in the context of project evaluation has had on "environmentally friendly" lifestyle choices, as well as on social relations at the local level between the government and residents. His findings show that much valuable interaction may be lost in this process of translation from the analogue to the digital.

Happy Reading!

Gerda Wielander and Hongwei Bao (essay guest editor)

Reclaiming Rubbish: *Feiwu* at the Intersections of Gender, Class, and Disability in Xiao Hong's *Market Street* and *Field of Life and Death*

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Abstract

This article revisits Xiao Hong's Field of Life and Death (Shengsi chang 生死場, 1935) and Market Street (Shangshi jie 商市街, 1936) against sources from the periodical press to explore how Xiao Hong's works speak back to discourses on "rubbish" (feiwu 廢物), a slur that was frequently used to refer to disabled people, to people of lower social status, and to women during the Republican period. In particular, I explore how the category of feiwu lays bare processes of marginalisation and dehumanisation, contextualising literary excerpts against New Life Movement slogans, satirical cartoons, and homemaking or hygienist press articles. I show how Xiao Hong's works build through the category of feiwu a counter-discourse bearing on the representational entanglements of gender, class and disability, as materialised through animals (in Field of Life and Death) and through objects (in Market Street). In doing so, I contribute to a conceptual history of feiwu, and I extend existing scholarship concerned with literary representations of disability in China into the Republican period – a budding subfield that has so far mainly focused on works produced since the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949.

Keywords: Xiao Hong, Market Street, Field of Life and Death, intersectionality, disability, gender, *feiwu*, waste, New Life Movement

Introducing Rubbish: Historicising Discourses on *Feiwu* in the 1930s

On 10 December 1935, the cartoon magazine *Oriental Puck* (*Duli manhua* 独立漫画) published a satirical vignette which read as follows (Figure 1):

> On making use of rubbish
>
> The husband, having lost his job: Our financial situation is dire. You do know how to make use of rubbish, don't you?
>
> The wife: How would I not? I live with you, am I not already making use of rubbish?

Figure 1: On Making Use of Rubbish *(Xu Zhaoran, 1935)*

Beyond poking fun at marital gendered dynamics, the scene is alluding to the moral rhetoric of the New Life Movement (*Xin shenghuo yundong* 新生活運動). "Making use of rubbish" (*feiwu liyong* 廢物利用) was indeed a New Life Movement slogan aimed at fostering productivity, frugal habits, and the use of local products. The slogan was ubiquitous in the periodical press in the mid-1930s (Nedostup, 2009: 380). On the most basic level, primary sources show that *feiwu* 廢物 (rubbish) in the 1930s was part of the vocabulary of homemaking magazines, instructing readers as to the best ways of making the most out of scraps of fabric (Yun Yun, 1936) or out of broken bits of tea leaves (Shi Zhimin, 1936). On a scientific and hygienic level, *feiwu* was a common term used to describe the body's unwanted toxins (You Yusheng, 1935), or in the context of maintaining clean water and mitigating the development of carriers of disease, as outlined in documents published by the Health Department of the Ministry of the Interior (Neizhengbu weishengshu, 1934). As alluded to in the *Oriental Puck* vignette when the husband's newly found state of unemployment brings about a reversal of gender roles, *feiwu* was also a distinctively gendered slur. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, it had been used as a gendered derogatory term, especially after some reformers took to referring to women as a "wasted resource […] because of their non-contribution to the household economy" (Bailey, 2006: 175). In the early 1920s, *feiwu* became an integral part of May Fourth iconoclast discourse when Chen Duxiu started to use the expression to refer to all things that were "useless yet revered by people" which he thought had to be discarded (Ciaudo, 2015: 45). Beyond its uses referring to gender and employment status, *feiwu* was also a common term in Republican China for the alienation and objectification of people. As Dauncey says, *feiwu* was associated with "*canfei* 殘廢 ('invalids') […] with all its retained connotations of 'uselessness' and 'rubbish' as reflected in particular by the fei 廢 character" (Dauncey, 2017: 51). The term was an intrinsic part of an ableist lexicon and the imagery that surrounded individuals thought to be visually repulsive, a stigma held against disabled people and mutilation victims that went back all the way to the pre-imperial penal mutilations for criminals

which served to make offenses legible on the body (Graziani, 2011).

As those usages highlight, the term *feiwu* and the associated lexical field of "garbage" were part of a dehumanising discourse of interpersonal and institutional violence. In early Republican China more specifically, *feiwu* was part of a discourse on women, economically disenfranchised people, and disabled people, proving reminiscent of the insult that is calling people *dongxi* 東西 (things). Charting the evolution of the representations of disability after 1949, Sarah Dauncey underlines that the term *feiwu* became an iconic catchphrase in 1950s discourses, used to represent the oppression of the "old society" towards disabled people and, by extension, thanking the Party for enabling a new society where disabled people would be "disabled but not useless" at last (Dauncey, 2020: 51-52).

However, as illustrated in the *Oriental Puck* vignette above, the "old society" was certainly not entirely devoid of ironical or critical uses of *feiwu*. In this case, it bears asking how the term was understood, negotiated, and possibly reappropriated in cultural and literary production prior to 1949. Was it used at all to describe the same processes of alienation and marginalisation of different categories of people that quickly become apparent in the examples above? And, if so, how can we use *feiwu* as a steppingstone to chart the ruptures and continuities in the representation of marginalised individuals beyond the 1949 divide? In this article, I argue that one powerful example of such critical engagement can be found in the works of Xiao Hong 蕭紅 (1911-1942), a young woman writer who arrived in Shanghai in November 1934 after fleeing Japanese-held Manchukuo. Xiao Hong quickly became a literary sensation after she joined Lu Xun's circle and started publishing in literary magazines associated with the League of Left-Wing Writers.[1] I contend that the category of *feiwu* allowed Xiao Hong to undertake a critique compounding questions of gender, disability, and social class in her works *Field of Life and Death* (*Shengsi chang* 生死場, 1935) and *Market Street* (*Shangshi jie* 商市街, 1936).

In raising the marginalisation and de-humanisation at play through *feiwu* in Republican China as well as Xiao Hong's critical engagement with the representational entanglements of gender, class and disability, my point is certainly not to claim that Xiao Hong invented intersectionality ahead of time. The notion of intersectionality was first coined by feminist theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in a specific socio-historically situated moment to analyse how race and gender intersected to deepen the marginalisation of African American women in the United States. Overtime, Crenshaw's foundational concept of intersectionality has gradually been taken up by other scholars to encompass the intersections of not only gender and race, but also sexual orientation, disability, age, social class and other identity markers entangled in social power hierarchies. What interests me nevertheless is the exploration of how *feiwu* in Xiao Hong's texts still effectively functioned as a compounding prism that spoke back to representations of marginalised people circulating in Xiao Hong's *own* linguistic and socio-historical context of 1930s China, one that effectively targeted and otherised women, economically disenfranchised people, and disabled people as "rubbish." I am focusing here more specifically on questions of disability, gender, and social class, as those are the primary vectors through which Xiao Hong undertakes a critique of usages of the term *feiwu* in *Market Street* and *Field of Life and Death*. Nevertheless, reflections on Manchuria being the home to a multi-ethnic refugee population and its alternative geographies of stateless subjects (White

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[1] Xiao Hong's life has been the subject of a wealth of biographical works that are beyond the scope of this article. For English-language biographical accounts of Xiao Hong's literary career, see Dooling (2003: 431-36) and Kong Haili (2016: 313-16).

Russians, Russian Jews) under the Japanese colonial regime are certainly present in other works by Xiao Hong (eg. *Sophia's Distress Suofeiya de chouku* 索菲亞的愁苦), as astutely described by Clara Iwasaki (2019) who also emphasizes its implications for marginalised women.

In seizing *feiwu* as a compounding prism through which are reflected the entrenched marginalisation of gender, class, and disability in the historical context of the Republican era, this paper not only contributes to historicising the concept of *feiwu*, but also enriches literary scholarship on Xiao Hong in revisiting two of her major works beyond the now-canonical frameworks of nationalism and feminism and to more recent debates on ecocriticism and animal studies. This article further contributes to the budding field situated at the crossroads between Chinese studies and disability studies, most notably in extending the timeframe of ground-breaking scholarship that has mainly focused so far on the Second Sino-Japanese War (Riep, 2008) and the People's Republic of China up to the present day (Dauncey 2017 and 2020; Riep, 2018; Choy 2016). My article thus seeks to expand the discussion into the Republican period. Offering a glimpse of earlier critical discussions of disability in literature as they intersect with gender and class is all the more interesting, I argue, in that Dauncey notes that it was *not* customary for women writers to write about disability. She observes that while "Chinese women write about their sick selves, Chinese men, it seems, have dominated the market in writing about disabled *others*" (Dauncey, 2020: 35). Unsettling those boundaries, Xiao Hong's texts engage, as we shall see, with a wide variety of terms of interest to historians of disability in China, often doing so through the prism of animal (in *Field of Life and Death*) or object-related metaphors (in *Market Street*).

Human Beings and/as Animals in *Field of Life and Death*

Published in December 1935 as part of Lu Xun's *Slave Series* (*Nuli congshu* 奴隸叢書), *Field of Life and Death* (hereafter, *Field*) made Xiao Hong an overnight literary sensation. The novel consists in a series of vignettes chronicling life in the Manchurian countryside alongside the cyclical rhythm of the seasons before and after the inauguration of Japanese rule over the region. *Field* is replete with grim accounts of epidemics, poverty, domestic violence, traumatic childbirths, accidents in the fields and how all of those often leave minds and bodies scarred for life.

While most of the reception from Xiao Hong's contemporaries focused on the theme of national resistance, the role of animals as a key theme of the works was already noted by Hu Feng in his postface and in reviews he published to promote the book (Hu Feng 1935a & 1935b). The title of the book itself was famously chosen by Hu as a testament to the shared predicament of humans and animals, encapsulated in a famous line from *Field*: "In the village, men and beasts were occupied in the business of living and dying."[2] Animals and animal-related metaphors certainly play a prominent role in *Field*, with many characters turning into animals, either individually or as a group. In their classical study of Chinese women's literature, Meng Yue and Dai Jinhua (2004:181) devote a small passage to animal figures in *Field*, which they take as a metaphor for the bestiality of human existence, and as a stand-in for people who have

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[2] Xiao Hong & Howard Goldblatt (2002: 47). Unless otherwise noted, all citations are from the original Chinese edition (Xiao Hong, 1935) and noted (SSC: [page number]). Citations in English are quoted from Howard Goldblatt's translation and will be noted (FLD: [page number]). The same holds true for citations from *Market Street*, noted (SSJ: [page number]) for the Chinese original and (MS: [page number]) for the English translation.

little other desires than those of the flesh. The question of bestiality in Xiao Hong's *Field* has also been taken to be a precursor to animal symbolism in 1980s literature: "A work most densely populated with animals […] where the skinny fish, dead snake, gaunt horse, sick dog, ailing cat and a dozen or so of their wretched companions are presented in juxtaposition to the human protagonists agonising in their existential struggle, epitomising the bestiality of human existence." (Zhou Zuyuan, 1994: 70). The animal as representative of bestiality in human beings was a frequent trope of Republican Chinese literature under the growing influence of social Darwinism (Capehart, 2016) and of Lu Xun's and Zheng Zhenduo's translations of Russian naturalists such as Artsybashev from 1920 onwards (Gamsa, 2008: 144, 384-85). Lydia Liu (1994: 157-77) also touched upon animals with regard to what they share of the physical experiences of abuse suffered by women in her well-known examination of *Field* as an indictment of patriarchal rural society beyond the nationalist narrative. The most extensive treatment of the topic can be found in a recent article by Todd Foley (2020), who analyses *Field* through the prism of ecocriticism and animal studies. Drawing on Zhuangzi and Buddhism, Foley examines how animals and their fate in *Field* work as a magnifying glass to expose the failure of traditional philosophical approaches to address the suffering of the villagers.

What all of the above accounts share is a very pessimistic approach to animal metaphors in *Field*, whether they are concerned with bestiality, with gendered violence, or with the failure of philosophy or religion to alleviate suffering. And certainly, most vignettes in *Field* are pretty grim: in keeping with the hygienicist discourse of *feiwu*, villagers as a group are often described as animals to account for their lowly status. The *Busy Mosquitoes* chapter that describes harvesting peasants as busy mosquitoes is immediately followed by a chapter called *Epidemic*, and then another one titled *Do You Want to Be Exterminated?* In *Field*, peasants are brought closer to actual mosquitoes as they become pluralised as *chongzimen* 蟲子們 (insects). In many instances, animals and plants are thus pluralised when they function as metaphors for human beings. One finds many *niumen* 牛們 (cattle), *yezimen* 葉子們 (leaves), *mamen* 馬們 (horses) in Xiao Hong's *Field*, using a pluralising form for common nouns specific of Northeastern dialects (Maury, 1992: 106; 119; Peyraube, 2000: 4).

Beyond the plethora of characterisations of humans as animals, two characters depicted as animals deserve particular attention as they embody an exploration of *feiwu*: Mother Wang (*Wang po* 王婆) and her mare, and Two-and-a-Half Li (*Er li ban* 二里半) and his goat. In the book, the term *feiwu* first appears *stricto sensu* in Mother Wang's long semi-incoherent rambling recounting the death of her daughter, aged three, when the little girl fell from a haystack directly onto the sharp end of a rake lying on the ground:

> "The child was three when I let her fall to her death. If I'd kept her, I'd have been a wreck [我會成了個廢物]. That morning ... let me think ... yes, it was morning. Anyway, I left her on the haystack when I went to feed the cow. Our haystack was behind the house. When I remembered the child, I ran back to get her. But she wasn't there. Then I saw the handle of the pitchfork under the haystack, and I knew that was a bad sign. She'd fallen right on top of it. At first I thought she was still alive, but when I picked her up ... aah!" (SSC: 14; FLD: 10)

Mother Wang starts off saying that having a child was to be her downfall. Embedded within such a lapidary sentence is the harsh reality of lost income and lost time to work in the field,

the added mouth to feed, the meagre compensation for it given she had a daughter, not a son.[3] She then effectively sacrifices her daughter on the altar of keeping up with manual labour, due to the necessity of leaving her child unattended to be able to work, or forgetting her due to tiredness. As reality catches up, she is overcome by remorse and pain. The next scenes describe Mother Wang throwing herself into working in the fields to avoid thinking about her dead daughter, trying desperately to forget and so outperforming every other family in terms of her work output. Mother Wang having escaped her fear of becoming non-productive "garbage," the text soon starts hinting at her gradual estrangement from herself, self-loathing and eventual self-identification with "rubbish" herself when *she* starts to give way to *it* (emphasis mine):

> 趙三門前，麥場上小孩子牽着馬，因為是一條青年的馬，牠跳着蕩着尾巴跟牠的小主人走上場來。小馬歡喜用嘴撞一撞停在場上的「石滾」，牠的前腿在平滑的地上跺打幾下，接著牠必然像索求什麼似的叫起不很好聽的聲來。
> 王婆穿的寬袖的短襖，走上平場。牠的頭髮毛亂而且絞捲著，朝晨的紅光照著牠，牠的頭髮恰像田上成熟的玉米纓穗，紅色並且蔫捲。
> 馬兒把主人呼喚出來，牠等待給牠裝置「石滾」，「石滾」裝好的時候，小馬搖着尾巴，不斷的搖著尾巴，牠十分馴順和愉快。
> 王婆摸一摸蓆子潮濕一點，蓆子被拉在一邊了；孩子跑過去，幫助牠
> (SSC 20-21)A

> In front of Zhao San's house a little boy was leading a horse onto the threshing floor. The young foal trotted after its young master, tail swishing in the air. The young foal loved to nuzzle up against a stone roller on the ground; pawing the smooth ground with its front hooves, then looking for something, **it** gave a slightly discordant whinny.
> **Mother Wang**, dressed in a short jacket with loose sleeves, came out onto the threshing floor. **[Its]** hair was untidy and snarled. The morning sun made it look like tassels on ripening corn, all red and curly.
> The horse's whinny brought out its master. It was waiting for the roller to be put in place. When that was done, it swished its tail. It was a docile, happy animal.
> The straw mat was damp to the touch, so Mother Wang pulled it to the side. The boy came over to help **[it]**. (FLD 13-14)[4]

Xiao Hong's play on neuter pronouns can seem trivial until we remember that neuter pronouns had just been around for ten years when *Field* was written. By the mid-1930s, neuter pronouns were specifically the targets of rebuttals as "unnatural" or "un-Chinese," (Lin Yutang, 1994: 214), as being "too foreign," "too deformed" and "useless" (Zhu Ziqing, 1933). Here, the first *it* starts bringing together the image of Mother Wang and of the dishevelled horse. The

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[3] In addition to usages outlined in the introduction to this article, *feiwu* was also used as a very charged term in the specific context of colonial Manchukuo institutions, and associated with Japanese impositions on women who had "nation-oriented roles to fulfil" and should not just "change from garbage into a toy (*you feiwu gaicheng le wanwu*)" (Smith, 2004: 57-58).

[4] Here, I have replaced some instances when Howard Goldblatt translates "her" by [it] and [its] to reflect more accurately pronoun use in the original Chinese text. If the translator's preface to Field does not state which version the translator is translating from, it is likely that he was working from one of the many post-1953 editions of *Field* where pronouns have been "corrected" and where those are indeed feminine pronouns. See for instance Xiao Hong (1953, 16).

following instances of the pronoun confirm that there are two *it*s present: one of them must then be Mother Wang. By the time the little boy arrives to help, the reader no longer knows if he is there to help Mother Wang or to help the horse break free. In the next scene, the horse lashes out at her foal, exhausted by her work on the threshing floor, and the scene ends up with the foal being badly hurt and bleeding. Like the old mare, the foal's mother, Mother Wang blames herself for hurting and losing her daughter.

This first passage is important in that it prefigures and helps better understand the oft-analysed third chapter, *The Old Mare's Trip to the Slaughterhouse* (*Lao ma zou jin tuchang* 老馬走進屠場). Zhang Yinde (2010: 125) has noted the influence of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, translated into Chinese by Guo Moruo as *The Slaughterhouse* (*Tuchang* 屠場), on Xiao Hong and her use of animal imagery, emphasizing how cruelty to the old mare can be understood as a metaphor for the cruelty of Japanese rule. But this chapter, I argue, cannot be understood in isolation from the previous scene. It is precisely because Mother Wang has had a daughter, causing her to become a *feiwu*, and because she has inadvertently let her daughter be killed in the name of attending to her duties, that she becomes *feiwu* to herself, and then through the use of pronouns, literally turns into the mare who hurts her foal in the passage above. Then, the *lao ma* 老馬 (the old mare) of the chapter title effectively turns into the *lao ma* 老媽 (the old lady) as she leads the "frail old animal" (*canlao de dongwu* 殘老的動物) who hurt her foal to her death at a "private slaughterhouse" (*si zaichang* 私宰場), which is also her own private mental hell:

> The old mare [老馬] stepped onto the road leading into town. The illegal slaughterhouse [「私宰場」] was located east of the city gate. There the knife had been unsheathed in readiness for the frail old animal [這個殘老的動物].
>
> Old Mother Wang was not leading the horse. She was following behind, driving it ahead of her with a switch. (SSC51; FLD 26)

Here, the reader does not know anymore who is leading whom towards the slaughterhouse. In the following paragraphs, Mother Wang then tries to reassure herself that putting an end to the frail old animal's life is the most compassionate thing to do. The only alternative is a slow painful death and starvation. The Chinese sentence remains unclear as to whether Mother Wang refers to herself, to the mare, or to both of them. Meanwhile, they continue to move forward:

> The old horse, the old woman, the old leaf [老馬，老人，配着一張老的葉子] – moved down the road into town. (SSC 51-52; FLD 26)

The "old leaf" (*lao de yezi* 老的葉子) turns into another kind of *lao yezi* 老爺子 (old man) as the compassionate Two-and-a-Half Li (*er li ban* 二里半), an old villager with a bad limp, accompanies her for a while on the road, trying to plead mercy for the animal. Soon afterwards, Mother Wang imagines the butcher's knife going through her own spine instead of the mare's. The point is driven home on the next page when:

> They drew near the slaughterhouse. Now the city gate was directly ahead.
> Mother Wang's heart was in turmoil [王婆的心更翻着不停了].
> Five years ago it had been a young horse [五年前牠是一匹年青的馬], but
> owing to farm work, it had been reduced to skin and bones. Now it was old.

Autumn was nearly over and the harvesting done. It had become useless, and
for the sake of its hide, its unfeeling master was sending it to the
slaughterhouse. (SSC: 54; FLD 27-28)

Here, the *it* is without doubt an anteposition for the young horse, but given that Mother Wang's name immediately precedes it, the reader initially confuses it with an anaphoric reprise of Mother Wang, furthering the identification between the woman's heart and the horse. The autumn being nearly over echoes another passage when "Only the women in the village, like farm horses, grew skinnier in the summer" (只有女人在鄉村夏季更貧瘦，和耕種的馬一般。 SSC: 99; FLD 45). The continuum of shifting pronouns from Mother Wang's early ramblings through to Chapter 3 show how the mare's trip to the slaughterhouse is also a metaphorical trip to the slaughterhouse of remorse. As opposed to the horse, Mother Wang fails to die at the slaughterhouse but then becomes an old "talkative phantom" (*neng yan de youling* 能言的幽靈 ; SSC 16; FLD 11). She is repeatedly described as "phantomlike," (*youling yiban de* 幽靈一般的; SSC: 48; FLD: 105) as if all life energy had left her, and pronominal shifts become most explicit when again the "old gray phantom" is compared to a grey bird, where once again she is described as *it*. Like a phantom, she will know no respite and does not even manage to die when she takes poison on purpose to kill herself in Chapter 7, *The Sinful Summer Festival (Zui'e de wu yue jie* 罪惡的五月節). She is almost buried alive, but even that fails.

Todd Foley (2020) also explores the example of Mother Wang: he ties the shared fate of the human and animal in life and death to Buddhist associations with the concept of samsara given the prominence of the terms life/birth (*sheng* 生) and death (*si* 死) in the title of the book, and given other explicit mentions of Buddhist terminology including the four distresses (Foley, 2020: 189-91). The question of Buddhism in *Field* has led to some controversy. Yue Gang (1999, 298-300) generally dismisses Buddhist associations in Xiao Hong's writings, while Lydia Liu emphasizes that the novel locates "the meaning of its suffering in the immediate socio-economic context of this world rather than in a world of karma" (Liu, 1995: 203). For others, the association and translation of the title of the book as *Samsara* are immediate (Vuilleumier, 2015: 49). While I concur with the view that the Buddhist subtext to the story is undeniable, I argue that, although it is the most overt, it might not be the only element that lends itself to a religious interpretation in the text. Reading *Field* through the prism of *feiwu,* the figure of Two-and-a-half Li materialises neither as a ridiculed anti-hero standing in the way of the nationalist struggle (Ho, 2012: 242), nor as a castrated individual, more of a woman than a man (Liu, 1995: 209), but through the lens of his relationship with the goat. This relationship frames the entire novel, articulating his disability and his compassion for all living beings, until the goat ultimately transforms into a Christ-like figure, the only one to see Two-and-a-half Li beyond his physical appearance.

Among the villagers, Two-and-a-half Li is described as the most *feiwu* of all, and as an anti-heroic figure who is constantly mocked by other characters through the entire course of *Field*. First he is mocked as "a cripple," second as father to a disabled boy, and third for refusing to give up his beloved goat for good luck in an oath-taking ceremony for the sake of "saving the nation" and without, at that, seeming particularly distressed about it, the most supreme insult of all. In the eyes of his fellow villagers, he is considered to be even lower than the widows who, "despite being women," had at least the moral strength to join the revolutionary army:

Even the widows took their oaths with the gun aimed at their hearts. But
Two-and-a-Half Li did not return until after the oath taking, when the

assembly was about to kill the goat [殺羊]. He had managed to find a rooster somewhere. He was the only person who did not take the oath. He didn't seem particularly distressed about the fate of the nation as he led the goat [山羊] home.

Everyone's eyes, especially old Zhao San's, angrily followed his departure.

"You crippled old thing [你個老跛腳的物]. Don't you want to go on living?" (FLD 73)

Located at the end of Chapter 13, this passage constitutes a twist on the theme and title of the chapter, *Do You Want to Be Exterminated?*, which the reader had so far believed to be a reference to the peasants as victims of the Japanese, or to point at the peasants' resolve in joining the revolutionary army, the chapter ends with Zhao San's angry and threatening call: "You crippled old thing. Don't you want to go on living?" It is the banal yet terrible social death sentence imposed upon those who fail to live up to the norm, either physically or patriotically, and shows how quickly physical weakness becomes associated with lack of moral strength or patriotic values.

Interestingly, the 1953 edition of *Field* substitutes "*ni ge lao bojia de wu* 你個老跛腳的物" ("You crippled old thing") with "*ni ge lao bojia de dongxi* 你個老跛腳的東西" (122), moving the original sentence away from the lexical field of *feiwu* by replacing the *wu* with the common insult of calling people *dongxi* 東西 (things). The choice of *wu* over *dongxi* in the original text – while *dongxi* was attested as a political slur as soon as 1915 (Thornton, 2002: 607) – is just one of the subtle shifts that illuminate the discrepancy between the original discourse on *feiwu* and the later readings of Xiao Hong's *Field* by PRC critics as more of a nationalist text. Certainly, the 1953 editors' choice of the dissyllable *dongxi* over the monosyllabic *wu* sounds more natural in spoken speech. However, the new ending to Chapter 13 also diverts from an oral "clunkiness" that was perhaps specifically the point, one that made audible the manifold manifestations of the category of "rubbish."

And yet, while nearly every other character goes on to die a horrible death, Two-and-a-Half Li eventually finds redemption from the goat itself. The animal increasingly takes on human-like characteristics, its dreariness and sadness standing in for those of its owner:

Two-and-a-Half Li's goat lowered its bearded head [山羊下垂牠的鬍子] and walked gently over to a spot beneath a luxuriant tree. It no longer searched for food. It was tired and so old its coat had turned a dirty color. Its eyes were dim and teary. It looked comical yet pitiful as it walked toward the low ground, its beard swaying from side to side. (SSC: 140; FLD: 62)

In the final chapter, *The Unsound Leg* (*Bu jianquan de tui* 不健全的腿), Two-and-a-half Li eventually becomes convinced that "to free himself from all worries and ties, it seemed to him that he must kill the goat without delay" (FLD 90). And yet, his physical and emotional "weakness," his "unsound" leg where *bu jianquan* 不健全 can be read as "not robust" but also as having "no common sense," prevents him from killing the goat. Of course, the idea of "robustness" (*jianquan* 健全) ties readily into the prevalent eugenics-influenced discourses of the Republican period (Dauncey, 2020: 21). In the eyes of other villagers, the leg is also "unsound" because they see it as unfit for its purpose as a leg, that is, for farm work. The leg is unsound because it does not make sense according to the norms of society to spare the goat

at all costs. And yet, it is Two-and-a-half Li's renunciation of the supposedly "sound" expectations of society that eventually turns the goat into a Christlike figure able to redeem the "cripple":

> The old animal [*lao yang* 老羊] came up and scratched itself against his legs.
> For a long time, Two-and-a-Half Li stroked its head. He was overcome with
> shame and prayed to the goat like a Christian. (SSC: 208; FLD: 90)

In the end, only an animal found the compassion necessary to stroke Two-and-a-Half Li's leg and look beyond his disability, whereas human beings could not. Reading the "goat" as a redemptory figure for the "cripple" eventually unveils an astute superposition of metaphors in Xiao Hong's writing that can hardly be rendered in translation. Two-and-a-half Li's *yang* 羊 is not, strictly speaking, a goat. It is certainly described as *shan yang* 山羊 (a goat) in the first chapter, but gradually the text moves towards describing it only as *lao yang* 老羊 (the old sheep/goat), as *yang* 羊 (a sheep/goat/lamb), or sometimes even as *xiao yang* 小羊 (little sheep/lamb). By the time we get to the sacrificial scenes, there is only the question of whether to *sha yang* 殺羊 (to kill the sheep/goat/lamb). The "goat" from the beginning is transfigured into a sacrificial lamb, as is also evident in the first time when the peasants must conduct a sacrifice: a rooster ends up being sacrificed in its place, just as a ram ended up as a substitute for the beloved son in the Bible. By the time we get to the last scene, Two and a half-Li's *yang* 羊 is thus both the sacrificial lamb and the satanic image of the pagan goat who is prayed to, instead of the nation that Two and a half-Li is expected to hold sacred. As a Christ-like figure undoing blindness, the goat is nevertheless the only character of the story to "save" Two and a half-Li. However, in a total reversal of Christian anthropocentrism, here the saviour *is* the animal. Linguistically speaking, this reversal is even more striking in relation to representations of disability if we consider, as Emma Stone has shown how Chinese characters with animal radicals have historically been used to refer to physical or mental disability in a way conveying diminished personhood (Stone, 1999: 141). Here, Two-and-a-half-Li and the goat saving each other in turn and moving away from the cruel expectations of society thus further subverts common tropes of metaphorical and linguistic linking of animals and disabled people circulating in the Republican period. In a similar fashion, the next section will explore how *Market Street* turns its focus to the shared destiny of human beings and *things* as *feiwu*, and how *things* similarly highlight a compounding of inequalities based on class, gender, and disability.

Human Beings and/as Things in Market Street

Published in August 1936, *Market Street* (*Shangshi jie* 商市街) consists of a series of semi-autobiographical vignettes chronicling the life of a couple struggling to make ends meet through the seasons, sickness, and Manchuria's evolving political circumstances during the early 1930s. Though considerably less studied than *Field of Life and Death*, scholarship on *Market Street* has mostly focused on the book as an artistic exploration of hunger (Yue Gang, 1999: 293-4), or alternatively as an autobiographical account of Xiao Hong's life (Zhang Enhua, 2016: 113). The latter tendency is to be attributed to the many striking similarities between the storylines of *Market Street* and the details of Xiao Hong's own cohabitation with fellow author Xiao Jun (蕭軍, 1907-1988), with whom she lived in Harbin until 1934 and with whom she co-authored *Trudging* (*Bashe* 跋涉, 1933). Beyond those aspects, the book is a striking exploration of the way people relate to objects when everything is scarce, and of how "broken things" become stand-ins for reflecting on the value of what society considers to be "broken

people." Echoing the mercantile connotations of the title of the book, many chapters are named after objects (*The Last Piece of Kindling*, *Black Khleb and White Salt*, *Ten Yuan Bill*, *The Book*…), after places or practices of consumption (*The Europa Hotel*, *The Pawnshop*, *Borrowing*, *Buying a Fur Cap*, *Selling Off Our Belongings*…), or after occupations (*The Tutor*, *The Basket Carrier*, *The Female Tutor*…).

In *Market Street,* objects often become imbued with human emotions. For instance, the window glass in the vignette *The Tutor* (*Jiating jiaoshi* 家庭教師), which is marked by a multitude of tear-like streams by the snows:

> The window was high up on the wall, like in a prison cell. I raised my head to look out the window at the swirling snowflakes falling outside the building. Some of them stuck to the windowpane, melting on the glass and forming rivulets of water, turning the window into a mass of meandering, aimless streaks.
>
> Why did snowflakes dance in the air? How meaningless it all seemed. It dawned on me that I was just like those snowflakes, leading a meaningless existence. I was sitting in the chair, empty-handed, doing nothing; my mouth was open but there was nothing to eat. I was exactly like a completely idled machine. (SSJ: 9; MS 8)

Here, the window becomes a reflector of the narrator's image, in a stunning first parallel made between "useless" non-productive bodies and machines. The main protagonist of *Market Street* cannot work as she is physically too weak, all while her partner is out and about seeking employment. She is described as being as frail as a snowflake and she sees her own existence as a meaningless one. The windowpane recurs several vignettes later when:

> The window frosted up as soon as I closed it. Before long, tears were streaming down the pane of glass! At first, only a few streaks, but then tears ran in a torrent down the glass! The face of the window was covered in tears, just like the face of the beggar-woman on the street below. (MS: 26)

The window functions as a stand-in for the tears of the narrator herself, a medium exposed to both the warmth of the inside and the cold of the outside. The thawing ice on the pane acts as an intermediary between the two women, until the reader no longer knows who is crying for whom: the narrator on the inside, the beggar woman on the outside, or the object that separates them. It is but the thickness of glass that differentiates the narrator from the beggar woman, a fragile thing that nevertheless amounts to everything in the dead cold of winter.

The narrator's physical frailty is made worse as she eats as little as possible so that her male partner who is able to work can have as much sustenance as possible. With reduced eating, she must reduce her physical movements to the bare minimum as well:

> During the days, I would sit quietly in the company of our furniture — I had a mouth, but no one to talk to, legs, but nowhere to go, hands, but nothing to do. I was just like a disabled person — I was so lonely! [我雖生着嘴也不能言語，我雖生着腿也不能走動，我雖生着手而也沒有什麼做，和一個廢人一般，有多麼寂寞！] (SSJ: 59; MS: 44)

The narrator then turns to things to assuage her loneliness during her long wintry confinement: things in the apartment are recast in her image. Like a table, she has legs but nowhere to go (a table's legs are also *tui* 腿 in Chinese). Like a jar, she has a mouth but no one to speak with (a jar's mouth is the *kou* 口 of *pingkou* 瓶口, as for a human mouth). She likens her object-like forced stillness, and her loneliness to that of a *feiren* 廢人. This is translated as "disabled person," in Howard Goldblatt's translation but which in Chinese, of course, carries the added connotation of "useless person" or "good-for-nothing," as translated and noted by Dauncey (2012: 322) in her discussion of disability life writing in China from the late 1980s.

Immediately afterwards, the narrator's silence is contrasted against the lively tune of the concertina that takes on a life of its own to sing to the hardships of life:

> Close by, a concertina started to play. Was it singing to life's hardships?[5] It was such a mournful tune!
>
> I opened the little window by standing on the table. That little window was our sole link with the outside world. Through it we maintained contact with the skyline — roofs and chimneys — the falling snow, the dark, floating, moisture-laden clouds — street lamps, policemen, hawkers, beggars... The streets were noisy and bustling.
>
> We could no longer hear the concertina in the next room. (MS 9)

It is the *it*, the concertina-as-object, that comes alive to fill the air with the sound of streets, "noisy and bustling," that the narrator cannot access or make out for herself. The effect is reinforced by the *shijie* 市街 "Market Street" that phonetically evokes a world (*shijie* 世界), a cityscape that is a world in and of itself for the confined people who cannot go out. In the next vignette, when the narrator is finally well enough to be working, she can at last enjoy a spring outing to the park. As she hears again the enchanting tune of the concertina, she turns around the corner trying to follow it. To her disgust, she discovers that the concertina is played by a blind man sitting next to another with a frozen, swollen leg, who is at once begging and eating a rotten pear:

> The song of a concertina came to us from the next street over. But it wasn't the song of spring. How sad the blind man made us as he cocked his head and played his concertina. The blind man couldn't experience spring, for he had no eyes. The man with the swollen leg couldn't walk in the spring, and he might as well have had no legs at all.
>
> There's no reason for the world's unfortunate people even to be alive! They should be exterminated as soon as possible, so that the rest of us need never listen to the horrible song they sing!" (MS 84)

Only at this stage does she find out that the concertina, the *it* that has charmed her all along and helped her bear her solitary confinement and her extreme state of weakness, does not sing by "itself" but is played by a *him*, the blind man. She was happy to listen to the beautiful sounds of the concertina as long as she remained blissfully unaware of the conditions of their

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[5] Here, the original English translation reads "Someone began playing a concertina in the next room. Was it a tune dedicated to the misery of life?" thus removing the emphasis on the concertina in the Chinese original.

production, unaware of people – as the reader learns a little later in the text – injured by war. The motif of the man with a broken leg as a nuisance to others is of course reminiscent of Lu Xun's *Kong Yiji* 孔乙己, perhaps the epitome of the motif of the physical disability at that time. Of course, in the case of *Kong Yiji*, it is not war but classical culture and education that lead to his becoming disabled (Vuilleumier, 2015: 66). Here, the reoccurrence of the vocabulary of "extermination" recalls the attitudes of the characters of *Field* towards disabled people and also shows here how people's empathy largely extends to themselves as long as they are directly concerned but is quickly dismissed as soon as their personal circumstances improve.

After she falls ill again, the narrator seems to regain her sense of empathy for what others see as "damaged goods," the only ones to keep her company. In the penultimate vignette, *Selling off our belongings* (*paimai jiaju* 拍賣傢俱), the cooking pot that has eased the burden of the narrator's loneliness and prevented her from dying of hunger is nevertheless damaged goods (*feihuo* 廢貨), from the perspective of the unemotional used goods merchant:

> Look, this stuff is a bunch of junk [廢貨]. Even if I do buy it [它] from you,
> I'll have trouble selling it. (SSJ 178; MS 129)

Meanwhile, the narrator seems to hesitate as to whether she should simply consider the cooking pot as an object that has served its purpose and let it go, or cling to it as a member of the household that had shared their misfortunes (129). This passage builds on an earlier scene when the narrator found herself discussing "what is human" and "what is not" with a couple of friends. Everyone brought their own definition to the table, some people highlighting that "A person without emotions is not human," others that "A person without courage is not human," and still others that "Cruel people are not human." (殘忍的人不是人; MS 76; SSJ 106). The passage concludes: "Everyone had his own definition of what was human. Some gave as many as two standards for determining what was human." Interestingly, the text leaves a degree of doubt as to whether the sentence refers to participants in the conversation, or if it is a more general statement from the narrator that "people" in general often having "double standards."

If "cruel people are not human," the discourse on *feiwu* in *Market Street* shows how disabled people often come to be on the receiving end of the cruelty of other people. Already in the earlier scene with the concertina player, it was deemed "cruel" (*canren* 殘忍) and thus repulsive to the narrator that the blind man could not experience spring. A little further, disability functions once again as the magnifying glass that brings out cruelty in people:

> After that, we went over to look at a warship sunk during a 1929 battle with the Russians. We could still see its name — it was called "Great Victory." We shared our thoughts regarding the warship, but everything we said was a bunch of nonsense. Someone said it had sunk when the boiler had burst; someone else said that it had sunk when the pilot had been killed. It was riddled with bullet holes, and made people feel the cruelty of it all [使人感到殘忍]. Just like one sees on the street[6] a soldier who has lost a leg on the battlefield. Being maimed, he is called a cripple [他殘廢了，別人稱他是個

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[6] Here, the original English translation modifies somewhat the meaning of the original. Goldblatt's translation reads: "It was riddled with bullet holes, a useless cripple. It reminded one of…", thus transferring judgment value by calling the disabled soldier "a useless cripple" while the Chinese original oppositely says that the view of this body prompts people to being cruel. For the sake of the analysis, I have thus replaced parts of Goldblatt's translation, signalled with brackets.

廢人]. The battered warship lay there alongside the wharf, turning to rust.
(SSJ 168; MS 121)

Here, the masculine third person pronoun helps personify the sunk warship and transform it into a maimed soldier. Once again, the focus is on what other people call it (*feiren* 廢人, human rubbish), and the term "cruel" returns as bystanders become uncomfortable with the emotions that arise from watching the sunk warship. Beyond *Market Street*, disability and disability-related metaphors often take centre stage in Xiao Hong's wartime narratives. Mute people become narrators of the war's story, as in her 1933 *An Old Mute* (*Ya laoren* 哑老人), where a mute old man is unable to prevent his granddaughter dying from violence while he himself is trapped during a fire at a beggar's shelter (Xiao Hong, 1991 [1933]). On a metaphorical level, the role of hearsay in giving fragmented, conflicting accounts of the war, here foregrounded in the use of "someone said", "someone else said", "everything we said was a bunch of nonsense" in the text, becomes physically embodied when characters have their ears cut off, as is the case in *On the Oxcart* (*Niuche shang* 牛車上) when the wife of the soldier finally shows her cut-off earlobes, lamenting her typical fate (Xiao Hong, 1936). A far cry from the heroic figures and able-bodied, superhuman exemplary soldiers who would take literary models by storm a few years later in the early PRC (Riep, 2008), disability comes to represent the absurdity of war, when people are either considered to be "garbage" for not joining in, or "garbage" all the same when society fails to find a way to reintegrate those who did go. In the same vignette, the image of the maimed battleship, forever moored by its wounds, is contrasted with the broken pieces of ice that despite being broken, float happily towards the sea:

> It was a beautiful sight, this river flowing with a purpose but seemingly without purpose; chunks of ice, big and small, crashed against each other as they flowed with the current — "ping, ping" — sounding like ceramic pots banging together, like pieces of glass banging together. As I stood on the riverbank I daydreamed: *Where do these chunks of ice go? To the sea? They'll probably never make it that far, for the sun's rays will surely [eradicate]*[7] *them* [全數把牠們消滅盡] *before they reach their destination.*

> Still they [它們] flowed on, tranquilly, as though they were alive and far happier than we humans [幽遊一般也像有生命似的，看起來比人更快活。]. (SSJ 167; MS 120)

While the warship is stuck ashore, condemned to rust and stay a "cripple" in the human realm, the chunks of ice happily float and dissolve into the sea. The pieces of ice floating to the sea are likened to broken ceramic pots and pieces of glass, *things* containing water, like the windowpane, or the little rice pot. Unlike the crying windowpane, and unlike the image of the narrator frail as a snowflake melting onto the glass, they are happy. While a shattered window or a ceramic pot become a collection of mere pieces of ceramics or pieces of glass, the little pieces of ice are content to serve no purpose. Unlike objects or humans, they do not belong to any realm of transactional exchange and do not lose "value" because they are shattered. They are just water returning to the sea and will continue to do so despite having been "eradicated" by the sun.

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[7] Here, the original English translation gives "melt them" but 消滅 *xiaomie* is "eradicate" and much harsher than "melt."

Conclusion

In this article, I have sought first to historicise the slur *feiwu*, "rubbish", as it circulated in the periodical press in 1930s China through excerpts of New Life Movement slogans, satirical cartoons, and homemaking or hygienicist press articles. Against this background, I have shown how the category of *feiwu* functions as a prism that brings together Xiao Hong's *Field of Life and Death* and *Market Street* in a common critique of contemporary discourse on gender, disability, and social class. Through a gendered lens, *feiwu* in *Field* is most clearly articulated through the figure of Mother Wang, for whom having a daughter was a downfall. In *Market Street*, women become "trash" when they do not contribute actively to the household (the narrator, the beggar woman), while men become "garbage" when their disability makes them unable or unwilling to join the armed insurrections against the Japanese, as Two-and-a-half Li. And still, when men do uphold their civic duties and later become unable to reintegrate society after the "heroic" undertaking of war leaves them disabled (the soldier and the warship, the beggar and the concertina), they become "rubbish" all the same. The category of *feiwu* thus becomes revealing of disability as much as it uncovers gender and works as a magnifier for social inequalities: the beggar woman is separated from the narrator by the thickness of the window, and peasants are mosquitoes that "must" be exterminated.

Pointing to gendered violence and rural patriarchy as dominant themes in *Field*, Lydia Liu already noted in 1995 that "It is interesting that, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, nationalist interpretation of this novel is the rule rather than an exception in Xiao Hong scholarship" (Liu, 1995: 210). Interesting also is how many of all those who have looked at Xiao Hong beyond the nationalist struggle have focused on the novel's dark denunciation of "bestiality," on gendered violence, deaths and hopelessness. While Xiao Hong's works remain grim indeed, an exploration of what *Field of Life and Death* and *Market Street* opposes to this discourse on "human rubbish" (the figure of the goat, the pieces of ice) allows us to see how her novels are not only dark, but in many instances also let light in between the cracks, thereby revealing what all kinds of people can teach us about our shared humanity. Laying bare the processes of marginalisation and dehumanisation at play in public discourse and popular media in 1930s China, Xiao Hong's oeuvre thus provides us with a glimpse into the kind of critical counter-discourse that was already being articulated in the Republican period by those seeking to take to task stereotypical representations of gender, class, and disability circulating at the time. Expanding into earlier decades discussions conducted thus far by historians of disability for the Second Sino-Japanese War and for the People's Republic of China, it also suggests that more attention needs to be paid to earlier critical discussions taking place during the Republican period to understand fully the continuities and ruptures that have shaped discourses and counter-discourses on marginalisation in twentieth-century China.

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Between Fear and Respect: Vocabulary and Meanings of the Dead Body in Urban China from the Late Qing to the Early Republican Era

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Abstract
This article explores the meanings and emotions attached to dead bodies in urban China during the late Qing and early Republican periods, through studying the vocabulary for the dead body. A range of words - shi, qu, ti - were used to denote corpses in the Late Imperial period. These words, with their different connotations, reflected how the corpse always held emotional and spiritual influences over the living, either by arousing a negative emotion of fear, or by bringing a positive meaning of respect. During the late Qing and early Republican era, political revolution, medical development and religious influences imposed new meanings on dead bodies in urban China. Words for dead bodies were reconfigured to adapt to such new meanings. Traditional notions of fear attached to corpses had to be mitigated to pave the way for post-mortem medical study. The new vocabulary did not use invented scientific terms that objectified bodies, but rather incorporated reconfigurations of old words that connoted respect. This reflected a continuity in the meanings and emotions attached to corpses. Dead bodies in the Republican period were sanctified and respected through new ways, as they were incorporated into the narrative of nationalism. The ongoing relationship of the living with the dead was therefore never erased, but continuously reinvented against the backdrop of modernisation.

Keywords: dead bodies, vocabulary, late Qing, early Republican, fear, respect, sacrality

Part One: Introduction

In contemporary Chinese language, there is a range of terms referring to a dead body – *shiti* 屍體, *yiti* 遺體, *yihai* 遺骸 etc. This range of vocabulary denoting a dead body is formed from Classical Chinese characters with ancient origins; however it is also the product of modern reinvention over the last one and a half centuries. Chinese vocabulary for corpses was reconfigured during this period through arranging existing Chinese characters together or through imbuing existing words with new meanings. This reconfiguration of vocabulary took place against the backdrop of momentous social, cultural, and political transformations. Such transformations brought about changes in the attitude and beliefs towards dead bodies in urban China. The vocabulary for corpses was therefore reconfigured to accommodate the new meanings attached to dead bodies.

Vocabulary is the key subject of this article, taken as a lens to understand the meanings and emotions attached to dead bodies. Vocabulary here refers to the range of words for a particular subject - the dead body in the case of this study. To trace the development of vocabulary, dictionaries prove a useful source to observe the occurrence and absence of particular words, as well as their changing definitions through time. However, more importantly, this study focuses on observing 1) how the words were used in the wider public discourse, and 2) what emotional connotations those words aroused. The connotations, be it

fear or respect, can be gleaned from studying the surrounding texts and understanding the context. For the wider public discourse, this study mainly utilises newspapers and various forms of commemorative writing. These texts were mostly produced and circulated in urban centres by the political or intellectual elites. This study thus limits itself primarily to the linguistic practices of the Chinese urban population as initiated by the urban elites, given the vastness of China as well as diversity of Chinese culture and language(s).

This article argues that despite the pressure of scientific modernity, the dead body was continuously imbued with sacred meanings. The vocabulary for the dead body continued to hold connotations of respect and sacredness, rather than evolving into scientific terminology that implied pure objectification. The newly-reconfigured vocabulary signified the reinvented meanings of respect and sacredness towards dead bodies in the Republican era. During the Qing period, bodies were sanctified for dynastic loyalty and filial piety; in the Republican period, bodies were commemorated for Chinese nationalism and civic contribution.

Death practices and beliefs in China is a large field of research, with a considerable quantity of anthropological work published throughout the years (De Groot, 1892–1910; Freedman, 1966; Watson, 1982). While such scholarship is highly meticulous, it generally takes a relativist approach, by focusing on revealing the uniqueness of Chinese customs and traditions. Such ethnographic works, which often focused on seemingly 'static' rural communities over urban contexts, inevitably downplay the changes over time and influences of modernity, rendering a disjuncture between the study of Chinese death practices and broad questions of modernity. Recent anthropological work by Andrew Kipnis deviates from the conventional rural focus and explores contemporary Chinese funerary practices in a rapidly transforming urban society (Kipnis, 2021). Reorientating the study of Chinese death practices and beliefs in the urban context helps to better engage questions of modernity and social changes. In historical studies, while there have been some recent works on death and the dead in urban China during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century (Henriot, 2016; Asen, 2016), the field is still in its early stages, with few studies taking a discursive approach. The study of death and dead bodies in urban China in relation to the pressure of Western imperialism and the challenges of scientific modernity remains a meaningful subject to explore, helping historians to reflect upon the dichotomy between 'tradition' and 'scientific modernity'. The focus on vocabulary of dead bodies and their connotations is a novel approach unused by previous researchers to study death in urban China during this period. By focusing on linguistic practices initiated by the urban elites, this article offers a fresh perspective on the meanings attached to dead bodies during this period of momentous social and political changes.

Finally, this study acknowledges the diversity of Chinese death beliefs and practices across regions. This study limits itself to discussing the Han Chinese culture with an emphasis on the Confucian belief system, as this article focuses on the linguistic practices of the (coastal) urban Chinese elites. Most of the anthropological research by Western scholars focuses on southern coastal China due to the geographical limitation of their ethnographic work. While there was certainly much regional variance for practices and beliefs, historians like Susan Naquin respond by suggesting that there was an identifiable set of Chinese beliefs on funerary rituals across regions in the Late Imperial period (Naquin, 1988: 52–53). Furthermore, the imperial government enforced state orthodoxy in funerary and burial practices through laws, resulting in a certain level of uniformity across regions. By carefully utilising anthropological scholarship in context and identifying commonality from historical documents, this study tries to trace broader trends during the late Qing and early Republican era, while also avoiding the assumption that beliefs and practices were static over time and homogenous over regions.

In part two of this article, I will first explore the vocabulary used to denote dead bodies during the Qing period, particularly the words *shi*, *qu* and *ti*, which held different emotional connotations respectively. This lays the foundation for the discussion in part three, where I will examine the influences of Western thoughts like body-soul dualism and anatomical science during the nineteenth century. The major transformation of vocabulary of dead bodies will however be illustrated in part four. As my arguments will show, it was the urban Chinese elites during the early Republican era who reconfigured the Chinese vocabulary of dead bodies. Compound words like *yiti* and *yihai* were popularised, balancing the pressure of scientific modernity and traditional sacred meanings of dead bodies, and enabling a continuity of respect towards the dead.

Part Two: Fear and Respect towards Dead Bodies in Qing China
***Shi* and its connotations of fear**

Traditionally, the most common word used in the Chinese language for a corpse was *shi* 屍/尸. The word *shi* was used to denote corpses in most legal, administrative and medical texts during the Qing period. The character *shi* contains the *si* 死 (death) component; its 'deathly' connotations are explicitly evident. The *Kangxi Dictionary* 康熙字典, the authoritative dictionary commissioned by the Qing state, offers a detailed etymology of the character, illustrating examples of different uses of the word in ancient classics throughout a long history.[1] This ancient word, after a long development of its diverse meanings, only had a single denotation to a corpse by the Qing period.

As compared to *shi*, the word 'body' is most commonly used to denote corpses in the medical and legal contexts in the modern English language. The word 'body' itself denotes a wide-range of meanings, referring to either the living or the dead body. The diverse and malleable meanings of 'body' enable the word to be easily used in a scientific-medical context, without any strong emotional connotations. The closest equivalent of 'body' in the Chinese language would be *ti* 體 – which also entails diverse meanings including both living and dead bodies, depending on the combination with other characters. On the other hand, *shi*, in the Qing period and indeed even today, specifically refers only to a dead body. Unlike the English word 'body', the word *shi* did not possess a 'neutral' connotation, by which the referred corpse could be objectified. Instead, the word was intimately tied to the notion of spiritual danger of corpses.

In Qing China, corpses were seen as spiritually threatening to the living if not managed properly. Anthropologists studying death rituals in late Imperial China highlight the traditional belief that the dead body, prior to being permanently settled with a proper fixed burial, is most dangerous to the living spiritually (Cohen, 1988: 189; Watson, 1982: 156–159).[2] This fear was reflected in the Qing state's strict laws in regulating burial, and specifically protecting buried bodies. The *Great Qing Code* 大清律例 severely penalised acts such as uncovering graves, opening coffins, and mutilating buried corpses. Jeff Synder-Reinke suggests that the severity of the crime was not determined by the motive, for example grave robbing or simply mishandling, but by the level of exposure and destruction of the corpse. Penetrating a grave

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[1] There are two written versions of *shi* - 屍 or the simplified 尸. According to the Kangxi Dictionary, 尸 and 屍 could be used interchangeably, except in the specific context of ancient sacrificial rites, where only 尸 could be used, as 尸 referred to a person responsible for sacrificial rites rather than a dead body in that specific context. This distinction was largely irrelevant by the Qing era. In most of the Qing administrative and commemorative documents, the two characters were indeed used interchangeably.

[2] James L. Watson defines such spiritual danger of unburied corpses to the living as 'death pollution'; he focuses his study on Cantonese society in Southern China.

and opening a coffin would result in a heavier penalty. According to the code, the most severe crime was mutilating, destroying or discarding a buried corpse (Synder-Reinke, 2016: 6). This reflects the Qing state's ideology, which was preoccupied with the locational fixity and physical integrity of the buried dead. This was to ensure a fixed relationship between the living and the deceased, maintaining a ritual order where the living could reliably worship their ancestors, and thus preserving the Confucian social order (Synder-Reinke, 2016: 9).

Protecting the physical wholeness of corpses was paramount in Chinese death practices during the late imperial period. Somatic integrity - the wholeness of the body – preoccupied the mind of virtually all Chinese at that time. This concept is well explored in the work *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, which studies the Chinese imperial torture execution method of *ling chi* 凌遲 (death by slow slicing of the body). The authors of the work argue that *ling chi*, which was the most severe form of capital punishment above strangulation and beheading, invoked horror not just because of the pain, but more importantly, from the notion that the body was left completely disintegrated after the execution (Brook et al., 2008: 13–14). For many Chinese during the late imperial period, the fear of having their body disintegrated was greater than the fear of death itself. This was tied to the afterlife belief that the body and the spirits of the deceased were still entangled rather than detached after death. This inseparability of body and soul functioned in both the sinicised Buddhist and Confucian belief systems, even though one featured a cycle of rebirth while the other emphasised ancestors in the afterlife receiving offerings from descendants. In the Buddhist tradition, the dead without a complete body are robbed of a chance to be reborn, whereas from the Confucian standpoint, such victims are deprived of receiving offerings from their descendants (Brook et al., 2008: 15). As the corpse and souls of the deceased were entangled after death, the Chinese harboured a strong fear of mismanaging or disturbing corpses.[3] Disturbing a corpse, either by dissection, mutilation or excavation, would severely upset the spirits, causing them to haunt the living.

In the Qing legal and administrative texts, the literati only chose the word *shi* when referring to this notion of potentially dangerous corpses that should be feared and protected. They did not opt for a more encompassing and malleable word like *ti* 體 to denote the dead in the judicial and administrative contexts. In the *Great Qing Code*, only *shi* or *si shi* 死屍 were used to denote corpses when writing the laws of protecting the dead.[4] *Fu hui quan shu* 福惠全書 (*Book of Blessings*, 1694), an early Qing multi-volume publication on local administration, recorded many judicial cases involving murder and deaths. The publication uses these judicial cases as examples to illustrate how to cautiously carry out post-mortem investigations (Huang Liuhong, 1694: Vol 12, 92 - 93). In another example, the author discussed the prevalence of the ill-practice in which people brought a corpse to a neighbour's house to blackmail them for money (Huang Liuhong, 1694: Vol 14, 14 – 15). All these cases depicted the corpse as an undesirable and dangerous entity to be treated cautiously, and *shi* was the only word used for this notion of corpses throughout the publication. Thus, the word *shi* alone took on all the undesirable meanings attached to corpses.

Ti and *qu* – sacred dead bodies

While the word *shi* was 'jinxed' with negative supernatural connotations, reflecting the prevalent fear of corpses, did the words *ti* 體 or *qu* 軀 then play the opposite role, promoting a

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[3] Souls [in plural] is used here, as according to traditional Chinese afterlife beliefs, the deceased had multiple souls/ spirits after death. The multiple souls of the deceased rested in separate places, including in the grave with the corpse and around the ancestral tablet for receiving worship (Cohen, 1988: 181 – 182).

[4] The words of *shi* and *si shi* were consistently used in 'Xinglu - zei dao xia zhi er' 刑律-賊盜下之二 (General Public Disorder and Theft: 7) in *Great Qing Code* 大清律例

'neutral' view of the dead body? *Ti* and *qu*, which can be roughly equated with the all-encompassing meaning of 'body' in today's Chinese language, were in fact often loaded with supernatural connotations during the Qing period as well. But in contrast to *shi*, the meanings associated with *ti* and *qu* were positive, implying respect and sacredness. The two words were normally only used to describe sacred bodies that had political value to the dynasty or social significance under Confucian beliefs.

The bodies of the vast majority of commoners would not be described as *qu* or *ti* when they died. During the Taiping Civil War (1850 - 1864), millions perished and the traditionally affluent Jiangnan region was devastated. In the aftermath of the war, the Qing state actively commemorated thousands of individuals who had sacrificed their lives for the regime as martyrs. Hundreds of accounts of martyrdom were recorded in local gazetteers. The gazetteers depicted their deaths using morally and politically charged language (Meyer-Fong, 2013: 2- 3). Here, the word of *qu* or *ti* was reserved for these politically significant dead.

Today, we commonly associate phrases like *juan qu* 捐軀 (to sacrifice one's body) or *wei guo juan qu* 爲國捐軀 (to sacrifice one's body for the nation) with modern Chinese nationalism. We associate these politically charged phrases with the dead who sacrificed their lives in revolutions or wars during the twentieth century. But in fact, these phrases, and the use of *qu* in such a way already existed in Qing imperial discourse. In one of the post-Taiping commemorative publications, the *Gengxin qi Hang lu* 庚辛泣杭錄 (*Tears for Hangzhou in the Gengxin Year*), which documents the fall of Hangzhou, the phrase *juan qu* was used a total of twenty-three times across the sixteen volumes of the publication. The more specific phrase *wei guo juan qu* was used twice in the publication as well (Ding Bing, 1895). *Juan qu* was used to describe many different cases of martyrdom, for example, chaste women who committed suicide in the face of rebels, generals and officers who died when defending the city etc. The use of *qu* in this context signified that the word was reserved for bodies of martyrs.

In an earlier period, as reflected in the aforementioned Kangxi-period *Fu hui quan shu*, *juan qu* was also used. Compared to the commonplace employment of *shi* in every volume of *Fu hui quan shu*, *qu* only appears three times throughout the whole publication. In two of the three occurrences, it appears as *juan qu*, highlighting the noble nature of the deaths. In one case, it was used similarly to its employment in post-Taiping commemorative literature, and described sacrificing oneself in the name of loyalty to the imperial dynasty (Huang Liuzhong, 1694: Vol 24, 122). But on another occasion, *juan qu* was used to describe sacrificing oneself for the Confucian doctrine of filial piety, in an instance when a son died when avenging his father's death (*Fu hui quan shu – Volume 12*, 1694: 95). The rare occurrence of *qu* in *Fu hui quan shu* reflects that very few bodies were sanctified as sacred bodies in the official imperial discourse during the early Qing period.

Similar to *qu*, *ti* was used to denote sacred bodies in Qing commemorative literature. Tang Yifen 湯貽汾，a Qing official, poet and artist, was commemorated in *Jiang biao zhong lüe* 江表忠略（*Stories of Loyal Martyrs from along the Yangtze*)*, a twenty-volume publication that memorialises many generals, officials and gentry who perished in the Taiping Civil War. Tang Yifen committed suicide when Nanjing fell to the rebels. His daughter hastily buried the body and used a branch to mark the burial spot before escaping. Ten years later, when the city was recovered by the Qing, the body was dug up. According to the memorial account, people discovered that the body was already wrapped in growing branches. The body was then properly reburied (Chen Danran, 1900: Vol 1, 49). The account here uses the word *ti* to denote

his body.[5] The word *ti* here possesses sacred meaning. The story emphasises how, despite great odds, the *ti* was miraculously preserved and recovered years after. The word *ti* as used here therefore has supernatural connotations of miracle and sacredness.

Tobie Meyer-Fong suggests that in Qing imperial discourse, the ideal state of the body after death reflected the virtue of the deceased person. Stories of bodies being perfectly preserved or bodies being miraculously recovered were reserved for exceptionally virtuous deceased individuals (Meyer-Fong, 2013: 108 – 109). These tales served as an encouragement for the general population, both morally and politically, at a time when the regime was delegitimised by long-lasting rebellions and society had been traumatised by massive loss of lives. In the late Qing period, as Meyer-Fong suggests, the imperial state was increasingly lenient in granting sacred status to the deceased in order to salvage the regime's dwindling legitimacy (Meyer-Fong, 2013: 142 – 144). Compared to the early Qing period, ever greater numbers of deceased men and women who died demonstrating loyalty to the regime were commemorated as sacred *qu* or *ti* in the imperial discourse.

In contrast to the *qu* or *ti* reserved for martyrs, the massive numbers of anonymous corpses abandoned during the Taiping War were referred to as *shi* in the post-war literature. Thousands of bodies scattered across battlefields; corpses were left exposed in devastated cities; streams were clogged with cadavers - all these scenes commonly appeared in post-Taiping literature to showcase the magnitude of destruction and suffering. *Shi* here was used to denote these anonymous corpses when describing such disturbing sights. Classic phrases like *shi heng bian ye* 屍橫遍野 (bodies scattered across the wilderness) or *shi hai zhen ji* 屍骸枕藉 (bodies piling over each other) were commonly used in the commemorative literature to bring out the horrifying images of seas of cadavers or piles of corpses.[6] All these corpses denoted as *shi* were merely nameless components of a disturbing sight. These bodies were stripped of their individuality, let alone having the sacred value that martyred bodies of *qu* or *ti* possessed. *Shi* here represented undesirable corpses that evoked horror and suffering.

In the Qing period, different words denoting dead bodies, be it *shi*, *qu* or *ti*, all had emotional connotations. *Shi* aroused feelings of fear and repulsion, as the word was constantly used for corpses in relation to spiritual danger. *Qu* and *ti* on the other hand brought connotations of respect, as the words were used for sacred bodies. The meanings of the words reflected that, either positively or negatively, corpses were constantly loaded with spiritual and emotional meanings in Qing China. The corpse was never simply a 'neutral' objectified entity. The spiritual and emotional meanings held power over the living as the living had to treat the corpse cautiously, either out of fear or out of respect. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, facing the influences of Christianity and medical science, an objectified view of the dead body came to seem necessary. Would these traditional spiritual and emotional meanings attached to corpses diminish? How would the vocabulary transform to adapt to the new meanings associated with corpses?

Part Three: Body-soul Dualism and Anatomy: Western Influences during the Nineteenth Century

At the entrance to the St. Michael Catholic Cemetery in Hong Kong, there is a Chinese couplet inscribed on the walls on both sides of the entrance. The couplet reads: *Jin xi wu qu gui gutu,*

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[5] The exact wording is "後十年城復改葬之 藤已發連枝抱其體"

[6] For example, the phrase *shi hai zhen ji* appeared on *Gengxin qi Hang lu – Volume 2*, 1895: 20 and *Gengxin qi Hang lu – Volume 5*, 1895: 8.

ta chao jun ti ye xiangtong 今夕吾軀歸故土，他朝君体［體］也相同. It could be translated as, 'today my body returns to the ground, tomorrow your body will share the same fate'. It is unknown when exactly the couplet was inscribed, but it was most likely around the turn of the century, when the cemetery started to welcome more burials of Chinese converts. We also do not know whether the author of the couplet was a European missionary or a Chinese convert. In any case, the couplet uses the words *qu* and *ti* to describe the dead in a way unique to Chinese Christian expressions. The couplet delivers the underlying religious message that our physical bodies will inevitably perish one day, implying that it is only our souls that could be eternal through the acceptance of God and ascent to Heaven. *Qu* and *ti* here therefore refer to the buried physical body, which is detached from the soul after death.

As mentioned, traditional Chinese afterlife beliefs emphasised that the body and the spirit(s) of the deceased were still intimately entangled after death. Christianity, on the other hand, maintained the notion that the soul of the deceased would immediately detach from the body at the moment of death. While this by no means implied that Christians held no regard for the well-being of dead bodies, the corpse in general held much less power over the living when beliefs in body-soul dualism were present. This notion of body-soul dualism was accentuated in many evangelical works written by nineteenth-century missionaries for Chinese audiences.[7] In nineteenth-century China, many Western missionaries not only sought to spread the Christian faith, but also stressed bringing Western science and culture to the Chinese population (Bays, 2012: 71). Many prominent Protestant missionaries were also medical missionaries who emphasised the importance of bringing Western medicine to China. Anatomy, and specifically a scientific objectified view of the body, was regarded by the missionaries as a key component of Western knowledge. Missionaries thus believed that the notion of body-soul dualism could coexist perfectly with anatomical science, combating the 'superstitious' fears towards corpses and enhancing scientific learning. In order to promote anatomical science, would the missionaries avoid using the word *shi* in their writing and opt for a new word that could lessen the fear of corpses?

Vocabulary adopted by Western missionaries

First and foremost, in the early nineteenth-century, missionaries' understanding and use of the Chinese language were influenced by both the official Qing Chinese lexicography and their daily interactions with local Chinese people in various dialects. For instance, Robert Morrison compiled his magisterial Chinese-English dictionary over the years 1815 to 1823 based on the *Kangxi Dictionary*; however, he also compiled his *Vocabulary of the Canton Dialect* in 1828. For the written Chinese language, the magisterial Chinese-English dictionary based on the *Kangxi Dictionary* was far more important. In other words, missionaries' written Chinese was directly influenced by official Qing Chinese lexicography. In Morrison's Chinese-English dictionary, specifically in part III, the English-to-Chinese section, 'corpse' was translated as *shi* (Morrison, 1822: 91). 'Body' was translated as *shen ti* 身體 (Morrison, 1822: 46). Missionary-translators like Morrison thus subscribed to the notion that the word *shi* denoted dead bodies. But at the same time, they also sought to illustrate body-soul dualism within the confines of existing Chinese lexicography. For instance, in Morrison's dictionary, in the entry for the English word 'flesh', he noted that "the body as distinguished from soul or spirit is

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[7] For instance, *Quan shi liang yan* 勸世良言, written by Chinese missionary Liang Fa and edited by British missionary Robert Morrison, was an early Protestant evangelical work that gained popularity among the Chinese due to its easily accessible language. The work heavily criticized traditional 'superstitious' practices among the Chinese. Body-soul dualism was accentuated in the work as the author highlighted that the soul independent from the material body needs salvation (Liang, 1832).

called *shin* 身 (*shen*), te 體 (*ti*), keu 軀 (*qu*)" (Morrison, 1822: 171). This shows that British missionaries were keen on using existing characters - *ti*, *qu* and *shen* - to illustrate the concept of body-soul dualism.

In subsequent decades, with the colonisation of Hong Kong and establishment of treaty ports along the Chinese coast, British colonial authorities began to dissect Chinese bodies on legal grounds. Chinese bodies in these colonial urban spaces were increasingly medicalised and scrutinised by the colonial authorities. This fitted the broader picture of the British imperial project of 'colonising the body', in which the physical body of the colonised people became a subject of state medical intervention (Arnold, 1993). In colonial Hong Kong, and to a lesser extent in treaty ports like Shanghai, British colonial authorities governed Chinese bodies through coroner investigations, the establishment of mortuaries, through enacting laws for birth and death registration, and the regulation of burial practices etc. These state interventions on dead bodies, often justified by either medical or judicial rationales, were based on a scientific and objectified view of bodies.

While British colonial authorities had increasingly intervened in Chinese burial practices within the colonial urban sphere since the mid-nineteenth century, missionaries also printed Chinese-language serial publications to introduce Western medical knowledge to a Chinese readership during the same period. In 1853, English missionary Walter Henry Medhurst founded *The Chinese Serial* (*Xia'er guan zhen* 遐邇貫珍) – the first Chinese-language newspaper in Hong Kong. The subsequent editors of this pioneering publication were colonial administrator Charles Batten Hillier and missionary James Legge, until it ceased publication in 1856. All three of them had an excellent command of the Chinese language, and wished to disseminate Western scientific knowledge to the Chinese people through their language abilities. In the issue of October 1855, there is a long essay introducing anatomical science and advocating the usefulness of dissection (*The Chinese Serial*, October 1855: 3-11). The essay was based on *Quanti xinlun* 全體新論 (*A New Treatise on Anatomy*), a pioneering work of anatomy in Chinese by medical-missionary Benjamin Hobson (Hobson, 1851). The writer of the essay began by explaining why Western hospitals practiced post-mortem dissections, then proceeded to elaborate how useful dissection was in enabling us to study the human body. Despite the attempt to promote a scientific objectified view of the body, the word *shi* was used throughout the discussion of dissection. *Yan shi* 驗尸 (autopsy) and *pou shi* 剖屍 (dissection) were used to denote post-mortem dissection (*The Chinese Serial*, October 1855: 3; *The Chinese Serial*, May 1856: 9). Missionaries chose to stick with the traditional common word in the medical context despite its 'dangerous' and 'fearful' connotation.

The choices of vocabulary made by these medical-missionaries were most likely influenced by the works of their predecessors such as Robert Morrison, who were directly influenced by the official Chinese lexicography as mentioned above. Nineteenth-century missionaries, despite their convictions toward the introduction of anatomical science and an objectified view of the body, had little desire and agency in altering the Chinese vocabulary for dead bodies in the medical context. When Westernised Chinese elites participated in this medical discourse, they also continued to use *shi* throughout the nineteenth century. Towards the late nineteenth century, more Chinese-language newspapers were founded in Hong Kong and Shanghai – including the *Xunhuan ribao* 循環日報 (*Universal Circulating Herald*) founded in Hong Kong in 1874 and *Shen bao* 申報 founded in Shanghai in 1872. These Chinese newspapers, managed and edited by Westernised Chinese elites, had a much larger readership than the earlier missionary publications. The newspapers reported the Westerners' measures for treating corpses, often expressing awe towards Western technologies. In reporting about

colonial autopsies or Western scientific techniques in preserving corpses, *shi* was still commonly used to denote the dead in these newspaper articles.[8] The persistent use of *shi* was not shaken by the introduction of anatomical science and post-mortem dissection in urban China. This old word remained dominant in the scientific anatomical context until the emergence of other alternative terms in the early twentieth century.

On the other hand, the characters *qu* and *ti*, which occasionally appeared in Christian writing such as the aforementioned couplet in the Catholic Cemetery, were rarely used by nineteenth-century Westerners or Westernised Chinese to denote dead bodies in the scientific anatomical context. Nineteenth-century Western missionaries were unable to make use of compound words to denote the scientifically objectified dead body either. The compound word *quti* 軀體 would occasionally appear in newspapers during the first half of the twentieth century. In newspapers, *quti* was normally used to denote the living body, for instance in writings about health or human biology.[9] And whenever *quti* was used to denote a dead body in the newspapers, it was almost always used within Western philosophical and religious discussion, and used simultaneously with the word *linghun* 靈魂 (the soul), illustrating body-soul dualism.[10] Hence, Westernised Chinese or Chinese Christians did employ the compound word of *quti* to denote dead bodies in relation to body-soul dualism during the first half of the twentieth century. However, during the nineteenth century, Western missionaries did not make use of this compound word in their scientific-medical texts to promote body-soul dualism and an objectified view of the body.

Old vocabulary inertia and limited lexical change during the nineteenth century

Compound words only solidified their presence in the Chinese language in the early twentieth century during the advent of *baihua* 白話 (written vernacular Chinese), a phenomenon that will be discussed in the next section. Nineteenth-century missionaries and Westernised Chinese elites did not yet have the momentum to transform vocabulary in the popular public discourse, as they still subscribed to the official Qing lexicography. This echoes with the argument proposed by Lydia Liu that the Chinese language itself, as the host language, remained the main arena wherein the contestation and negotiation of meanings played out. Western influences could not dictate the transformation of vocabulary, as translation was not simply a process of obtaining the 'authentic' meanings from the 'source' European languages (Liu, 1995: 27). It would be the Chinese intellectuals, together with their audience, who determined the extent to which foreign influences were incorporated into their language. In the case of dead bodies, compound words were not made use of by the Chinese intellectuals until the twentieth century.

Here we observe a contrast between the vocabulary for dead bodies and many scientific-medical terminologies. Many scientific-medical terms in the modern Chinese language were created simply through adopting 'phonemic loans' from European languages, as they were Chinese characters based on transliteration of European languages. This did not just include names of common medicines from the West like aspirin (*asipilin* 阿斯匹靈) and

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[8] Examples of *shi* used in the Western post-mortem medical context include:
Report on a coroner investigation of a body discovered in the Shanghai French Concession (*Shen Bao*, 12th November 1874).
Report on the death of the French consul in Hong Kong, in which his body was preserved by medical chemicals. (*Universal Circulating Herald*, 26th February 1880).
[9] As an example, an article in *Shen bao* used *quti* in discussing obesity (*Shen Bao*, 1st October 1919: 14).
[10] As an example, an article in *Central Daily News* 中央日報 entitled '*linghun he quti*' 靈魂和軀體. (*Central Daily News*, 2nd April 1947: 6).

penicillin (*pannixilin* 盤尼西林), or common diseases like cholera (*huoluan* 霍亂), but also fundamental modern medical concepts like the gene (*jiyin* 基因) (Liu, 1995: 354, 361, 368). The invention of these new terms reflected that these medical concepts or entities were viewed as completely foreign to Chinese knowledge, hence a foreign transliterated term was needed. In contrast to these medical terminologies, there had never been a phonemic loan in the Chinese language for dead bodies from European languages, nor was there a straightforward creation of new words for corpses in the name of science or Christianity. Therefore, while missionaries and Westernised Chinese elites attempted to heavily medicalise dead bodies, the promotion of a scientific view of dead bodies never reached the point where new scientific terminologies were needed to denote corpses. In other words, corpses were never seen as a purely scientific-medical entity that required an invented scientific term.

The persistent use of *shi* throughout the nineteenth century, despite the influx of Christianity and anatomical science, reflects that the traditional connotations of corpses remained dominant in Chinese society. Apart from the missionaries and a handful of Westernised Chinese elites, the vast majority of Chinese people held to the traditional spiritual view of corpses – namely, that corpses were spiritually dangerous and not to be disturbed. This included Chinese people living in the colonial urban sphere where Western influences were strongest. As a result, post-mortem dissections and other forms of interventions on Chinese bodies by colonial authorities continued to stimulate widespread fear and anger among the Chinese throughout the second-half of the nineteenth century. For example, in Hong Kong, when the colonial government introduced a system for registering deaths, many Chinese did not cooperate, as they feared judicial inquiry and subsequent post-mortem dissections (Tam, 2018: 81-83). Many Chinese also refused to be admitted to Western hospitals when dying, fearing their body would be dissected after death. During an outbreak of plague in 1894, thousands simply fled the colony, as they wanted to avoid the fate of having their bodies managed by the colonial authorities after death (Sinn, 2003: 167). All these reflected the fact that the traditional fears attached to corpses had barely dissipated throughout the nineteenth-century, despite the Westerners' ambition to promote an objectified view of the corpse. The word *shi*, accompanied by its connotations of fear and danger, dominated the Chinese language until the twentieth century when newly reconfigured vocabulary began to offer an alternative.

Part Four: The Reconfiguration of Vocabulary and the Reinvention of Respect
A new era: popularisation of anatomy, *baihua* and compound words

It was not the Western missionaries, but the progressive Chinese elites during the early Republican period that played the principal role in transforming the vocabulary of dead bodies. At the turn of the century, more reformist Chinese intellectuals, convinced by the importance of Western science, also actively promoted the study of anatomy. Motivated by a strong desire to strengthen China, these reformist intellectuals saw anatomy as one of the sciences that would lead the nation out of backwardness. Tan Sitong 譚嗣同, a prominent reformer during the waning years of Qing who helped initiate the failed Hundred Days' Reform and was later executed as a result, argued for the necessity of anatomical science. He criticised the Confucian taboo of cutting up bodies. Like many other reformist intellectuals, Tan saw the human body as the microcosm of the nation: feeble Chinese bodies signified a weak Chinese nation and a lack of anatomical knowledge of the human body meant a lack of correct understanding of the realm, resulting in poor governance (Luesink, 2017: 1013-1014).

After the collapse of the Qing dynasty and with the resultant abandonment of the Qing Code that had severely prohibited cutting up corpses, some reformers immediately proposed

to legalise anatomy. Tang Erho 湯爾和, a medical doctor and later a politician, was determined to set up an anatomy law soon after the collapse of Qing. After a year of active petitioning by Tang, an anatomy law was enacted in 1913 which made routine dissection possible (Luesink, 2017: 1019-1020). In the early Republican era, the Western scientific view of the body began to gain prominence with the rising power of medical professionals like Tang and with the institutionalisation of dissection. Western medical schools were established, where students could practice dissection to learn anatomy. With this unprecedented development of anatomical science among the urban Chinese population, would new terms that denoted an objectified corpse finally arise?

Yiti 遺體 and *yihai* 遺骸, both of which are specifically used to denote a dead body, were two terms that gained prominence in the medical context during the early twentieth century. My article's central contention is that these newly reconfigured terms were not denoting an objectified dead body, but rather can be seen as reinventing meanings of respect and sacredness attached to a dead body. This reflected a continuity in the meanings and emotions attached to the dead body, such that dead bodies during the early Republican period were sacralised and respected in new ways, even against a backdrop of rapid modernisation.

This reconfiguration of vocabulary through the development of compound words has to be understood in the context of the reformation and popularisation of *baihua* (written vernacular Chinese). *Baihua* was already used by some writers during the Ming and Qing period, for instance in novels. However, it was significantly reformed during the early Republican era by progressive intellectuals, as they sought to simplify and modernise the written Chinese language to enhance literacy. One major reformation was to simplify the character system by relinquishing complicated archaic characters and restricting the number of characters in daily usage. Linguistic historian Jerry Norman illustrates that the number of disyllabic words increased, "as the phonological system of Chinese underwent simplification and the total number of phonologically distinct syllables decreased" (Norman, 1988: 112). In other words, since the range of commonly used Chinese characters was reduced, compound words were now in greater demand and thus solidified their presence in the written Chinese language. This is also reflected in the differences between Qing-era dictionaries like the *Kangxi Dictionary* and early twentieth-century dictionaries like the *Ciyuan* 辭源; (*Source of Words*) in the former, the dictionary entries list only the characters with descriptions and example usages of the characters; in the latter, although the dictionary entries are also based on single characters, each character entry contains all the common compound words that are based upon that character. This shows that compound words were accepted as fixed vocabulary during the advent of modern *baihua* in the early twentieth century.

The *Ciyuan* was one of the most significant dictionaries during this era of the advent of modern *baihua*. Compiled from 1908 and published in 1915, it was the first Chinese dictionary that focused on compound words (*ci* 辭/詞), rather than individual characters (*zi* 字). The term *quti* was absent in the original 1915 edition, showing the marginality of that particular Christian-influenced term in daily Chinese language, as argued earlier. On the other hand, *yiti* was included in the dictionary, with a brief etymology description (*Ci yuan - You ji*, 1915: 216-217). Although *yiti* was not commonly used during the Qing period, the dictionary acknowledged that the term originally appeared in the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Rites*) during ancient times. This original use of *yiti* in the *Liji* however did not denote a dead body; it referred to one's own body as left by one's parents that should be treasured, thus reflecting an attitude of

filial piety.[11] Since the word *yi* 遺 means left over or remained, the literal meaning of *yiti* would be 'the physical body that remains'. While the original use of *yiti* in the *Liji* did not specifically denote a dead body, it still conveyed a meaning of respect – the body was something given by one's parents, and that required respect.

The use of *yiti*

In the Republican Era, *yiti* was increasingly used to denote dead bodies in public discourse such as newspapers, both in a medical context and a political one. Newspapers circulated in urban centres - for example, *Minguo ribao* 民國日報 (Republican Daily), founded in Shanghai in 1916, and *Yishi bao* 益世報 (Welfare of the World), founded in Tianjin in 1915 – popularised terms like *yiti* and *yihai*. While *yiti* had been occasionally used in Classical Chinese previously, it assumed new meanings to specifically denote the dead body during the Republican era. The term could be comfortably fitted in the context of anatomical science. One could argue that the literal meaning of *yiti* – 'a body that remains' – could be interpreted as in accordance with the notion of body-soul dualism, as the term could entail that the soul departs the body, and the body remains. This arguably enabled a more materialist view of the body in the medical context, detaching the corpse from its associations with dangerous spirits. Nevertheless, *yiti* did not exactly represent a purely objectified body devoid of meanings, as *yiti* was also used to denote dead bodies that had sacred political value. Secular political values were often bestowed on *yiti* to maintain their sacredness. The simultaneous use of *yiti* in both the medical context and the sacred political context signified a new hybrid meaning conferred on dead bodies.

The most iconic use of *yiti* in a political context was by the most iconic Republican figure – Sun Yat-sen. When Sun passed away in 1925, the press closely followed the news about the status and location of his body. Immense effort and attention had been put into preserving and ultimately interning this sacred body of the Republican regime. Throughout March and April 1925, there were reports about Sun's body published in *Minguo ribao* and *Yishi bao* on a daily basis. The news reports all used *yiti* to denote his body when discussing news concerning the preservation, treatment and movement of his body.[12] Sun's body was the most sacred body of the Republican regime; the body was interned in the newly-constructed Sun Yat-Sen Mausoleum in Nanjing in 1929 and a massive memorial ceremony was held. The mausoleum and the memorial service embodied hybrid elements from both Western influences and the older imperial legacy; the commemoration of Sun was a modern reinvention of the imperial funerary rituals conducted in order to maintain the legitimacy of the Republican regime (Nedostup, 2009: 259 – 262). The sacred political meaning attached to the *yiti* of Sun Yat-sen, was therefore a reinvention of the sacredness attached to bodies commemorated by the Qing imperial state. The commemorated *yiti* of the Republican-era might not possess the

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[11] The original phrase from *Liji* is as follows*:* '身也者,父母之遺體也.行父母之遺體,敢不敬乎?'

[12] Examples of news articles using *yiti* in reporting about Sun's body:
"Jueding jieshou guozang yiti shang zai xiehe yiyuan cheng lian hou zan"
決定接受國葬遺體尚在協和醫院成殮後暫 (Decision in organising a national funeral while the body remains at the hospital waiting to be placed inside coffin) (*Minguo Ribao*, 14th March 1925: 2).
"Zhongshan yiti zuori rulian" 中山遺體昨日入殮 (Sun's body was put inside coffin yesterday) (*Yishi Bao*, 16th March 1925: 3).
"Quanshijie tongku Sunxiansheng yiti rulian xiangqing" 全世界痛哭孫先生遺體入殮詳情 (Whole world weeps; the details of Sun's body getting into coffin) (*Minguo* Ribao, 19th March 1925: 3).
"Sunxiansheng yiti yibin" 孫先生遺體移殯 (The transfer of Sun's body) (*Minguo* Ribao, 21st March 1925: 3).
"Sunxiansheng yiti gai lian" 孫先生遺體改殮 (Transfer of Sun's body into coffin) (*Minguo* Ribao, 7th April 1925: 2).

miraculous elements that Qing commemorative writing had promoted, but the body of Republican martyrs and heroes were equally sanctified, and made distinct from the *shi* that represented the ordinary dead. In other words, despite a change of regime, the linguistic categorisation of corpses based on a political hierarchy was not fundamentally altered.

While *yiti* was used to represent politically sacred bodies, the term also simultaneously functioned in the medical context. The *yiti* of significant political figures were often discussed through a medical lens in newspapers. For instance, one report in *Minguo ribao* in 1925 discussed how the *yiti* of Sun was medically preserved (*Minguo ribao*, 16th March 1925: 2). Another report on *Yishi bao* in 1931 mentioned that the *yiti* of the Japanese Prime Minister was medically dissected (*Yishi bao*, 28th August 1931: 4). This simultaneous use of *yiti* reflected that many political elites in Republican China had already accepted Western medical interventions to the body, including dissection. They did not view such medical interventions as harming the sacredness of the bodies. Instead, the two were seen as compatible; the *yiti* could be sanctified, respected and mourned by thousands from the public, but it could also simultaneously be medically studied.

The use of *yihai*

The similar term *yihai* also functioned effectively in both the political and medical context. *Yihai* was popularised in the Republican-era political discourse slightly earlier than *yiti*. While *yiti* was popularised in the political discourse during Sun's death in the 1920s, *yihai* was used to denote the body of another iconic Republican hero – General Cai E 蔡鍔. Similar to *yiti*, *yihai* was not commonly used in earlier Classical Chinese texts, and it was also a reconfiguration produced through combining existing characters. In Classical Chinese, *hai* 骸 was originally used to refer to skeletons or remains, often specifically in the contexts of battlefields or wilderness. Traditionally, *hai* was often used interchangeably or simultaneously with *gu* 骨 (bones). In the aftermath of battles or disasters, when the abandoned corpses were collected and buried, often the flesh had already rotted away and the bones were the only undamaged part of the body that could be preserved. The dry bones were regarded as the core sacred part of the remains for purposes of ancestor worship (Reeves, 2007: 41). Similar to *yiti*, by adding *yi* to *hai*, a newly reconfigured term emerged – accentuating the sacredness of the bodies or body parts that remain. And just like *yiti*, *yihai* also represented more respected bodies, in contrast to the ordinary and unwelcoming *shi*.

The use of *yihai* for Cai E's body epitomised how the term could function well in both the Western medical context and the sacred political context. Cai E was known for leading a military campaign against Yuan Shikai when Yuan attempted to become emperor. He was thus venerated as a military hero who had saved the Republic during what became known as the *Huguo zhanzheng* 護國戰爭 (National Protection War). However, he suffered from tuberculosis and died in Japan in 1916 shortly afterwards. Similar to Sun's death, the press closely followed the status of Cai's body. *Minguo ribao*, which was founded initially to promote Republicanism against Yuan's imperial ambitions, reported on the funerary arrangements and the body of Cai on a daily basis. According to a report on 11th November 1916, Cai's *yihai* was soaked with formalin in order to preserve it, so that it could be later repatriated from Japan to China (*Minguo ribao*, 11 November 1916: 2). *Yihai* was used under this Western medical lens, and yet simultaneously maintained its sacred political meaning.

Medicalisation and sacralisation of the dead body under nationalism

The uses of *yiti* and *yihai* reflected that in the minds of the urban elites of the Republican era, political sacredness and Western medicalisation of a body were not mutually exclusive. Instead of adopting a purely objectified view of dead bodies to further medical science, the urban Chinese elites promoted ongoing respect towards medicalised bodies. The practices within medical schools in Republican China reflected such respect. As mentioned earlier, educated elites like Tang Erho promoted anatomical science through the establishment of medical schools. The teaching and practicing of dissection attracted hostility from traditionalists and the general public. The pro-anatomy educators thus needed to promote an image of respecting the dead while carrying out medical interventions upon them. Memorial services for the medically-studied bodies were held by the National Medical College starting in 1915; they were sacred rituals which all students and staff were required to attend (Luesink, 2017: 1023). These practices reflected the attempt of the reformist elites to balance traditional notions of respect with the need for the medicalisation of corpses. Instead of treating dissected bodies as meaningless objects, they tried to cultivate a form of ongoing spiritual connection with the medicalised corpses.

On a personal level, the body was not just an object, but a spiritual and emotional entity that the student should cultivate an ongoing relationship with. On a societal level, the body was revered as a contributor to the development of science. With this approach to sanctifying the medicalised dead, in a way, more corpses would be respected as sacred bodies that had contributed to the public good. In comparison to a smaller number of sanctified bodies during the Qing period, as medical schools in the twentieth century carried out sacred rituals regularly, thousands of medicalised bodies could be revered as sacred entities, which embodied a social meaning of contribution to the cause of scientific development.

This phenomenon could be understood as part of a continuous process that had broadened the sanctification of bodies during the Republican period. As mentioned earlier, the late Qing period already saw the imperial regime trying to sanctify many more dead bodies as compared to the early Qing period. In the Republican period, the definition of sacred bodies was further loosened; many thousands of bodies that were previously only regarded as 'ordinary' *shi* were given social or political meanings. Commemorating medically-dissected bodies as contributors to science was one example. In the broader political context, many 'ordinary' dead were elevated to the respected status of *qu* or *ti*, as they were incorporated to the grand narrative of nationalism.

As discussed earlier, phrases like *juan qu* or *wei guo juan qu* (to sacrifice the body for the nation) were already appearing regularly in Qing commemorative writings. Since the 1910s, these terms started to commonly appear in newspapers that were sympathetic to the Republican cause, for example, *Minguo ribao* and *Yishi bao*. Not surprisingly, these phrases were used for those fallen during the revolution and the many subsequent revolutionary wars. But on top of that, even individuals, particularly young persons, who died from illness during work or study, were sometimes commemorated through use of such politicised phrases, as they were seen as having sacrificed their bodies by working tirelessly for the nation. For example, in the summer of 1919, when Chinese nationalism heightened during the May Fourth Movement, a student named Liu Jialin 劉家麟 was commemorated as *wei guo juan qu* on *Yishi bao*, after succumbing to heatwave related illness in Shanghai (*Yishi Bao*, 28th July 1919: 3). Another student from the city of Yueyang, who died from heatstroke while busy participating in political activities, was also commemorated as *wei guo juan qu* (*Yishi bao*, 14th September 1919: 3). These youths, who died under circumstances that would previously be considered

'normal', were commemorated as martyrs as their deaths were incorporated into the narrative of nationalism.

Republican-era political discourse greatly loosened the requirement for the dead to become politically meaningful bodies. Apart from these nationalistic students, on the battlefields, not just exceptional generals, but thousands of ordinary fallen soldiers, achieved *wei guo juan qu* as well. Caroline Reeves has studied how the Chinese Red Cross Society actively collected and buried many abandoned corpses on battlefields during the early Republican era; the collected dead were then commemorated in the monthly magazine that was published by the society (Reeves, 2007: 33-49). Reeves suggests that the task of burying the unclaimed dead was a process of incorporating the deceased individuals into a newly created national identity. The unclaimed dead were buried as Chinese citizens and the act of burial was a "performance of citizenship" (Reeves, 2007: 51–52). The active politicization of the dead during the early Republican era had elevated many corpses that would previously be deemed 'ordinary' to become sacred bodies. Whether these were dissected bodies for medical study or collected corpses on battlefields, they were not treated as 'undesirable' *shi*, nor were they purely objectified. Instead, they were given sacred meanings, and were respected for their contribution to the greater society and nation.

Reinvention of sacredness

The very meaning of sacredness in the political context was also reinvented under the pressures of secularisation. A modern form of 'political sacredness' was advocated. This article has discussed the sacredness of the dead body and respect towards the dead body, often interchangeably. There were however differences between the two concepts: sacredness is connected to religious and spiritual beliefs; it signifies a realm not to be intervened in by secular concerns and administration; respect on the other hand is not necessarily tied to religious or spiritual beliefs. Respecting a significant political figure can simply be a secular affair. So, respect towards the dead does not automatically translate into sacredness. But in the Republican era, despite the pressures from scientific and secular modernity against traditional spiritual beliefs, the political elites were able to sacralise the dead in new ways.

Traditional 'superstitions' were discouraged by the Republican regime, which was preoccupied with leading the Chinese people out of 'backwardness'. Traditional funerary ritual specialists were labelled by the Kuomintang Nationalist government as the embodiments of superstitious backwardness (Nedostup, 2009: 191–226). With the decline of traditional practices, the sacralisation of dead bodies found its way in the modern political ideal of nationalism. This echoes with the observations illustrated in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* – that the cenotaphs and tombs of soldiers have become the emblem of the modern culture of nationalism, as the myth of the 'immemorial nation' replaced traditional 'superstitious' beliefs to become the new religion of the twentieth century (Anderson, 2006: 9). In the context of contemporary urban China, anthropologist Andrew Kipnis suggests that "ideas about soul are often political because powerful people and organizations assert that they represent something that is immortal, unchanging, and everlasting. Such permanence adds to their mystique" (Kipnis, 2021: 27). In the twentieth century, the political elites therefore tried to reinvent the sacredness of dead bodies by tying the immaterial spiritual meanings of the bodies to the 'immortal' nation. The respect towards the politically significant dead surpassed the secular domain and was elevated to a form of worship of the sacred. This is reflected in both the mausoleum of Sun Yat-sen in Nanjing and the mausoleum of the Seventy-two Revolutionary Martyrs in Guangzhou, as those sites were sanctified as the holiest places of the Republic.

Ongoing spiritual values of dead bodies in the present

In contemporary urban Chinese societies, despite the persistent medicalisation of dead bodies, bodies continue to be bestowed with spiritual meanings. The concept of *da ti lao shi* 大體老師 (corpse teacher) in contemporary Hong Kong and Taiwan reflects this trend. In contemporary Taiwan, there has been a Buddhist movement that has promoted the sacralisation of medical science. Traditional spiritual beliefs are made to fully engage with medical science. Dissection becomes the focal point of such sacralisation. The identity of the corpse is known to the medical students, so that the students can establish a connection with the dissected body; the body is respectfully addressed as *da ti lao shi*; each body is commemorated by ceremonies before and after dissection (Huang, 2017: 84). This approach, which echoes with the memorial services for dissected bodies held in the early Republican era, in fact has popularised anatomical science and body donation. The number of voluntary corpse donations surged under the Buddhist medical institutions (Huang, 2017: 83). Medical professionals have continued to imbue medicalised bodies with spiritual meanings and the general public have welcomed it.

In mainland China, after 1949, the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has attempted to revolutionise and regulate the management of dead bodies to an even greater extent than the previous regimes. Martin Whyte documents that traditional death rituals were indeed under much pressure in the urban areas during the first few decades of the PRC. However, he argues that despite a radical break in ritual forms, the urban population still adhered to the core elements of the traditional beliefs. In other words, 'orthodoxy' (beliefs) persisted even though 'orthopraxy' (practices) changed. Whyte observes that although the Chinese urban population were pressured to simplify their traditional rituals and adopt cremation, there were no signs that they cared less about the treatment of the remains of their loved ones; indeed, considerable efforts were made to ensure bodies were treated properly even though options were limited (Whyte, 1988: 313-314). Many of the urban dwellers in China today still view the dead body as a spiritual rather than an objectified entity. Andrew Kipnis's very recent ethnographic study also suggests that Chinese urban dwellers today still widely hold spiritual beliefs about the entanglement of dead bodies with souls, spirits or ghosts (Kipnis, 2021: 114–115). Whether they refer to the bodies as *shi* or *yiti*, dead bodies are never devoid of spiritual meanings.

Conclusion

Thomas Laqueur's magisterial work on the cultural history of the dead ambitiously argues that humanity has universally cared for and given meanings to the dead. No culture throughout history or in our modern age is indifferent to dead bodies; the dead body still matters greatly for individuals, communities and nations in this supposedly secular and scientific era (Laqueur, 2015: 1). Through this study of vocabulary and meanings of dead bodies, this assertion is proven to be true in the context of late imperial and early Republican urban China. Dead bodies did not lose their spiritual and emotional meanings when political revolution, scientific development and cultural transformation took place.

Fears associated with the corpse, which were manifested by the word use of *shi*, dominated the Chinese society throughout the late imperial period. Such fears of disturbing corpses went against the development of anatomical science. Yet, the vocabulary of dead bodies remained largely unchanged throughout the nineteenth century. Western missionaries had limited influences over altering the vocabulary of dead bodies, and no Western scientific terminology was invented to denote the corpse in a scientific-medical context. It was the

progressive urban Chinese elites during the Republican era who reconfigured the vocabulary to incorporate new meanings for dead bodies. Terms like *yiti* and *yihai*, both of which were reconfigurations of existing characters, functioned well in both the sacred political and scientific-medical context. This showcases that the urban Chinese elites of the time saw post-mortem medical study and sanctifying the dead as very much compatible.

The sacred meanings of dead bodies were reinvented as regime changed and science developed. How Chinese vocabulary was reconfigured signified a continuity of respect towards the dead – a respect that persisted and grew in face of modernity. The urban elites did not choose to promote a purely objectified view of dead bodies. Instead, dead bodies were sacralised and respected through new hybrid ways, blending the traditional spiritual beliefs with the new dominating narrative of nationalism. Many more bodies, whether they were medically-dissected corpses or collected battlefield remains, were sanctified as contributors to a greater social good or martyrs to the nationalist cause. Under the pressures of scientific advancement and secularisation, the meaning of sacredness, particularly in the political context, was also reinvented. The immaterial spiritual value of the dead was tied to the myth of the 'immortal' nation. In this era of rapid political and cultural transformation, the relationship between the living and dead bodies was never erased, but was continuously reinvented.

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───── (1925c), "Quanshijie tongku Sun Xiansheng yiti rulian xiangqing"全世界痛哭孫先生遺體入殮詳情 (Whole world weeps; the details of Sun's body getting into coffin), March 19, 3.

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Translating Wang Xiaoshuai: From Third Front to Cultural Revolution

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Abstract

Since the turn of the century, there has been an upturn of cultural production about the Third Front (1964-80) within China, yet mainstream knowledge of this military-industrial project and former state secret remains limited, particularly outside of China. This article examines the English-language reception of Wang Xiaoshuai's "Third Front trilogy" of films, arguing that – despite the moniker – reviewers have tended to marginalise the Third Front and focus instead on the Cultural Revolution proper (1966-68), creating a slippage between these two distinct events. This "translation" of campaign time has occurred because of English-language reviewers' assumptions about the Mao era and how it should be depicted by Chinese artists, as well as a Chinese-English subtitling strategy in one film that anticipates and encourages these same assumptions about the Mao era. Moreover, despite generally adopting a critical tone towards the CCP, film reviewers have reproduced – and propagated – the judgement of the 1981 Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of the Party since the Founding of the PRC that the Cultural Revolution was "ten years of turmoil". Consequently, not only do these reviewers enfold the Third Front into the Cultural Revolution, they also homogenise the complexities of the Cultural Revolution. In doing so, film reviewers unwittingly provide the Party with useful assistance in globally disseminating and maintaining its version of PRC history, as well as hindering the emergence of alternative accounts of the Mao era.

Keywords: Wang Xiaoshuai, Cultural Revolution, film reception, discourse, translation, reception, Third Front

Since the turn of the century, there has been a significant upturn of interest in the Third Front (*sanxian* 三线) within China, with various academic articles, films, documentaries and museums devoted to this huge Maoist military-industrial project. However, public knowledge of the Third Front, as a former state secret which involved the mass relocation of key industries from big cities into remote areas, remains limited, particularly outside of China. This article focuses on Wang Xiaoshuai's "Third Front trilogy" of *Shanghai Dreams* (*Qinghong* 青红), *11 Flowers* (*Wo shiyi* 我十一), and *Red Amnesia* (*Chuangruzhe* 闯入者), to explore how long-standing assumptions about the historical development of the PRC have led to the marginalisation of the Third Front in the English-language reception of these films. It asks three questions: what assumptions about Mao-era China do English-language critics reveal in their reviews of these films, how have these assumptions been shaped, and what are the consequences of these assumptions? With a particular emphasis on *11 Flowers*, I argue that film reviewers have viewed Wang's Third Front films through the lens of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, despite generally adopting a critical stance towards the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), these film reviewers' understanding of the Cultural Revolution

reflects – and propagates – the reductive judgement of the 1981 *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of the Party since the Founding of the PRC* that the Cultural Revolution was ten years of turmoil. As a consequence, not only do film reviewers enfold the Third Front into the Cultural Revolution, they also homogenise the complexities of the Cultural Revolution. In doing so, despite their antagonistic stance towards the CCP, film reviewers unwittingly provide the Party with useful assistance in globally disseminating and maintaining its version of PRC history.

In the following paragraphs, I provide contextual information on the Third Front, Wang Xiaoshuai and the English-language reviews of his trilogy, as well as highlighting the importance of discourse and translation in shaping the reception of these films. In the second section, I introduce the conflation of the Third Front and Cultural Revolution that begins in reviews of *Shanghai Dreams*. In the third section, I examine how the translation of *11 Flowers*' subtitles into English encourages reviewers to dwell on the Cultural Revolution rather than the Third Front. In the fourth section, I argue that reviewers of *11 Flowers*, having been guided towards the *topic* of the Cultural Revolution by the subtitles, are additionally guided by the CCP's 1981 *Resolution* and globally-circulated "scar literature" in their judgements of what *type* of Cultural Revolution should be depicted by Chinese filmmakers. In the final section, I examine how the Third Front is completely eclipsed by the Cultural Revolution in reviews of *Red Amnesia* and reflect on the difficulties of publicising stories about the Mao era that do not align with existing dominant discourses.

The Third Front resulted from Mao Zedong's concerns during the early 1960s about the nation's vulnerability to aerial strikes, especially nuclear, as tensions escalated with both the United States and the Soviet Union. With industry concentrated on the eastern seaboard, Mao believed that a few well-placed strikes could potentially severely undermine China's capacity to mount a military response. In 1964, Mao rejected a draft of the Third Five-Year Plan (1965-70) and called for specific revisions, including the division of the country into First, Second and Third Fronts (see Naughton, 1988). The latter, in marked contrast to the post-Great Leap austerity policies of the previous years, was to be a massive self-sufficient military-industrial complex created almost from scratch amid some of China's most inhospitable terrain. Nearly 40% of the national capital construction budget was subsequently allocated to the Third Front between 1964 and 1980. The central government demanded that key Third Front factories – rather than being located within existing cities – should be adjacent to mountains, dispersed, and hidden (*kaoshan, fensan, yinbi* 靠山、分散、隐蔽), and in certain cases, located in caves (*jin dong* 进洞). With a lack of existing industrial infrastructure and knowledge in many inland provinces, an estimated four million urban workers were relocated, along with family members, from major cities to the Third Front, while another 11 million residents served as temporary construction workers (see Meyskens, 2020: 237–44).

Since the turn of the century, a burgeoning Chinese-language academic corpus (see Zhang Yong, 2018) on the Third Front has come to exist alongside a growing number of artistic works. The director Wang Xiaoshuai has emerged as a trailblazer in the latter field, as a former "child of the Third Front" (*sanxian zidi* 三线子弟). During my interview with Wang in summer 2018, he noted the previous lack of creative works on the Third Front before the release of his film *Shanghai Dreams*. He further argued that this film's success at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival had generated significant interest towards the Third Front within China. [1] He has also cited a sense of personal responsibility for raising awareness of the Third Front (Shi Zhiwen,

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[1] Personal interview, Wang Xiaoshuai, 2018.

2012: 65). During the 1960s, Wang's mother was relocated from a Shanghai factory – along with many other workers – to a new Third Front factory to the northeast of Guiyang city. With Wang just four months old at the time, his father quit his job as a teacher in the Shanghai Theatre Academy and the family moved together to Guizhou.[2] Wang's later departure from Guizhou as a teenager seems to have heightened rather than diminished his sense of connection with the Third Front (Wang Xiaoshuai & Li Ren, 2005: 50-51).

Given this personal connection, Wang is painstaking in his filmic depiction of everyday life in the Third Front, rather than simply using its "rusticated factories" (Naughton, 1988: 383) as aesthetically-pleasing backdrops. And given his standing on the international film circuit, Wang has been able to disseminate his representations of the Third Front to a more global audience than most other creators. However, English-language critics have generally missed the centrality of the Third Front to Wang's trilogy, and instead have treated his films – particularly *11 Flowers* and *Red Amnesia* – as mainly concerned with the turmoil and violence of the Cultural Revolution. Existing academic studies of Wang's Third Front trilogy, meanwhile, have focused on the films themselves rather than their reception. These studies have variously explored the inter-family conflict and longing for homeland in *Shanghai Dreams* (Letteri, 2010), the employment of a child's perspective in *11 Flowers* (He, 2018; Meng Jing, 2020: chap. 3), and the spectre of the Cultural Revolution in *Red Amnesia* (Wang Yanjie, 2017).

In order to study the English-language reception of Wang Xiaoshuai's trilogy, I searched for reviews and synopses of all three films. The 114 texts I found have mainly been penned by professional film writers for newspapers (e.g. *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*), entertainment magazines (e.g. *Time Out*, *Slant*, *Variety*), film festivals and online entertainment sites (e.g. *Cinematical*), with amateur reviewers (e.g. on *Imbd* and *Letterboxd*) in the minority. The vast majority of these texts are not written by China experts, and it is this quality that makes analysis of them illuminating, since it offers a snapshot of non-expert, English-language discourse on PRC history and cinema. How the PRC, its history and its cultural production are translated and reconstructed in non-domestic mainstream news and entertainment sites is an important issue; such media are more accessible not only than most academic journals but also Wang's own films, and so warrant at least the same level of scrutiny and critique.[3]

The majority of the analysed texts appear in publications that are based in either the US or the UK, with a remaining handful in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong. Apart from national differences and the distinction between professional and amateur writers, there are also differences in publication scope, with some covering Wang's films alongside more mainstream, English-language films and others evincing a commitment to "indie" or "international" filmmaking. However, while these forms of difference have certainly influenced writing styles, they do not appear to have exerted significant influence on the overlooking of the Third Front and amplification of the Cultural Revolution by reviewers. Since I followed an inductive method when coding these texts, their focus on the Cultural Revolution has also heavily informed the direction of my own article. A handful of Mainland China-produced English-language articles about Wang's films are quite different in their approach and are not included in the sample of 114 texts. Although I briefly examine this

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[2] Personal interview, Wang Xiaoshuai, 2018.
[3] By comparison, Daniel Vukovich's work (2012, chap. 6) on the reception of *In the Heat of the Sun* and other cinematic depictions of the Mao period shares commonalities with this article, but mainly focuses on the judgements of academics with extensive knowledge of China.

handful of texts in the final section, the reception of Wang's trilogy in Mainland China itself is largely beyond the scope of this article.

After analysing the reviews, I revisited the films and scrutinized their accompanying promotional materials, searching for clues that might have pointed reviewers away from the Third Front and towards the Cultural Revolution. I came to the conclusion that "translation proper", that is, the "interpretation of signs by means of some other language" (Jakobson, 1959: 233), played an important role in guiding reviewers of *11 Flowers* away from the Third Front and towards the Cultural Revolution. This is an important finding as it validates the claims of translation theorists that studying "cultural translation", that is, the transfer of meaning from one cultural context to another, is insufficient if it does not include consideration of translation proper.[4] However, in this particular case study, translation proper is ultimately subservient to existing discourse, by which I mean a conceptualisation of the Mao period which is so socially embedded that its essential logic frequently goes unquestioned. The translation of these films does not create a new discourse about the Mao era, but rather facilitates the reproduction of popular pre-existing assumptions, particularly the simplistic characterization of the Cultural Revolution as ten years of political chaos and violence. Whereas some studies have highlighted the transformation of discourse through translation, this discourse on the Cultural Revolution is dominant in both source and target languages, albeit with different accompanying emphases, and thus particularly pervasive. [5]

Reviewing Shanghai Dreams: Conflations of Third Front and Cultural Revolution

Set in Guizhou during the early 1980s, *Shanghai Dreams*, the first of Wang Xiaoshuai's trilogy, focuses on the conflict between a relocated first-generation Third Front worker Wu Zemin – who plots with his colleagues to return home to Shanghai – and his daughter Wu Qinghong, for whom Guizhou is the only home she has ever known. This home is a Third Front work unit in Guiyang's Wudang district, the site of the filmmaker's own factory upbringing. As Qinghong navigates the hilly path between school and home within the work unit, she is followed by the camera and her father Zemin, the latter obsessively determined to ensure that she does not do anything to jeopardize his longed-for return to Shanghai. He particularly wants to ensure that she does not tie herself to Guizhou by engaging in any romantic encounters with Fan Xiaogen, a local teenage boy who works in the factory. Zemin's disciplinarian efforts backfire with awful consequences when Qinghong sneaks away one night to end her relationship with Xiaogen, who – in a resentful rage – rapes her. The final scene shows Qinghong and her family leaving the Third Front work unit in a truck, while a broadcast announces the impending execution of Xiaogen.

In their consideration of *Shanghai Dreams*, 16 out of 37 English-language reviews mention the "Third Front" or "Third Line". This is a low number since the film is entirely set within a Third Front work unit save for a single scene, although it is still proportionately far more than for reviews of *11 Flowers* and *Red Amnesia*. Those few reviewers that go into detail on the Third Front describe it as a response to the threat of war with the Soviet Union; they do

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[4] See Buden and Nowotny (2009) on the purported merits of "cultural translation". For some critical responses to this proposal, see Chesterman (2010), Pratt (2010), and Pym (2010). For a complete denunciation of "cultural translation", see Trivedi (2007).

[5] For studies of the transformation of discourse as it moves between Chinese and English, see for example Sang (1999) on the translation of European sexological ideas about homosexuality into Chinese during the Republican Era, and Pan Li (2015) on the translation of English news sources about China's human rights record by the PRC publication *Reference News*.

not mention that it was also a response to the threat of war with the United States. The relative visibility of the Third Front in reviews of *Shanghai Dreams*, compared to reviews of *11 Flowers* and *Red Amnesia*, may well be due to the inclusion in the opening credits of a long introductory textual description of the Third Front. It is a stark introduction. White text on black background is accompanied first by silence and then by a broadcast of radio calisthenics, before eventually giving way to a bleak shot of an empty dormitory corridor and then a shot of Qinghong exercising at school.

This introductory text provides the historical context of the Third Front, as a relocation of urban workers during the mid-1960s, not just for viewers of *Shanghai Dreams* but for viewers of Wang's entire trilogy. The second movie, *11 Flowers*, released six years later, opens with a much shorter introductory text whose English translation contains no reference to the Third Front, while the third movie, *Red Amnesia*, has no opening written text at all. In addition to this introductory text, there are other elements of *Shanghai Dreams* that establish clear links with the other two films, indicating that Wang intended these films to be appreciated together, as a triad of perspectives on the Third Front, despite the lack of chronological progression and recurring characters.[6] While a number of PRC academics have commented on these links (for instance Wu Yan, 2016: 75, 77; Wang Xiaoshuai & Liu Xiaolei, 2012: 49–51), English-language reviewers have not. Regardless of the director's intentions, the release of these films over the course of a decade and the rapid turnover of online critics have meant that English-language reviewers have almost never commented on continuities between the films, other than a claimed continuous focus on the Cultural Revolution.

Since *Shanghai Dreams* is set in the early 1980s, it is slightly surprising that the Cultural Revolution is mentioned in 13 out of 37 reviews and synopses. Some brief comment on the Cultural Revolution is perhaps inevitable, given the dominance of a CCP-led narrative which presents the Cultural Revolution as the chaos that explains and justifies the transition to the Reform era (see Schoenhals, 2002). However, a number of reviews additionally claim that the relocation of Qinghong's family to Guiyang occurred during, and even *because of*, the Cultural Revolution. State-led migration and the subsequent attempts of migrants to return home is a central theme in *Shanghai Dreams* and even the trilogy as a whole. However, assertions that Third Front migration occurred "thanks to the Cultural Revolution" (Mattin, 2006) or "as part of the Cultural Revolution" (Brooks, 2006) also indicate a tendency among reviewers – which is prominent in the reception of *11 Flowers* – to amplify the Cultural Revolution to the point that it eclipses the Third Front. Since the Third Front campaign began in 1964, its workers not only began to relocate before the Cultural Revolution but would also have continued to relocate irrespective of the Cultural Revolution's existence. With Qinghong aged 19 in *Shanghai Dreams* (set in the early 1980s), and her father Zemin saying in one scene that he moved from Shanghai to Guiyang when she was a new-born baby, Wang Xiaoshuai presents the family as belonging to the first batches of Third Front migrants, who moved before the disruption of the Cultural Revolution proper (1966-68). Although the blunt force of the film's textual introduction is such that a number of reviewers recognise its Third Front theme, some reviewers still preferred to focus on the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, the latter group become the clear majority for *11 Flowers* and *Red Amnesia*, as preconceptions about the Mao era, together with issues of translation proper, reconfigure Wang's sometimes oblique stories of the Third Front as stories of the Cultural Revolution at its most tumultuous.

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[6] For example, there are clear parallels in name, character, and story between Qinghong in *Shanghai Dreams* and Juehong in *11 Flowers*.

Subtitling 11 Flowers: The Cultural Revolution Eclipses the Third Front

Despite winning the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, *Shanghai Dreams* did not generally receive positive assessments from English-language reviewers, who complained about the slow pace and lack of clear narrative. Such complaints were far less common in the more positive reviews of *11 Flowers*, Wang Xiaoshuai's second Third Front film, which is again set in Guizhou. This time around, English-language reviewers found a clear narrative in the film. However, it was not that of the Third Front, but rather of the Cultural Revolution.

Set in 1975 and 1976, *11 Flowers* does at least take place during the long version of the Cultural Revolution. The Chinese title, literally "I am 11", refers to the age of the child protagonist Wang Han, who lives in a Third Front work unit with his parents. A chance encounter sees Wang Han's life become intertwined with that of Jueqiang, a teenager who is on the run after murdering a factory cadre in revenge for the rape of his sister, Juehong. Everything in the film either takes place within the Third Front work unit or the adjacent countryside, with the exception of a single scene in a local prison.

In the reception of *11 Flowers,* the Third Front is only mentioned in seven out of 48 reviews (and in 13 paragraphs within these texts). In contrast, the Cultural Revolution is mentioned in 43 of these 48 reviews (and in 75 paragraphs). I argue below that the type of Cultural Revolution envisaged by reviewers has little to do with what is presented in the film. However, their focus on the Cultural Revolution rather than the Third Front is actively encouraged by the ways in which the Chinese-English subtitlers address an issue of "translation proper". Below is the crucial contextualising opening text of *11 Flowers*:

> Chinese subtitles: "中国西南/ 三线建设某兵工厂/ 1975 年"
> English subtitle: "1975, Southwest China/ One year before the end of the Cultural Revolution"
> My more direct English translation: "Southwest China, a Third Front military factory, 1975"

The opening English subtitle provides a fairly straightforward translation of map space (southwest China) and year (1975). However, the socio-spatial location ("a certain military factory of the Third Front") has been removed entirely and replaced by a clarification that 1975 was "one year before the end of the Cultural Revolution". The more general location of "Southwest China" is also de-emphasized, having been moved from the front of the subtitle to be sandwiched between "1975" and the added reference to the Cultural Revolution.

This subtitle is crucial because there is little further historical context until the very end of the film. *11 Flowers* somewhat aligns with Cui Shuqin's assessment of "new-generation filmmaking", namely that films by so-called sixth-generation directors are often not so much directly concerned with wider socio-political events as with everyday family life (Cui Shuqin, 2006: 101). Rather than recounting the political events of the late Cultural Revolution, Wang Xiaoshuai focuses on the life of 11-year-old protagonist Wang Han, including his relations with his family, his friends and the fugitive Jueqiang, whose crime is not political. Moreover, the term "Third Front [construction]" (*sanxian jianshe* 三线建设) is specialist terminology somewhat unsuited to the register of everyday non-work life and so is absent from the film's dialogue. This absence leaves the social-political context open to interpretation by reviewers, who also lack in-depth knowledge of the Mao era. It also heightens the importance of the opening subtitle translation, as encouraging non-Chinese-reading reviewers to make

themselves comfortable amid a well-worn discourse of the Mao period as the Cultural Revolution, and of the Cultural Revolution as ten years of turmoil.

The team of Chinese-English subtitling translators have made omissions and additions as part of a strategy that adapts the source text to not only the lexis and grammar but also the dominant discourses of the target language. The producer of *11 Flowers*, Isabelle Glachant, has described the subtitling of the film as a process of "adaptation" rather than translation, with the idea being "to help a foreign audience to better understand the background or not to bother them with too much information that would seem obscure or too local". This process included omission of reference to the Third Front and insertion of the Cultural Revolution: "The Third Front movement is known by very few foreign audiences. The Cultural Revolution is easier to understand and gives faster an idea of the situation and time to a foreign audience" (Isabelle Glachant, 2019, personal communication).

In fact, this process of "adaptation" is the most common contemporary strategy of translating into the English language, with its emphasis on the "domestication" of the source text for a target audience. The translation theorist Lawrence Venuti (1995) has critically described the ways in which this strategy works to conceal a source text's cultural and linguistic differences, and also to reduce the visibility of the translator, to the extent that the ideal translation is one that does not read like a translation at all. Drawing on the early-19th century thought of Fredrich Schleiermacher, Venuti has instead advocated a foreignizing strategy, whereby the translator refuses to smooth over difference for the sake of fluency, and thus disrupts the dominant discourses of the target language. The following quotation from Schleiermacher summarises the differences between foreignizing and domesticating strategies of translation: "Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him [foreignization]; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him [domestication]" (Schleiermacher, [1813] 2012: 49).

Whereas Venuti's critique was primarily aimed at the domestication of literary texts, Abé Mark Nornes has aimed a similar critique at the translation of film dialogue, arguing that "subtitlers have developed a method of translation that conspires to hide its work - along with its ideological assumptions - from its own reader-spectators….It is a practice of translation that smooths over its textual violence and domesticates all otherness while it pretends to bring the audience to an experience of the foreign". For Nornes, such mainstream contemporary subtitling is "corrupt" (Nornes, 2004: 449). In the context of Chinese film, Akiyama Tamako has engaged with the theories of Nornes while reflecting on her own Japanese subtitling of Wang Bin's documentary *Fengming, a Chinese Memoir*. Akiyama writes about her translation of the film's very first line of dialogue as an attempt to avoid "corrupt subtitling" as well as her astonishment at how her translation subsequently informed reviewers' understanding of the film (Akiyama, 2018: 253-4).

With *11 Flowers* too, the opening subtitles appears to exert considerable influence on reviewers; the translation both anticipates and encourages a discourse that understands the Mao period mainly in terms of the Cultural Revolution. My point here is not to condemn the translators of *11 Flowers* for deliberately distorting the film's main theme, but rather to demonstrate how difficult it is to translate in a way that simultaneously maintains textual coherence, generates audience interest, *and* avoids enfolding the source text into dominant discourses that are already known to the target audience. In terms of textual coherence, Akiyama notes the restrictions of time and space faced by subtitlers; the bottom of the screen and viewer cognition can only accommodate so much text, and the translator has to assume

that the text will not be re-read (Akiyama, 2018: 251–53, 256; see also Kuo, 2018). The comprehensive textual introduction to the Third Front in the opening credits of *Shanghai Dreams* partially surmounts these restrictions by having monolingual subtitles, multiple pages and zero aesthetic distractions. *11 Flowers*, in contrast, has bilingual subtitles and a more dynamic audio-visual accompaniment to its introductory text. Following reviewer comments about the slowness and drabness of *Shanghai Dreams*, the briefer, more stylish textual introductory to *11 Flowers* reduces the possibility of a bored audience. At the same time, this reduction of subtitling space means that subtitlers cannot fit in contextualising clauses explaining the reference to the Third Front, while a direct translation without context would entail a loss of coherence. Even the option of slowly drip-feeding contextual information into later subtitles is limited by the lack of direct reference to the Third Front throughout the film's dialogue.

Anthony Pym (1996) has argued that Venuti's preferred foreignizing strategy may doom a translated work to a place on the margins. Mark Polizzotti (2018: 60) has been similarly critical, arguing that "in a cultural climate already dismissive of foreign outlooks and literatures, intentionally making them even harder to access seems a classic case of shooting oneself in the foot with a howitzer". From this perspective, it makes commercial sense to omit reference to the Third Front in the opening English title of *11 Flowers* and amplify the Cultural Revolution, and thus avoid the further marginalization of a film that was never going to appeal to a large audience in the first place. But it is harder to agree with Polizzotti's accompanying claim that the "concerns, viewpoints, settings, and context" of a source text will end up "shining almost inevitably through the target version as if through a translucent cloth" (Polizzotti, 2018: 59). In the case of *11 Flowers*, adapting the subtitles to the target audience's perceived knowledge renders the setting of the Third Front invisible to many reviewers. This translation strategy hinders the production of a new English-language discourse on the hitherto little-known Third Front, in contrast to the emerging Chinese-language discourse on the Third Front that Wang has contributed to. It also encourages reviewers to run with more familiar discourses of the Cultural Revolution that have little to do with the content of the filmmaker's trilogy.

Reviewing 11 Flowers: Cultural Revolution as "ten years of turmoil"

The translation of the opening subtitle of *11 Flowers* is crucial in steering English-language reviewers away from the Third Front and towards the *topic* of the Cultural Revolution. However, there are also more pervasive influences that guide reviewers in their understandings of what *type* of Cultural Revolution should be depicted. Ironically, given their often negative commentary on the CCP, many reviewers reinforce a key message of the Party that the Cultural Revolution was ten years of continual chaos and political violence, despite the film itself containing little content to encourage such an interpretation.

Reviewers examine the Cultural Revolution alongside the intertwined themes of the protagonist Wang Han's coming-of-age, political violence, and censorship. Belinda Qian He (2018) has already written extensively on the child's perspective in the film. In contrast, I am concerned with reviewers' assertions that Wang Han is too young to fully comprehend the socio-political events around him, that this is why the political violence and chaos of the Cultural Revolution is not properly omnipresent in the film, and that the filmmaker's decision to use a child's perspective is influenced by considerations of censorship. Reviewers state that Wang Han "can only understand pieces of the dramatic events taking place around him" (Jones, 2013), and that he and his friends "possess little understanding of the social upheaval surrounding them" (Korman, 2013). The social upheaval to which these reviewers refer is not

the upheaval of migrating from big industrial cities to mountain valleys as part of the Third Front. Instead, it is the upheaval and violence of the Cultural Revolution, which – according to many reviewers – is all around Wang Han but not quite perceived on account of his pre-teen innocence.

Consequently, for a number of reviewers, if the child's perspective does not indicate that a scene is about the political violence of the Cultural Revolution, then the child is probably wrong. In one scene, Wang Han and his friends observe a badly-beaten factory youth, Ah Fu, receiving emergency medical aid from his friends. One of Wang's friends has heard that Ah Fu got into a dispute over a girl with a guy from outside the factory. In a subsequent scene, Ah Fu and his friends are seen gathering in tactical positions at the work unit entrance, in preparation for an attack from a gang from another work unit. One reviewer disputes the perception of the film's children that this is a fight over a girl, arguing that it is certainly a fight between rival political factions (McKenzie, 2013).[7] However, even if exacerbated by the political and social tensions of the time, gang fights between the adolescents of different work units were a regular feature of not only the Cultural Revolution but also the early Reform era. Indeed, this kind of inter-factory violence can also be seen in the 1980s setting of *Shanghai Dreams*, when a clandestine disco in Qinghong's factory is interrupted by the smashing of windows by a gang from another Third Front factory. Urban gangs of the Cultural Revolution were also frequently involved in the pursuit of sexual and romantic relationships, alongside fighting, drinking and petty crime (Honig, 2003: 169-70). And as Keith Forster's (1991) work on Zhejiang has demonstrated, there certainly was revived violent conflict between factions during the mid-1970s, but these were often cynical, depleted reconstructions of the more idealistic factions that had existed during the Cultural Revolution proper (1966-68). These remnants of factional conflict existed alongside rising common crime and a climate of discontent (Wu Yiching, 2014: 204–6), including mass protests of sent-down personnel (see Dong Guoqiang & Walder, 2012), and wall-poster critiques of suppressive state policies implemented in the wake of the Cultural Revolution proper (see Chan, Rosen & Unger, 1985).

However, many reviewers, with their references to Red Guards, appear to expect depictions that would be more appropriate to a film set during the Cultural Revolution proper (1966-68) rather than during the twilight years of 1975-76, as in the following extract:

> Sometimes, Wang employs the viewpoint of another character: Jueqiang (Wang Ziyi), a wounded fugitive who's hiding in the woods. He steals Han's shirt and uses it to staunch the bleeding from his side. The gesture has both practical and symbolic implications. How can the boy tell his mother he lost the new shirt? And how can innocence be restored to a bloodied China? The movie doesn't dwell on the latter question, although the murder is followed by outbursts of teen-gang violence and Red Guard attacks on "conservatives" (Jenkins, 2013).

The image of the bloodied fugitive is first introduced, then politicised ("how can innocence be restored to a bloodied China?"), and then connected to clearly political violence ("the Red Guard attacks on 'conservatives'") via further violence ("outburst of gang violence").

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[7] At least one trailer for *11 Flowers* encourages this interpretation by fusing footage of the inter-factory fight with dialogue about Red Guard factional fighting.

The reviewer's reference to "Red Guard attacks on 'conservatives'" is particularly noteworthy, since the Red Guards were finished as a major political force after the summer of 1968 (MacFarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006: 250–1). The subtitles again play a role here in guiding reviewers toward a particular vision of Mao-era China. Whereas the Chinese refers to fighting "between" two factions, that is the "royalists" (*Baohuang pai* 保皇派, translated as the "conservatives") and the 411 ("April 11th" 四一一派) faction, the English subtitles transform this conflict into an attack of "the Red Guards *against* the conservatives" (emphasis added). For multiple English-language reviewers, this conjures up visions of well-known Red Guard atrocities against intellectuals during the Cultural Revolution proper. One outlier, an amateur reviewer with a leftist perspective, complains about the film getting "dewy eyed about the plight of oppressed conservatives" (Post1000Tension, 2018).

In fact, in Guizhou, the "conservative" Red Guard faction had worked with Li Zaihan, the leader of the provincial revolutionary committee, to suppress the less well-equipped April 11th faction. These factions also came to include far more than just Red Guards, with the involvement of industrial and military allies, including Wang Xiaoshuai's factory as a place of refuge for the hard-pressed April 11th faction (Deng Zhenxin, 2010: chap. 17). A particularly violent attack on the April 11th faction in July 1969 led to the central leadership's intervention and Li Zaihan's downfall (Deng Zhenxin, 2010: chap. 18); he was stripped of his posts in 1971 and died in 1975 (Jian, Song & Zhou, 2009: 147). Any revived conflict between remnants of the two factions that might have occurred in 1975-76, presumably during the leftist assault on Deng Xiaoping in elite politics, would have been a limited re-run of the 1967-69 conflict and is thus deservedly confined to the narrative background in *11 Flowers*. Given the setting of the film in a remote military factory, the director also locates this violence in the geographical background, in the city of Guiyang where Wang Han's father works, rather than in the factory itself.

However, the Cultural Revolution that the reviewers expect to see on film is not the Cultural Revolution of 1975-76, but rather the Cultural Revolution of 1966-68. The point here is not that film reviewers should be expected to have detailed knowledge about the differences between China in 1966-78 and in 1975-76, but that the Red Guard-dominated imagery of the early Cultural Revolution has come to function as a synecdoche for an entire ten-year period. As a consequence, a film set between 1966 and 1976 that lacks this imagery is open to claims of inauthenticity or interpretations to justify this presumed lack.

In contrast, for some academics who have focused on the social conflicts of 1966-68, such as Anita Chan (1992) and Jonathan Unger (2007), events after 1968, and certainly after the Ninth Party Congress of April 1969, should not even be described as part of the Cultural Revolution. These scholars focus on the Cultural Revolution as a grassroots social movement and thus strongly object to the conflation of this movement (1966-68) with its subsequent brutal suppression by a militarized state. This two- or three-year periodization of the Cultural Revolution is certainly disputed, but it is not controversial to state that 1966-68 was the main chaotic period of Red Guard violence and factional fighting before the even more violent army-led reassertion of state authority and mass purges of the "cleansing of the class ranks" campaign in 1968-69 (on different periodisations, see Zhang and Wright, 2018: chap. 11 onwards).

The 1981 *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of the Party since the Founding of the PRC* (henceforth 1981 *Resolution*) avoids all mention of Red Guards. Despite dividing the Cultural Revolution into three sub-periods, the overall message of the 1981

Resolution is that the Cultural Revolution was a decade of continuous turmoil during which the passive masses were manipulated by a small minority of counter-revolutionaries. The verdict that the Cultural Revolution constituted ten years of calamity, first publicly declared by central leadership in September 1979 (Ye Jianying, 1979; see Forster, 1986: 8–9), has, in the words of Wu Yiching "reduce[d] the extraordinary complexity of the Cultural Revolution to the simplicity almost exclusively of barbarism, violence, and human suffering" (Wu Yiching, 2014: 4). This verdict over-emphasizes the political struggles of the CCP elite, while ignoring the ways in which everyday life differed over the various phases of the long Cultural Revolution (Law & Whyte III, 2003: 20). Moreover, underplaying the temporal complexity of the Cultural Revolution lays the foundations for the Red Guards, as the globally circulated symbols of this Mao-era turmoil despite their omission from the *1981 Resolution*, to become an expected prominent feature of a film set during this ten-year period.

For Yang Guobin, the *1981 Resolution* "laid out the golden rule for writing histories of the Cultural Revolution: Let it be known that the Cultural Revolution was a ten-year disaster and leave it at that - above all, do not be nosy about the details". This rule was reinforced by the 1984 campaign to "totally negate" the Cultural Revolution, with the central message that "The Cultural Revolution was bad - forget about it unless you want to ask for trouble" (Yang Guobin, 2005: 14). In the post-Tiananmen years, Lowell Dittmer (2002: 5) notes a "determined official silence" in the face of a popular revival of interest in the Cultural Revolution. Despite Xi Jinping's 2013 assertion that the eras preceding and following Deng Xiaoping's reforms have both been essential to the construction of Chinese socialism (see Berry, Thornton & Sun, 2016), as well as online, filmic and literary departures from the CCP narrative, the Cultural Revolution remains largely ignored in CCP discourse. [8] An online search, for example, indicates that "Cultural Revolution" (*wenhua da geming* 文化大革命) has appeared in the headlines of just three Chinese-language *People's Daily* articles since 1986, with a further 12 headlines carrying the shortened "CR" (*wenge* 文革). In comparison, the table tennis player Ma Wenge (马文革) has received more headlines.[9]

Although it is highly unlikely that the reviewers of Wang Xiaoshuai's film trilogy have directly read the 1981 *Resolution*, the shorthand verdict of "ten years of turmoil" has resonated far beyond the borders of China (see Dirlik & Meisner, 1989). Reviewers have also most likely been influenced by a globally-circulated strand of "scar literature", as represented by the memoirs of Jung Chang and Nien Cheng, which serve as "standard references when the Mao era and Cultural Revolution are under consideration" (Gao Mobo, 2008: 14). This diasporic scar literature has partially countered the post-1978 CCP verdict by continuing to dwell on the Cultural Revolution and by humanizing suffering through accounts of everyday trauma, including at the hands of Red Guards. In doing so, this literature carries forward some of the themes of domestic popular culture in the years immediately after 1976, including that of "scar film", whose popularity came to an abrupt end in 1981 once Deng Xiaoping had consolidated power and non-CCP interpretations of the Cultural Revolution were no longer useful (see Berry, 2004). However, these memoirs also validate the CCP's characterisation of the Cultural Revolution as a ten-year calamity, and as a clash between clearly demarcated forces of good and evil. As Craig Calhoun and Jeffrey Wasserstrom have noted, post-1978 discourse on the Cultural Revolution has been dominated by "the perspective of the wounded and the 'rectifiers'

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[8] For example, see Weigelin-Schwiedrzik & Cui Jinke (2016) on Maoist rebel blogs, and Meng Jing (2015) on the 2012 CCTV drama *Sent Down Youth*.
[9] Search performed via "OriProbe Information Services China Daily – Renmin Ribao (1946-present)" database, available at https://www.oriprobe.com/peoplesdaily.shtml, April 2021.

of its wrongs, such as Deng Xiaoping" (Calhoun & Wasserstrom, 1999: 34). Reviewers of Wang Xiaoshuai's films knowingly align themselves against the CCP's ongoing desire to restrict discussion of the Cultural Revolution. However, they unknowingly propagate the CCP's own verdict on the Cultural Revolution (ten years of chaos), rather than alternative accounts that it might fear (as a period whose temporal and spatial complexities cannot be reduced to a single discourse of good versus evil).

11 Flowers does not portray a Cultural Revolution of good versus evil. It does not dwell on political violence but rather on the sometimes mundane everyday life of a Third Front work unit, as well as the sufferings that Third Front migration brought to individuals. For some reviewers, the distance of political violence is a troubling aspect of the film, as for example in this review in the US bi-weekly *TV Guide*:

> If *11 Flowers* has a flaw, it lies only in the nature of [Juehong's] crimes. Although we never see the rape or homicide on camera, those actions cloud the picture's political undertones to a needless degree; such events could happen anywhere, of course, and are hardly unique to Cultural Revolution Era China; they feel too universal for this story (Southern, n.d.).

This complaint seems to carry the expectation that the fictional depiction of everyday life in 1970s China must be subservient to politics. Such an expectation may sound familiar to scholars of Chinese studies: Mao's pronouncements at the 1942 Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art firmly placed politics in command of art for the duration of the Mao period (and beyond). Having shifted the focus of *11 Flowers* from Third Front to Cultural Revolution, reviewers expect to see "the familiar characteristics of the Cultural Revolution", that is, "mass violence, chaos, political persecution [and] betrayal" (Li Li, 2016: 82). They align with the CCP both in their belief that fiction should transmit political truth and in their understanding of the political truth that the Cultural Revolution was ten years of chaos.

Tong King Lee (2015) has written of how the English translations of PRC literary works are frequently advertised for their value as ethnographic documents created by dissidents who accurately represent a "real" China that is hidden by the political authorities. Wendy Larson has similarly commented on the unreflective reception of Chen Kaige's *Farewell, My Concubine* as if "this is indeed Chinese history and thus, China" (Larson, 1997: 332). Extending these arguments, once a slice of artistic-ethnographic reality has been established in discourse, it can be difficult for artists to escape that discourse without being accused of misrepresentation. Thus, for Li Li, the absence of mass violence, chaos and other markers of the Cultural Revolution in Chen Kaige's *King of the Children* contributed to its initial poor reception in English-speaking countries (2016: 75–83).

In contrast to Chen Kaige's film, the usage of a child's perspective in *11 Flowers* enables most reviewers to forgive Wang Xiaoshuai for not documenting the Cultural Revolution according to their expectations. Usage of the child's perspective provides a justification for the film's failure to stress the political chaos and violence of the Cultural Revolution, since reviewers believe that the child is unable to perceive these upheavals. This commentary on the child's lack of political awareness sometimes interweaves with remarks about a second form of political persecution, which is the censorship of contemporary Chinese filmmakers. Multiple reviewers (e.g. Barber 2012; Jenkins 2013; Jones 2013) point to how Wang and other filmmakers have been artistically thwarted by the state. Reviewers generally refrain from explicitly stating that Wang has used a child's perspective in order to depict the

Cultural Revolution without the intensity of political chaos and violence that an authentic adult narrative would require. This is, however, implied with references to his creation of a "political film without politics" (Jones 2013), or the need for filmmakers to handle narratives of the Cultural Revolution "in a way that doesn't upset the authorities" (Barber 2012). Reviewers thus work two political themes into their writing: the state repression of contemporary filmmakers; and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution which these filmmakers so bravely depict. In his critique of political scientists, Michael Schoenhals has written of how "The 'Cultural Revolution' has become part of the rhetorical erector set – a box of conceptual nuts, screws and braces – out of which authors build their explanations of the here and now" (Schoenhals, 2002: 159). It also functions as an essential conceptual apparatus for English-language film reviewers when building their explanations of how and why contemporary filmmakers such as Wang Xiaoshuai choose to depict the Mao era.

Conclusion: Translating "Third Front Trilogy" as "Cultural Revolution Trilogy"

If the Third Front is conflated with the Cultural Revolution in the reception of *Shanghai Dreams*, and then increasingly eclipsed by the Cultural Revolution proper (1966-68) in the reception of *11 Flowers*, this eclipse is almost total in reviews of *Red Amnesia*. This 2014 film was the third and final instalment of Wang Xiaoshuai's self-titled "Third Front trilogy". It focuses on the character of Old Deng, as her actions in and memories of the Third Front in the 1970s increasingly intrude upon her life in contemporary Beijing. After hearing of the death of her former colleague Old Zhao – with whom she struggled to earn a transfer away from the Third Front to Beijing during the early Reform era – Old Deng appears to be afflicted by the hallucinations of a failing mind, with flashbacks to Third Front buildings, silent phone-calls to her home, and the visit of what she takes as the apparition of Old Zhao. It is later revealed that she is afflicted by more than hallucinations; the apparition is actually Old Zhao's grandson, who has come from Guizhou to Beijing to exact revenge upon Old Deng for her underhand tactics in securing the transfer of her family from the Third Front at the expense of the Zhaos.

The Third Front is mentioned by just two out of 29 English-language reviews, not including those produced in Mainland China. In contrast, the Cultural Revolution is mentioned in 18 of these 29 texts. As its title suggests, *Red Amnesia* is a film about partial forgetting, but exactly what has been forgotten by Old Deng is not fully understood by reviewers. The two mentions of the Third Front – on the global cinema specialist website *Filmatique* and *The South China Morning Post* – come from Wang Xiaoshuai himself, with both of these texts introducing the film through interviews with the director. Yet somehow, both these texts and others also refer to *Red Amnesia* as part of Wang's "Cultural Revolution trilogy" (Grisham, 2016; Lee, 2015). *Filmatique* asks Wang Xiaoshuai: "Can you comment on the significance of Red Amnesia as the bookend to your Cultural Revolution trilogy, and how it relates to the other films?". Wang responds by describing it as part of his "Third Front Trilogy" (he also refers to it as his "Life Trilogy") (Grisham, 2016). Despite this answer, *Filmatique's* accompanying description of the film continues to introduce *Red Amnesia* as the "bookend of his Cultural Revolution trilogy", while also claiming that the film's poor showing in China evidences "the censorship of art house cinema" (Filmatique, 2016).

Reviewers' overlooking of the Third Front's presence within the film itself is perhaps more understandable. The streets and apartment buildings of contemporary Beijing dominate the first three-quarters of the film, while the dilapidated red-brick buildings of the Third Front slowly force their way back into the life of Old Deng, mentally through dream sequences and materially through Old Zhao's grandson hurling a red brick through her window. It is only in

the final half-hour of the film that Old Deng physically returns to Guizhou and her former factory. In contrast to *Shanghai Dreams* and *11 Flowers*, Wang Xiaoshuai saves his introduction to the Third Front until the second hour of the film, and inserts it not as written text but as dialogue, with Old Deng's adult sons mentioning the campaign by name as they discuss her recent odd behaviour. As with *11 Flowers*, this reference to the Third Front has not been directly translated into English. Even if it had been translated into English, the lateness of the reference, and its fleeting presence within dialogue rather than as a lingering opening title, reduces the potential effect on reviewer reception. If the director foregrounds the Third Front in *Shanghai Dreams* and *11 Flowers*, he turns its legacy into a menacing background presence for the first three-quarters of *Red Amnesia*, before it explodes into the foreground for the film's finale in Guizhou.

What is notable about the film's reception therefore is not so much the absence of the Third Front from reviewer discourse but rather the sustained dominance of the Cultural Revolution in this discourse. While the Third Front lurks in the shadows of Old Deng's life in contemporary Beijing, the Cultural Revolution lurks in even deeper shadows, as an accessory to Old Deng's wronging of Old Zhao. The viewer learns from Old Deng's sons that she and Old Zhao were violent activists during the Cultural Revolution, and that Old Deng reported Old Zhao's past misdeeds (but not her own) when struggling to earn the sole transfer away from the Third Front. However, this struggle to move back to Beijing occurs during – and is heavily shaped by – the beginning of the Reform era. It was during the Reform era, and not the Cultural Revolution, that new economic policies caused the decline of many Third Front factories, whose locations had been driven by considerations of military defence rather than efficiencies of access to natural resources and markets. Moreover, Old Deng's desperation to escape the Third Front was a product not simply of the state-led migrations of the Mao era, but also the new developmental logic of the Reform era. This new logic significantly reduced the social status of Third Front workers, as well as refocusing the economy away from the interior towards the coast. The film's focus is thus the ongoing impact of these past upheavals on the elderly, including not only the Cultural Revolution and the Third Front but also the early Reform era.

Red Amnesia also received a handful of English-language reviews in Mainland Chinese state media. The sample size is too small to draw conclusions, but reviewers appear to do their best to avoid mentioning the Cultural Revolution at all, instead referring to the Third Front (Wei Xi, 2014) or "a troubled period of China's history" (*China Daily*, 2014), preferring to focus on the film's appearance at the Venice Film Festival. There is an irony here, that a film can generate discourse abroad about the Cultural Revolution and artistic censorship while simultaneously reinforcing patriotic discourse within Mainland China about the international success of Chinese filmmakers.

There is a further irony in that I have needed to shift almost completely away from the Third Front in order to describe the ways in which a director's self-styled "Third Front trilogy" has been received by English-language reviewers. Wang Xiaoshuai, I feel, would be disappointed, given his aforementioned desire to raise awareness of the Third Front and its workers. It is striking that a campaign as massive as the Third Front can be enfolded into the Cultural Revolution in mainstream English-language discourse, and this raises questions about what happens to other marginalised stories of the Mao period as they make their way across languages. It is also striking that reviewers' assumptions about the Cultural Revolution at least partially align with the CCP's own official verdict. Although anxious to resist the CCP's second rule about the Cultural Revolution (don't talk about it), reviewers seem unaware of their

reproduction of the first rule (it was "ten years of chaos"). In *11 Flowers*, translation proper helps push the reviewers towards the Cultural Revolution. However, it is a translingual discourse of Cultural Revolution as ten years of brutality and chaos that primarily pushes reviewers to dwell on the Cultural Revolution proper (1966-68), rather than the later period in which the film is set. Further research can hopefully ascertain whether this reception of Wang's films is an isolated peculiarity or part of a wider tendency in mainstream English-language media to collapse all differences within the Mao era into a blanket condemnation of the Cultural Revolution while glossing over alternative, dissident accounts of PRC history. Further research can also examine the reception of films and other creative works about the Third Front in China itself, where tales of heroic workers struggling against nature and foreign imperialism would be more useful to the CCP's construction of state history than tales from the Cultural Revolution of internal division and class struggle.

Acknowledgements

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Author's note: Official Chinese-English translations are in parentheses. Where official translations are not available, my own translations are given in square brackets.

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Who Makes the Fall Happen? A Study of two National Taiwanese Universities' Experiences of Removing Statues of Chiang Kai-shek

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Abstract

Addressing contentious historical figures' statues and heritages is an issue that perplexes many countries and generates polarised social debates. Taiwanese society has also had a long debate on how to appropriately handle statues of the country's former leader, Chiang Kai-shek. What has become known as "Fallism" has been quite prevalent worldwide in recent years. Several studies have attempted to delineate this trend in South Africa, Belgium, the UK, and Taiwan under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) rule after 2016. However, no study thus far has focused on who truly makes the fall happen. In this study, the authors examine two Taiwanese cases - National Chengchi University and National Sun Yat-sen University, located in the north and south of Taiwan respectively - and explore these two universities' experiences of decision-making with regard to the removal of Chiang's statues. To do so, we examine both quantitative and qualitative data collected through participatory observation and voting results. This study aims to answer the fundamental question of who actually makes the statues fall. The findings of this study enrich the discussion of fallism in the current literature.

Keywords: Chiang Kai-shek statue, National Sun Yat-sen University, National Chengchi University, Taiwan, fallism

Introduction

During 2017 and 2018, two national universities in Taiwan decided to remove statues of Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 on their campuses. Although the decisions to make Chiang fall were made on campus, these decisions cannot be considered apart from their appropriate political domestic or international contexts (Stevens & de Seta, 2008). In domestic Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the 2016 presidential election. During their campaign, the DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen set the goal of "achieving transitional justice" (*luoshi zhuanxing zhengyi* 落實轉型正義) as one of her top five policy priorities. Accordingly, the Tsai administration established the "Transitional Justice Commission" (Cujin zhuanxing zhengyi weiyuanhui 促進轉型正義委員會)" in 2018, and addressing the issue of Chiang Kai-shek statues became one of the commission's main tasks. Encouraged by the macro-political atmosphere promoted by the DPP and the party's emphasis on Chiang as a dictator rather than

a hero, post-2016 a number of student movements have argued for the removal of Chiang's statues from their universities (Muehlbach, 2021; Strong, 2016).

Internationally, the issue of how to address contentious historical figures and the heritage of political leaders has perplexed many societies. In Belgium, a long debate has taken place concerning the historical reputation of King Leopold II and what to do with his statues, many of which are in public spaces and on university campuses (Rannard & Webster, 2020). In addition, both in the UK and South Africa, university students have launched a series of movements discussing the reputations and contributions of an Anglo-South African historical figure, Cecil John Rhodes. Rhodes operated a variety of businesses in South Africa and is highly controversial. He was the Prime Minister of South Africa between 1890 and 1896, at which time the country was under British colonial rule. During his rule, Rhodes not only restricted local voting rights, but also enforced a series of policies that had a significant negative impact on the people of South Africa and undermined their human rights. As Rhodes graduated from the University of Oxford and established a university named after him in South Africa, the students of both universities have had long debates over whether to remove his statues from the campus as part of a wider discussion about trends of decolonization and fallism in the global context (Shepherd, 2020).

As the previous examples demonstrate, Taiwan is not unique in facing difficulties over what to do with previous historical figures and heritages. In fact, many countries and societies have problems finding societal consensus on the issue, as different groups and stakeholders attach contradictory sentiments to these heritages and hence hold various attitudes toward the issue of whether to remove these statues. Notably, many of the movements and protests arguing for the removal of historical figures' statues and heritages have been organized by university students. However, students do not have sufficient power or resources to remove the statues on their own. The possible challenges that students may face include opposition from administrators and disagreement from other university elites. In this respect, making statues and heritages fall is not a linear process and cannot be accomplished by students alone. The actual situation is more complex and involves many power negotiations and sometimes even conflicts between different actors (Matten, 2012).

Unfortunately, the existing literature mainly provides historical reviews rather than answering the critical question of who really makes things happen, as most studies do not take actors' points of view into consideration. To fill this research gap, this study examines the student movements and experiences of removing a historical figure's statues, in this case Chiang Kai-shek, from two Taiwanese national universities - National Sun Yat-sen University 國立中山大學(NSYSU) in Kaohsiung city and National Chengchi University 國立政治大學 (NCCU) in the capital city of Taipei. In terms of their location, these two cities are located on the south and north parts of Taiwan respectively. This article aims to identify the dominant decision-makers in the process of statues' removal. Before providing detail about the cases, the next sections briefly outline the history of Chiang Kai-shek in the Republic of China (ROC) and Taiwanese society, and examine the various attitudes and sentiments toward him and his leadership in the Taiwanese political context.

Chiang's historical position and his complex reputation

Even today, evaluating the reputation of Chiang Kai-shek remains a highly controversial and politically contentious issue. Some appreciate his contributions, in particular his assistance to

Dr. Sun Yat-sen in establishing the first republic in Asia, the Republic of China (ROC), in 1912, and his efforts to combat Japan's invasion in the 1930s and 1940s. However, others regard Chiang as a dictator, due to the implementation of a series of repressive policies by his government after the declaration of martial law in 1949. Under this law, his government jailed thousands of people because their political ideologies or beliefs differed from the government's position (Chen, 2008). Chiang's debatable historical position and personal reputation are also revealed in surveys. According to surveys conducted by Wu (2008), 29% of people in Taiwan thought Chiang's contributions to Taiwan outweighed his faults, 30% regarded his contributions as equal to his faults, and nearly 10% of people believed his faults outweighed what he did for the country. Moreover, Ling and Li (2015) found a large generational gap between those aged over 40 and those aged under 40 regarding their perceptions and views of Chiang's leadership, with those over 40 generally more positive toward Chiang. The researchers argued that in general, the younger generation in Taiwan holds more negative views and perceptions toward Chiang. Notably, opinions of Chiang have varied not only among the different generations but also between different administrations. During the presidencies of Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國, the administrations strove to build Chiang Kai-shek's image as that of a national hero. Such purposive constructions of his image and associated political narratives endured for the last four decades of the twentieth century, while the KMT retained power in the central government (Morris, 2018).

Chiang's reputation has changed significantly since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP 民進黨) came to power, first serving in government from 2000 to 2008. The DPP's victory heralded the first change in the ruling party in Taiwan since the 1996 transformation of the electoral system had allowed people to directly vote for the president. Under Chen Shui-bian's 陳水扁 presidency (2000 to 2008), the government sought to transform Chiang Kai-shek's personal image and national political narratives, reconstructing him as a bad, authoritarian leader, even a murderer. Chen's administration further regarded statues of Chiang or public spaces bearing his name, such as schools, roads, and infrastructure, as reminders of the terrible authoritarian past of his rule and thus tried to eliminate or remove heritages associated with him. Accordingly, Chen's government implemented a series of policies that can broadly be labelled as *qujianghua* ("de-Chiang-Kai-shek-ification" 去蔣化), renaming roads bearing his name and to removing his statues from many public settings (Musgrove, 2017). For example, in 2007, Chen's administration changed the name of the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (*Zhongzheng jiniantang* 中正紀念堂) in Taipei, which has the largest statue of Chiang in Taiwan, to the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall (*Guoli Taiwan minzhu jinianguan* 國立臺灣民主紀念館) (AsiaNews.it, 2007). Chen's actions encouraged many, including DPP politicians and local governments ruled by DPP mayors, to join this political campaign, arguing for the removal of Chiang's statues and symbolic heritage from their schools, public spaces, and cityscapes. Notably, college students were one such group who enthusiastically participated in the political campaign to remove statues. According to some estimates, from 2000 onwards, Taiwanese college students organized dozens of student movements promoting the elimination or removal of Chiang's statues from their campuses. However, each university experienced different levels of conflict due to varying attitudes toward the issue and differences of opinion regarding the statues' removal (Musgrove, 2017).

Chiang's statues and paradoxical attitudes toward Fallism in the Taiwanese political context

It is important to understand the historical context in which many Chiang Kai-shek statues were constructed in Taiwan. During Chiang's presidency, to enhance his and the Kuomintang's (KMT) legitimacy on the island, a series of "de-Japanification" (*qu Ribenhua* 去日本化) and "re-Sinification" (*zai Zhongguohua* 再中國化,) policies were introduced and implemented. The re-Sinification policies began in the 1950s and lasted for nearly four decades until the late 1990s. During this period, the KMT government began erecting statues of Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, portraying him as a strong and powerful national leader. During their presidencies, both Chiang Kai-shek and his son had many statues erected across Taiwan. As Taylor argues, the aim of constructing statues of Chiang and naming main roads of cities and villages after him was to connect Chiang with the island's society and history, and to minimize the disadvantage that Chiang and his government held as newcomers to the island. By constructing his statues and advocating for a traditional Chinese style of architecture, Chiang further aimed to reconnect the national legacies and collective memories of the "old Republic of China" on the mainland with the "new Republic of China" on the island he ruled (Taylor, 2006). According to the Transnational Justice Commission, in 2018, there were still 1,083 Chiang Kai-shek statues in Taiwan. Many of them were located on school and university campuses (Chen, 2018).

However, the question of how to deal with the thousands of Chiang's statues located all around the island has become an increasingly controversial problem today, creating confusion for the Taiwan population as the main political forces hold very different, typically opposing, attitudes toward the issue (Matten, 2012). There are two main political forces in Taiwan. One is known as the Pan-Blue coalition (*fan lan* 泛藍); the KMT is the main political party in this coalition alongside other smaller parties, such as People First Party (*Qinmindang* 親民黨). The parties in this coalition hold different opinions about domestic issues; however, in general, party members within the coalition hold a more positive attitude toward Chiang Kai-shek's leadership and his heritage. Some politicians in the Pan-Blue coalition even believe that, without Chiang, Taiwan and some parts of the mainland might still be colonized by Japan. Therefore, they consider Chiang as a hero for all Chinese ethnic groups (*minzu de jiuxing* 民族的救星). Following from this positive evaluation of Chiang, the Pan-Blue camp opposes the removal of Chiang's statues from Taiwan; by contrast, they believe keeping Chiang's statues on their original sites is critical for the country's historical integrity (Shih & Chen, 2010). The other political force is the Pan-Green coalition (*fan lü* 泛綠). Several political parties could be categorized as belonging to this camp, including the DPP, the New Power Party (*Shidai liliang* 時代力量), and the Taiwan Statebuilding Party (*Taiwan jijin dang* 台灣基進黨). Notably, compared with their Pan-Blue counterparst, the Pan-green camp have quite a different political attitude toward Chiang's leadership and his historical reputation. They make a somewhat negative assessment of the historical legacy of Chiang's authority and tend to regard Chiang as a murderer and unworthy of the people's respect. Thus, they support the removal or dismantling of Chiang's statues (Preker, 2018; Shih & Chen, 2010).

Taylor (2010) also focused on the Pan-Blue and Pan-Green perspectives in his analysis, in which he primarily reviewed historical data on the Qujianghua policies that were implemented by the DPP government. He found that the DPP's Qujianghua policy was not

actually a complete and consistent policy program but rather that the DPP's policy plans were also influenced by many different political and societal forces. For example, the KMT's opposition, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have also participated in what can be seen as a co-construction of Chiang and the Chinese Republic's political narratives and the varied narratives about Chiang at the grassroots level. Thus, Taylor argued that the *Qujianghua* policy applied by the DPP featured a complex array of multidimensional voices and policy agendas, because the DPP does not make policy decisions in a void. However, in reality, the DPP still needs to find a compromise between implementing its policies, achieving its political goals, and navigating different opinions toward Fallism. In addition to the actors in domestic Taiwan, Taylor noted that when discussing different policy options and whether Chiang's statues should fall, a multitude of voices must simultaneously be considered, particularly actors from the other side of the Strait (Taylor, 2009). By admitting the complex nature of contending with Chiang's heritage and the issues of Fallism, Stevens and de Seta (2020) further summarized four main approaches to Chiang's statues and reassessing his heritage in Taiwanese society: displacement, re-contextualization, preservation, and deliberation. They further argued that each approach reflects different sentiments and political attitudes held by decision-makers toward Chiang's statues and his leadership.

The discussion above shows that the issue of Chiang Kai-shek statues and the experiences of how Taiwanese society has addressed this former dictator's heritage have attracted the attention of both domestic and international scholars. However, most previous literature has focused on historical analysis; few studies delve in depth to explore the question of who makes the statues fall. To fill this research gap, this study examines two Taiwanese national universities' experiences of removing statues of Chiang Kai-shek and report who made things happen and let the statues fall, based on firsthand participatory observation data gathered through the first author's full participation in both universities' decision-making processes. The movements organized by students and their deliberation practices on online platforms are also discussed. The next section briefly reviews the historical connections between Chiang Kai-shek and the two universities and explains how his statues came to be erected on campuses.

Chiang's statues at NSYSU and NCCU: An Introduction

The original Sun Yat-sen University was in fact established in 1924 in Guangzhou by the founding father of the ROC, Dr. Sun Yat-sen. At the time, the university was named Guangzhou University 廣州大學, as it was located in Guangzhou city center. The university changed its name from Guangzhou to Sun Yat-sen University following Dr. Sun's death in 1925 to honor his role and contribution in establishing the country of ROC. The KMT government did not immediately re-establish the university after they lost the civil war against the CCP and retreated from mainland China to Taiwan and thus the NSYSU was not re-established in Kaohsiung until the 1980s. As Dr. Sun was the founder of the university, it is easy to understand why the university has a statue of Sun; however, the question of why Chiang's statue stands beside that of Dr. Sun at the NSYSU is rather more interesting, as Chiang had no direct relation to the NSYSU. The first university president of NSYSU was Huan Lee 李煥, who was a student of Chiang Ching-kuo. Moreover, the university was founded at the instigation of the state as a national university, and obtained its primary financial support from the government (National Sun Yat-sen University, 2020). These two reasons gave the first university president strong motivation to please the national leader at the time, Chiang Ching-kuo, hence the decision to erect a statue of his father to honor his legacy as part of the

new university construction project. Accordingly, the NSYSU has a statue of Dr. Sun seated, as well as a statue of Chiang standing beside him. Both statues were erected in 1985, and the statues are placed close together in the same location (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The original Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek statues on the NSYSU campus. NSYSU (2020b).

NCCU's connections to Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT government can be traced back to 1927, when the KMT established its Central Party School in Nanjing to cultivate its own political cadres. The KMT government reopened the university in 1954, soon after relocating to Taipei, because of its critical role in cultivating and training the government's medium to high position employees (National Chengchi University, 2006). As the university had a close relation with Chiang, the university erected its first statue of Chiang in the university library in 1967, and a second statue was erected in 1986 on the university's mountain campus (Tsai, 2017).

As can be surmised from the varied perceptions held by Taiwanese people toward Chiang Kai-shek and his leadership, dealing with the numerous Chiang Kai-shek statues erected across the country during his and his son's presidencies has been an important but contentious issue since the 1990s, since when Taiwan has experienced rapid social, economic, and democratic transformations. After the 1990s, when Taiwanese society experienced a major wave of political democratization, an increasing number of social and political forces emerging from the grassroots have generated deep and widespread reflection on heritage concerning the country's former dictator (Wu Chien-Jun, 2020). Influenced by the atmosphere of political democratization, the statue removal issue has also inspired several student movements on different Taiwanese university campuses.

At NSYSU, the student movement arguing for the statues' removal began in 2016, when the NSYSU student association began to discuss the issue internally. In July of 2016, the association tried to add the issue to the university committee meeting agenda. However, the university refused to discuss their proposal at that time. Instead, the meeting chair announced that the students' proposal for the removal of the statue removal would be discussed at the next meeting in October 2016. At the October meeting, supporters and opponents of the statues' removal held a fierce debate.[1] As the university could not navigate the conflicting points of

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[1] This information comes from the first author's field notes, taken in 2017.

view during the meeting, the NSYSU president decided to establish a new committee to investigate the issue. The committee comprised 14 members, only three of whom were student representatives. The university president announced that the aim of this committee was to collect diverse viewpoints and propose solutions to the problem of removing the statue in the subsequent year, 2017 (Liao Yuwen, 2017). In NCCU, back in 2012 when the NCCU student movement began, students had established a new association known as NCCU Wildfire (Zhengda yehuo zhenxian 政大野火陣線). This association played a vital role later in the movement. In April 2016, NCCU Wildfire cooperated with the NCCU student association to try to add the issue of statue removal to the university's discussion agenda, but the university refused their proposal. NCCU Wildfire tried again in 2017, and as at NSYSU, the NCCU president decided to establish a committee to collect different points of view and propose possible solutions (NCCU, 2017).

As seen above, the students' proposals to remove the Chiang Kai-shek statues in question were not accepted by the relevant university authorities when the issues were first raised. However, there have been some changes in the situation post-2016, after the DPP returned into power and at which point, Tsai Ing-wen's government made achieving transitional justice a priority. As the macro-political environment changed, university authorities thus had stronger motivations toward taking students proposals into consideration so as to reflect the central government's stance toward Chiang. On the other hand, as these two universities are both national institutions and receive significant support from the Ministry of Education regardless of other finances or academic funding, the macro-political environment and character of the national universities have become critical driving forces in making the fall of these statues a possibility at these two institutions.

Notably, even when some positive political factors that might promote the fall of the statues are present, the student advocacy for bringing them down may still face challenges or oppositions, as the elites of both institutions hold varying attitudes and sentiments toward Chiang and his statues. It is naïve to believe that university elites would stand aside and satisfy the student demands while ignoring elite preferences. Both university elites and students prefer to make universities' decisions reflect their attitudes toward Chiang and the different preferences concerning the issue of statue removal. Since this issue is controversial and politically sensitive, there may be conflict between elites and students' preferences. The paper thus examines how NSYSU and NCCU made their decisions regarding the removal of Chiang Kai-shek statues on their campuses and tries to uncover who made the statues fall.

Top-down and Bottom-up Decision-making Models and the Online Platform iConcern

There are two models for making decisions in political theory. The first is the elite model, in which the decision-making process stems from a top-down approach and is dominated by a small number of political or social elites rather than by the public. The model primarily thus reflects the preferences and political interests of the elite and ignores the voices of the public in discussing or deciding policies. For this reason, the decision-making process of this model has been criticized by scholars for not following democratic ideals because its lack of attention to public participation in politics. By extension, it can have negative impacts on social mobility and increase inequality between the minority elite and the majority public. In addition, a top-down decision-making model may also reduce government and public organizations' motivation to respond quickly to the needs of the masses. The second model is the pluralistic

model. It differs from the former in adopting a bottom-up approach and emphasizes allowing different people with varying viewpoints and interests to participate in the decision-making process through mutual exchange. Accordingly, the decision-making process of public policymaking is considered the result of competing interest groups, with no individual or minority group dominating the entire decision-making process and thereby determining the final outcome. In this model, the power hierarchies between elites and the public are equal in the decision-making process, and both voices are taken into consideration simultaneously. A main advantage of applying this decision-making approach is that different points of view and group interests can be represented and included, thus reducing the inequality caused when different power hierarchies and levels of capital are held by different groups of people. However, it is time-consuming to include various viewpoints and interest groups in the process of decision-making and policy discussion (Kuo, 2007; Kymlicka, 2002; Young, 2000; Lester & Stewart, 2000; Dahl, 1998).
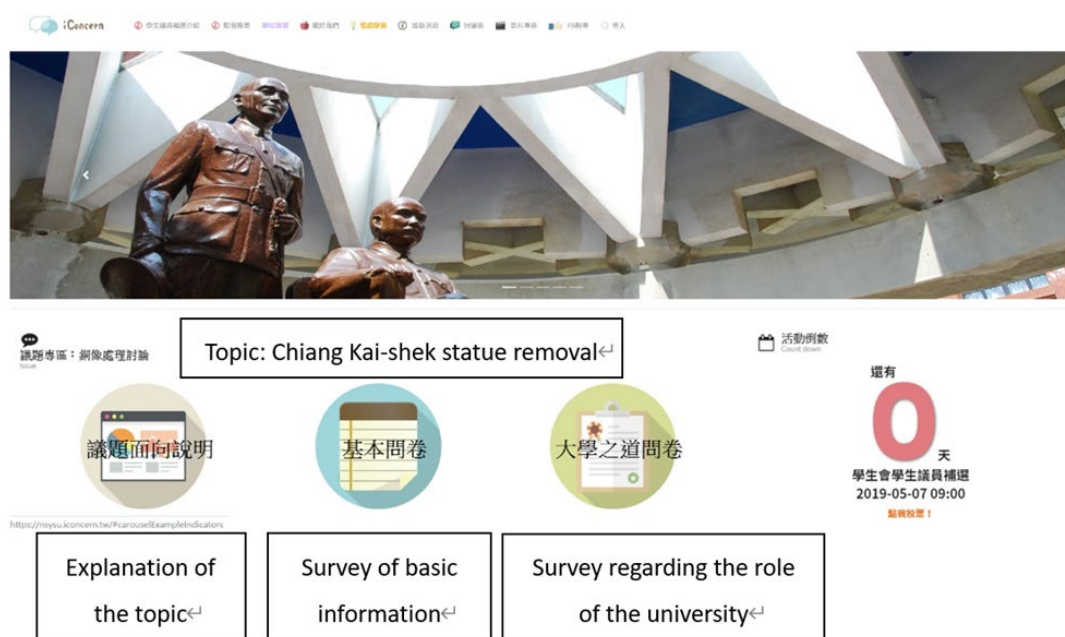

Figure 2: the iConcern online platform page, iConcern (2018)

These two decision-making models are not mutually exclusive. Decision-makers sometimes apply both models at the same time, particularly when dealing with highly contentious issues such as the removal of statues in this study. Taking the NSYSU and NCCU experiences as examples, the university administrators were not willing to make decisions about the statues on campus, as the faculty and students have somewhat varying attitudes and sentiments toward the contentious issue of Chiang-related heritage. Accordingly, both universities used an online platform - iConcern, developed by the first author and her research team - to help universities collect opinions. As the universities' practices of democratic deliberation were conducted through digital experiences, in the following paragraphs the authors further discuss how the online platform iConcern was used in assisting these universities in collecting public opinion.

The iConcern online platform was created in 2017 by the first author and her research team to explore the issue of removing Chiang Kai-shek statues at NSYSU and NCCU. The main goal for this platform was to assist both universities in collecting the opinions of students,

faculty members, and university staff on the issues before making their final decision. To encourage users to freely express their opinions on the issue, the iConcern platform established a discussion forum. In the forum, all users could freely write their thoughts or start new discussion topics. Rules were established to maintain a neutral and peaceful environment where users could discuss the issues. For example, the platform manager could delete messages containing hate speech or radical narratives. In addition, the platform offered four discussion domains, namely, university history (*xiao shi mianxiang* 校史面向), philosophy and aesthetics (*zhexue yu meixue mianxiang* 哲學與美學面向), politics (*zhengzhi mianxiang* 政治面向), and space arrangement (*kongjian mianxiang* 空間面向), as those who cared about statue removal considered multiple perspectives rather than a single viewpoint (Liao Da-Chi, 2018).

To explore these two universities' decision-making processes and their experiences of using iConcern in collecting public opinion from among university members, the data in this article consist of three parts: the first author's observation as a participant during the decision-making process at these two universities, online discussions and voting results from the iConcern platform, and the universities' decision-making records. It also examines the literature relating to the issues.

Decision-making Processes and Digital Deliberation Practices of Two Taiwanese Universities

Case One: National Sun Yat-sen University

Notably, users of the NSYSU iConcern online platform and the student association hold quite different attitudes toward the issue of removal. For student association members, removing the statue was an imperative issue to be solved as soon as possible. However, according to Figure 3, only 26 of the 209 online questionnaire participants (12.5% of all respondents) felt that removing the statue was important to them. Approximately 35% of online respondents indicated that removal is not an urgent issue for them; moreover, 65% of users rated the level of urgency in removing Chiang's statues from the NSYSU campus below level five, indicating that for most NSYSU iConcern online users, removing the statues was not an important issue for them in the context of their campus life. In addition, with regard to the discussion domains, the online respondents were most concerned with the statues' historical linkages with the University, followed by philosophy and aesthetics, and then politics. Space arrangement was the least of the respondents' worries.
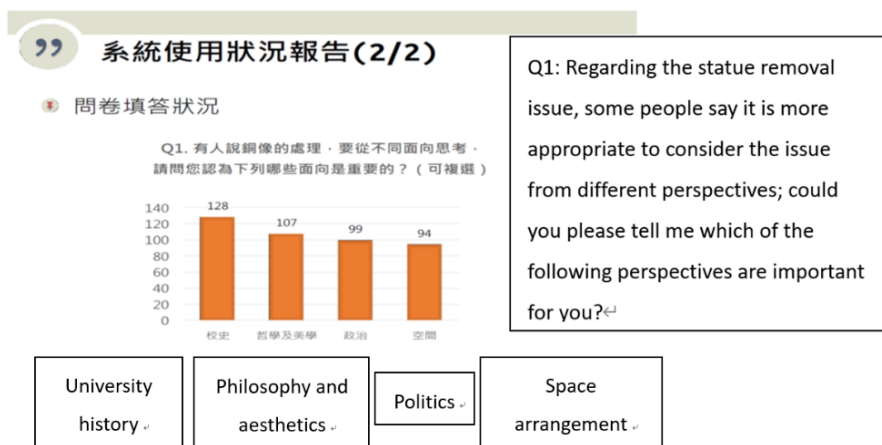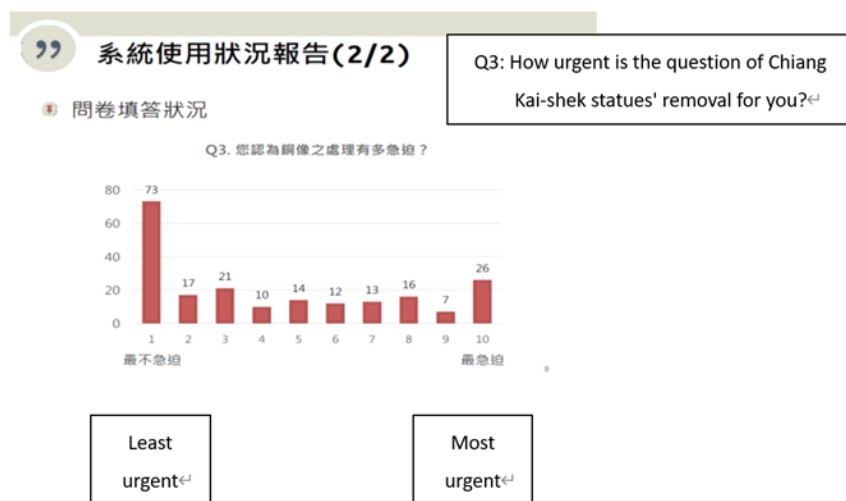
Figure 3: Online voting results from NSYSU users, iConcern (2018)

It is revealing to note how one user (brownbird203, an NSYSU alumnus) on the iConcern platform expressed his emotional connection with NSYSU in terms of the university's history:

I didn't choose to study at NSYSU for the beautiful views but because I wanted to follow the example of our national father, Sun Yat-Sen. NSYSU is special to me. I want to carry on the revolutionary cause for all Chinese, whether in Taiwan, in China, or in the rest of the world. I want to save our ROC—a suffering country. I want to make the ROC a major player on the world's stage again. I want to silently swear in front of the statues of the fathers of our nation, Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-shek, especially at midnight, that I will try to carry on their revolutionary cause (brownbird203, 2018).

Not only does this user associate his feelings with the revolutionary actions led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in combating the previous dictatorship of the Qing dynasty and establishing the first democratic republic in Asia in 1911, the Republic of China, but he also expresses his Chinese identity by linking himself to the history of Sun Yat-sen and NSYSU. In addition, brownbird203 specified his Chinese identity with the ROC rather than with the PRC on the mainland today. The user expressed his opinion indirectly at the end of his comment, implying that he does not agree with removing the statues of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen. Many users' comments on iConcern clearly indicate that users attached quite different emotions to the statues of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, and in general, many more online users hold positive feelings toward the statue of Sun Yat-sen than toward Chiang's. This type of positive emotion toward Dr. Sun further influenced university online users' subsequent options and answers to the survey.

*Figure 4: Deliberative democracy activities held by the first author and her research team.
Permission provided by the first author for use.*

Additionally, to entice more university students to participate in these pioneering campus deliberative practices and to encourage students to elaborate their opinions toward the issue, the first author and her research team organized several offline activities promoting the event, hoping to attract as much attention from university stakeholders as possible. These events included a mass media press conference, a citizen café, and a "statues week" including short talks, a student debate contest, and public hearings (*gongtinghui* 公聽會), both on and off campus (Liao *et al*, 2020).

After collecting all the comments and opinions regarding the statues' removal from online users and participants in offline activities, the first author and her research team sent those comments and opinions to the university statue committee. By reviewing the online and offline comments and opinions, the committee devised three options for the university assembly to consider: to leave the statue as it was, move it to another location on campus, and to move it off campus. Since NSYSU had two statues, one of Sun Yat-sen and the other of Chiang Kai-shek, they also suggested considering the issue of removal separately for each statue. In addition, NSYSU held a university assembly meeting on 3 December 2017 to discuss the statues' removal, where they considered the comments made online and offline and the committee's suggestions. At the assembly, 34 of 44 representatives voted to support the university in organizing a university-wide vote with regard to the statues' removal. Following the decision of the university assembly, NSYSU held a university-wide vote April 16th-19th, 2018. The university publicized the voting event on the university website's home page. All students, faculty and staff could participate by logging into their university account (NSYSU, 2017).

According to the first author's first-hand observations, some high-ranked NSYSU administrators did spend time discussing how to design the criteria for vote calculation so that the results of voting could fulfill the university elites' expectations. Two complex methods

were formulated by university elites for conducting the university-wide vote and tallying the results. First, they decided to adopt a single-step voting system rather than a two-step approach, even though the latter was recommended by many survey experts. The two-step approach would have involved first asking voters whether they support removal of Chiang's or Sun's statues. If a voter answers "agree to move" to the first question, the second step asks them whether to move the statues to other places on campus or off campus. Instead of using the two-step survey method, a one-step question which directly asked where would be appropriate to relocate the statues to was devised by elite figures in the university. Three options, to leave in its original spot, to move somewhere on campus, and to move off campus, were presented simultaneously. Clearly, outcome distributions will differ between the two-step and single-step methods of questioning. The second slightly devious method formulated by the university elites was the criteria for calculating the voting results. They combined the results of the two removal options to reflect a unified decision in favour of moving, instead of counting the relative majority among the three options (see Table 1). In addition, the university elites formulated some additional calculation criteria with the intention of making it easier for the removal options to surpass the stay option, namely, it was that decided that "If the proportion of [votes for] 'stay in place' is higher than 50%, then the statue will stay in place" and "If the proportion of 'stay in place' is lower than 50%, the statue will be moved away from its current location." Although these methods were designed by a few individuals, they were approved by the university assembly, because most participants did not pay attention to these details.[2] Notably, the voting results were relatively consistent with the university elites' original expectations and legitimized the final decision to remove Chiang's statues.

Voting options	Votes	Percentages
Sun Yat-sen statue to remain where it is	3,113	62.93 %
Sun Yat-sen statue to move elsewhere on campus	871	17.61 %
Sun Yat-sen statue to be removed from campus	963	19.47 %
Chiang Kai-shek statue to remain where it is	2,311	46.72 %
Chiang Kai-shek statue to move elsewhere on campus	869	17.57 %
Chiang Kai-shek statue to be removed out from campus	1,767	35.72 %

Table 1: Results from the NSYSU online vote, iConcern (2018)

The results of the university-wide vote were announced on 20 April 2018. In total, 4,947 NSYSU students and staff participated in the vote. Table 1 shows the results. Most voters felt that the statues of both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek should remain, rather than be removed. Most voters, approximately 63%, supported Dr. Sun's statue remaining in its original

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[2] This information comes from the first author's field notes, 2018.

place, while less than 20% voted to remove the statue from campus entirely. The option to remove Chiang's statue attracted the support of only a relative minority of voters, with 17.57% and 35.72% expressing that the statue should either be moved elsewhere on NSYSU or removed from NSYSU, respectively. However, about half of voters (47%) supported the option to keep the Chiang Kai-shek statue on campus. As the figures above show, it is clear that the question of removing Chiang Kai-shek's statue was more controversial than Sun Yat-sen's. This difference is likely due to the different historical reputations of the two figures and the paradoxical opinions held by the Taiwanese public and members of the university (NSYSU, 2018).

In terms of the relative majority, the results of the university-wide vote did not support removing both Chiang's and Sun's statues. However, the rules of the vote established before the voting event made the fall happen for Chiang's statue ("stay in place" below 50%) but not for Sun's statue ("stay in place" over half). The university then decided to remove Chiang's statue but keep it somewhere on campus, which was the least popular option (17.61%) among the three choices given to students.

Accordingly, the decision-making processes at NSYSU show that students were the main initiators, both organizing the movement promoting the fall on campus and in putting the removal proposal on the university's agenda. However, they could not really make the statues fall solely through their own actions. Furthermore, both the voices from the university publics and university-wide voting result might only play a minor role in the deliberation processes, because these opinions might be viewed as a supplementary reference for the decision maker. The most crucial part of making the fall decision, as revealed by the NSYSU case, is that a few elites designed the rules for the vote and vote counting methods in advance, in a highly sophisticated fashion.

Case Two: National Chengchi University

To deal with the question of the removal of Chiang Kai-shek's statues at NCCU, the annual university assembly also decided to organize a special statue committee in 2017. The committee's responsibilities included collecting staff and student opinions and providing the university assembly and president with possible solutions. As the university was also aware, the removal issue was highly contentious due to the university's special, close relationship with Chiang. Rather than deciding how to deal with the statues alone, the university leadership decided to collect and hear different stakeholders' opinions before making a decision. Moreover, so as to collect opinions effectively, the NCCU also invited the first author to assist the university, implementing the online platform iConcern as a complementary channel for collecting different viewpoints. The iConcern platform was used for holding discussions and collecting votes on options for removal of the statue in May 2017 (Liao Da-Chi, 2018).
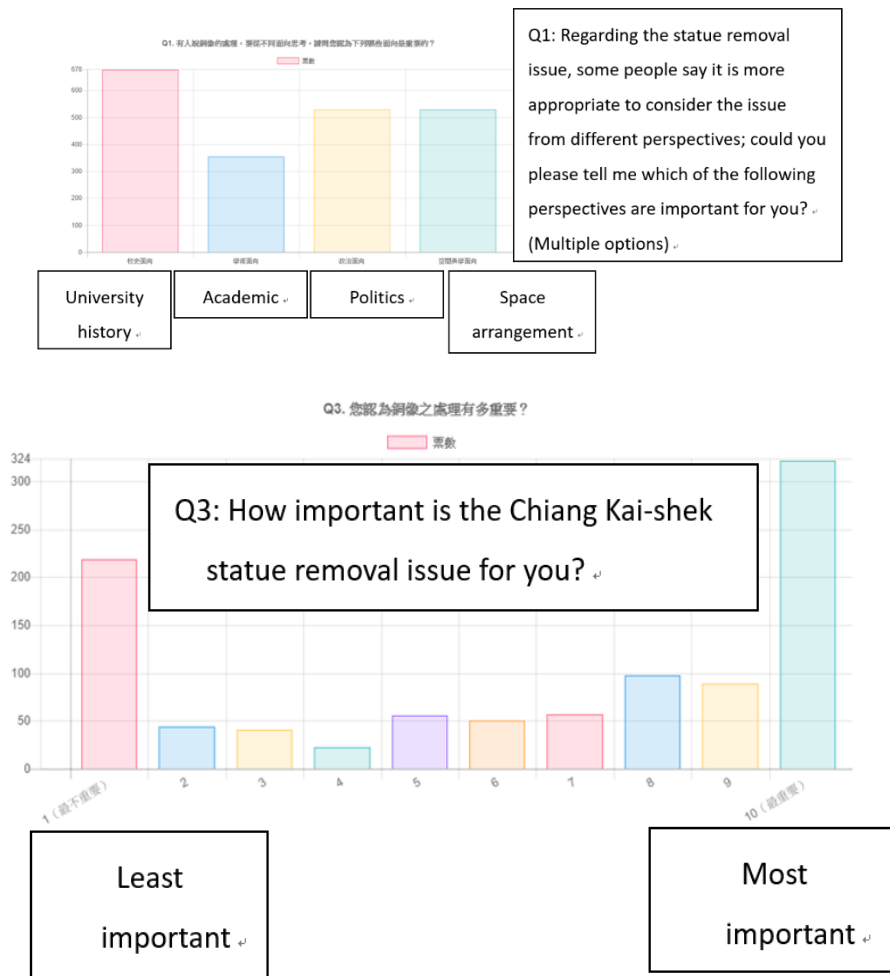
*Figure 5: Online voting results from NCCU users, iConcern (2018)*

Throughout May, all NCCU students and staff could log onto the platform via their university accounts, share their points of view regarding the issue, and participate in the online poll. That month, a total of 1,044 people, including students, professors, and staff from NCCU, participated in online voting and expressed their opinion on the issues. As Figure 5 shows, a majority of NCCU online users felt that the statue removal issue was very important to them. Similar to the users at NSYSU, most NCCU platform users considered and discussed the issues through the lens of university history, given that Chiang Kai-shek was the founding principal of the university. Users were less concerned about politics and space arrangement, but philosophy was the least important dimension aspect overall for NCCU online users. It is interesting to compare Figures 3 and 5, which reveal differences between the online users of NCCU and NSYSU, as the users at these two universities show some divergent interests regarding the four dimensions of the issue highlighted for discussion via iConcern.

Since NCCU had two Chiang Kai-shek statues, one located in the university library and the other positioned on the mountain campus, two questions were raised on the iConcern online platform during the vote to explore NCCU staff and students' opinions and attitudes toward the issue of statue removal. The two questions were as follows: (1) How would you deal with these two Chiang Kai-shek statues on campus? and (2) Which statue is your priority for

removal? For the first question, a total of 445 users selected the option "both Chiang Kai-shek statues should be removed" (accounting for 42.6% of all voters), while 422 users chose the option "both Chiang Kai-shek statues should remain" (accounting for 42.3% of all voters). Notably, only a few users at NCCU (142 users, 11.8%) chose the option to "only remove one of the two Chiang Kai-shek statues." The results from NCCU's online vote showed the university students and staff held quite polarized opinions and attitudes toward the issue of statue removal. Moreover, regarding the second issue - which one should be removed - most NCCU platform users demonstrated their preference for removing the statue inside the university library; however, several NCCU users did support removing the Chiang Kai-shek statue from the mountain campus. As the voting outcome was too polarized to establish a consensus, the NCCU university leadership did not decide to organize a university-wide vote, as they believed the activity might generate further conflict among different university stakeholders with diverse opinions.
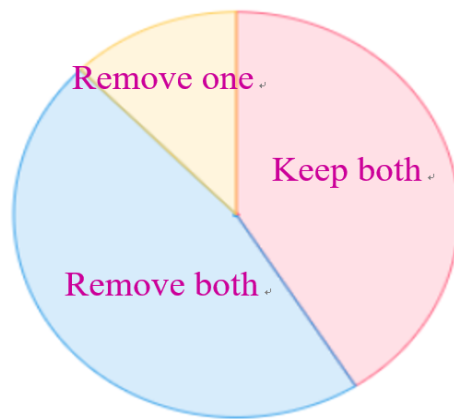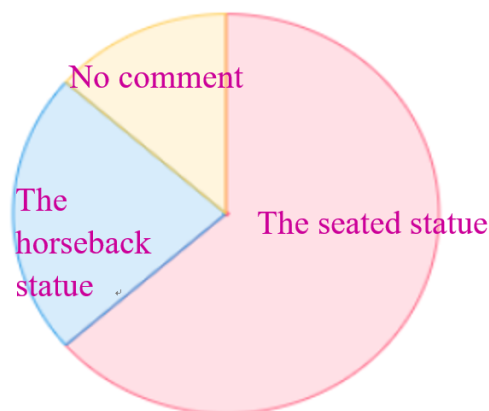

Figure 6: Voting results from NCCU iConcern users on the removal of statues, iConcern (2018)

Instead, they took the online discussions and voting results collected by the iConcern platform directly to a meeting of the university assembly for further discussion, which was held on 8 September 2017. The university invited all 79 of its staff and student assembly representatives to vote and choose which removal option they preferred. Importantly, the university held two rounds of voting during the assembly meeting. The first-round vote was to determine whether to remove the Chiang Kai-shek statues. Forty-two assembly representatives (54%) voted to remove the statues, 36 representatives (46%) supported keeping the statues and not moving them, and one vote was void. Therefore, because most of the assembly representatives supported the statues' removal, the university decided to remove the statues. The second-round vote was to determine how to remove the statues of Chiang Kai-shek and how many statues to remove. Forty-three representatives (55%) voted to remove one statue, 22 representatives (28%) voted to remove both statues simultaneously, and seven votes were invalid. Based on these results, the NCCU university assembly eventually decided to remove the seated statue of Chiang Kai-shek in the university library but leave the statue erected at the mountain campus. This decision was taken even though the university assembly decision differed from online users' general preferences and hence did not reflect public opinion on the statues.

It should be noted that NCCU and NSYSU applied different strategies in their decision-making regarding the removal of the statues. Although both universities utilized the iConcern online platform to assist them in collecting different opinions and arguments, in contrast to NSYSU, NCCU did not hold a university-wide vote and made its decision based on the votes of the handful of representatives who sat on the university assembly. Thus, without holding a university-wide vote, the final decision on removal of the statues as made by the NCCU assembly representatives had less legitimacy as compared with NSYSU's decision. However, the authors were curious as to why the NCCU assembly representatives chose the least popular course of action of removing one statue - instead of removing both or removing neither, both of which as individual options had more support. During the first author's participant observation, an NCCU professor and assembly representative shared the difficulties of the struggle that representatives faced when they tried to find a practical solution to the statues' removal during the assembly. He said:

> …you know, it was quite difficult for us to find a practical solution as the voting results were so polarized. The majority of online users either supported removing or maintaining both the Chiang Kai-shek statues. How could we [the assembly] balance such polarized viewpoints? It was mission impossible. If we decided not to remove both statues, then it would make the other side angry. Similarly, if we decided to remove both of the statues, then the opposite side would not accept it. So, I thought the decision made by the assembly representatives to remove one of the Chiang Kai-shek statues but leave the other in its original place was a compromise…. you know…the university really did try to appease the two groups (The first author's field note, 2018).

Figure 7: The damaged Chiang Kai-shek statute on NCCU's mountain campus. Picture courtesy of Prof. Lee Yeau-Tarn 李酉潭 of NCCU.

The above narrative, recorded in the first author's field notes, show the difficulties that the NCCU assembly representatives faced in finding a practicable solution over the issue of the statue, as the staff and students' online voting results revealed polarized preferences. Thus, the university leadership decided to take back authority in making the decision about this highly contentious and polarizing issue and made a final compromise decision to remove the university library Chiang Kai-shek statue but to leave the statue erected on the NCCU mountain campus in its original place, even though this decision did not reflect most NCCU members' perspectives.

Since the final decision made by the assembly meeting obtained insufficient support from students and members, the legitimacy of the final decision was compromised. As this decision was imperfect, a group of university students held a protest and cut one leg off the Chiang Kai-shek statue that had been left on the mountain campus (Taipei Times, 2019).

Table 2 below summarises how the two universities addressed the issue of statue removal:

Name of university	National Sun Yat-sen University	National Chengchi University
Statue year of construction	1985	1967, 1986
Number of statues on campus	One Chiang Kai-shek statue and one Dr. Sun Yat-sen statue, situated together	Two Chiang Kai-shek statues, one located in the university library and one located on the mountain campus
When the student movement for the statues' removal began	2016	2012
	Although the student movements at these two universities began at different times, students' proposals to remove the Chiang Kai-shek statues were not included in the universities' discussion agendas until the 2017-18 academic year, following the resumption of DPP government in 2016.	
Opinion collection procedures	Most university elites realized how sensitive the issue was and how important it was to carefully address the issue in a democratic manner at university campuses. These two universities utilized the online platform iConcern to assist them in collecting the various opinions held by the university public. These opinions were not decisive.	
University decision on removal of the statues	NSYSU decided to move Chiang's statue but keep Sun's in its original place.	NCCU decided to remove Chiang's statue from the library but keep the one on the mountain campus where it was.
	These two universities' final decisions did not reflect a majority of university public opinion or online users' preferences regarding the statues removal, although both universities used the online platform iConcern to assist them in collecting views from the different university stakeholders.	
Who made the fall happen?	At first glance, students at both universities seem to have played an important role in organizing the student movements and in actively proposing removal of the statues.	
	In reality, key university elites remained crucial, formulating the rules of the voting that substantially guided the decision-making process.	

Table 2. Comparison of contexts and removal procedures regarding Chiang Kai-shek statues at NSYSU and NCCU. Table compiled from data collected by the authors as part of this study.

Who makes the fall happen? Reflections on the two cases

Firstly, although the student movements at these universities began at different times, the window of opportunity for discussion about the removal issues only opened under DPP rule, particularly after 2016 when the DPP president Tsai Ing-wen took power and announced her government's goal of achieving transnational justices. In this macropolitical atmosphere, many university students were encouraged to organize student movements arguing for the removal of Chiang's statues from their campuses. The macropolitical atmosphere played an important role in setting the stage to make the removal issue salient. When the KMT were in power, removal issues were less likely to receive attention from society or university authorities as the KMT consistently expressed a more positive attitude toward Chiang and certainly supported the preservation of Chiang's statues.

Secondly, the status of the universities is an important factor. Both NSYSU and NCCU are national universities and obtain most of their financial funding and academic support from the central government. In this regard, both university presidents and their appointed administrative leaders were strongly motivated to incorporate student-authored proposals for the removal of statues into the university agenda under DPP rule as they reflected the political ideology of the ruling party. This factor is important, as it helps explain why both university presidents began to place students' removal proposals on the agenda and to allow discussion of the relevant issues between 2017 and 2018.

Third, it is important to consider the role of students during the decision-making process. Students played an important role in organizing the movements, participating in discussions, promoting their proposals for statue removal with the expectation that they would be included in the university's discussion agenda. However, it was impossible for the statues to fall through students' actions alone because both universities regarded students' voices and voting outcomes as merely references for making their own decision, and not decisive. In reality, students' deliberations could not bring about the removal of the statues because the experience of the decision-making processes at both universities demonstrate that participating in the processes of deliberation and decision-making costs too much time and effort (Lo, 2010). The above phenomenon was clearly demonstrated by the fact that at both universities, the number of online users who participated in the online vote was much higher than the number of users who participated in the discussions on the forum. Specifically, at both universities, thousands of users voted; however, fewer than 50 online users participated in the discussions on the forum. Moreover, based on the authors' observations of online participants, most online discussions and messages posted by users on the forum were one-off posts, meaning that the platform users did not really follow others' messages and replies; rather, they only expressed their own opinions. The platform users had very limited mutual interaction and communication over the issue of statue removal, which reduced the effectiveness of using online platforms to promote deliberation on these two campuses.

In this regard, if students were not the key actors, then who was the key person who made the decision? To answer this question, the role of university leaders must be considered. As Taiwan is a vibrant and young democratic country, citizens expect their voices be taken into account in the government's decision-making processes. Similarly, the elites of both universities realized how sensitive the statue issue was and understood that some students were actively participating in the movement and held strong opinions in favour of the removal of the

Chiang Kai-shek statues from their campuses. In addition, the leaders at these two universities knew that it might generate further conflict if they retained decision-making powers in this instance solely for themselves, thereby excluding the voices of students and the wider university public. Therefore, to respond to students' requests for participation in the decision-making process and the expectations of democratic fulfilment held by Taiwanese society, the university elites at both universities did not make the decisions on their own. Instead, they established statue removal committees and used the online platform iConcern to assist them in collecting different opinions from the public. By doing so, the university elites made the processes appear as though they were following a bottom-up rather than a top-down decision-making model. However, it is naïve to believe that the university elites would stand aside and wait for final decisions to be made that only reflected the opinions of a few activist students. The decision-making processes at both NSYSU and NCCU show that the university elites were definitely not bystanders and did not passively wait for the voting results. In contrast, they hid behind the formal procedures and played critical roles in the background, deciding the rules of the game, the methods for tallying the votes, and the issues included in the discussions and the direction discussions should take. Importantly, the university elite(s) could consist of an informal small group or a formal committee. In NSYSU, there were a few university elites and representatives overseeing the process, while at NCCU, the statue committee held the power in the decision-making process. Although there are some differences between the two universities, generally, the statue removal decisions at these two universities were ultimately made by a small number of university elites rather than the public, and the final decisions did not correspond to the majority's preferences or the outcomes of the online opinion survey.

Accordingly, the cases of NSYSU and NCCU show that both the macro-political environment and the national character of the universities were important factors in creating the political space for discussion of the removal of statues and in motivating university elites to follow national leaders' political deeds and ideologies. Unfortunately, although students seemingly played critical roles in bringing the statues down, in reality, their voices and forces only played a symbolic role in the entire process, as their viewpoints were mainly regarded as references for others to use in their decision, rather than a decisive factor in and of themselves.

Conclusion

In this study, the authors explored the experiences of removing Chiang Kai-shek statues at two national universities in Taiwan, NSYSU and NCCU, and identified the key actors in the process, exploring the different roles of students and university elites. The authors also fill a research gap in the existing literature, which has mainly focused on historical reviews of fallism, but which has not reflected on different actors' perspectives and roles. This study shows that it would be impossible to remove the statues with only the students' actions since the key actors were in fact a minority of elite university figures, rather than the student majority. University elites designed the rules of the game in making the final decisions. As both university administrators and elites had incentives to deal with the removal issue, they actively intervened in the decision-making procedures and further manipulated the final outcomes. By examining the experiences of removing statues at NSYSU and NCCU, the authors believe that this study can enhance the depth in discussion concerning the issues of fallism in the international literature. Currently, addressing contentious historical figures' statues and heritages is a salient issue in not only Taiwanese society but also other countries such as Belgium, South Africa,

and the United Kingdom. However, most of the fallism literature does not incorporate different actors' roles or answer the fundamental question about who makes the statues fall. This study attempted to fill this gap and highlighted that students may only act as initiators. In reality, students do not have enough power to actually achieve the fall of a statue. Instead, the university elites who hold administrative power, were more influential since they were able to formulate the rules of the game, which substantially framed the outcomes. Based upon the experience of the two national universities in question, the conditions that make elites willing to make efforts to tackle complex heritage issues relating to contentious historical figures depends upon both the political environments they are facing and the financial resources they are relying on. Accordingly, who makes the fall happen? The answer may require a multiple-dimensional approach and venture beyond merely the observation of superficial phenomena.

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Compressed Environmentalism: Greening Chengdu through Digital Platforms and Smart Housing Estates

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Abstract

While both digitalisation and environmentalism have become important topics for understanding China today, the intersection of these two issues is rarely discussed. With the coming era of Big Data, future development projects will no longer go through an Environmental Impact Assessment conducted by an official in person, but rather development plans will simply be submitted to a digital platform for approval. Additionally, Chengdu is now actively promoting Smart Housing Estates, which include geothermal heating, onsite water recycling facilities and digitalised metering of utilities directly connected to online bank accounts. Drawing upon fieldwork from Chengdu, this article critically examines what these changes mean for an "environmentally-friendly lifestyle". The dialectal relationship between the physical and digital relationships in these examples does not make them any more or less real, just qualitatively different. This difference is created not just through the compression of time-space, as found in many studies of digital technology, but also the compression of the labour it takes to be "environmentally-friendly". The article also examines the way that digitalisation has resulted in changes to social relations among my informants in Chengdu.

Keywords: time-space compression, labour, digitalisation, Sichuan, environmental impact assessment, smart cities

Digital technology plays an increasing role in the way we practice environmental behaviour or communicate information about the environment. For instance, digitalisation is claimed to support the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, but with variability from one country to the next due to contextualising factors (ElMassah and Mohieldin, 2020). While scholars have explored digitalisation in China through the desired sociality of migrant workers on social media (Wang, 2020) or the use of digital money to produce working-class subjectivities (McDonald, 2020), there has been little attention paid to the way digital technologies influence environmental actions. This is important to consider because Environmental Protection Agencies in China are looking to digital platforms of environmental information to strengthen environmental governance. From a different perspective, the city of Chengdu is also now actively promoting the development of "smart" housing estates, which have integrated technologies into their design that purportedly allow residents to live sustainable lifestyles more conveniently.

In this paper, I critically examine a similarity between these two examples of digital platforms and smart cities; namely that the technologies discussed compress the labour, as in the work or effort required for completion of an arduous task (Williams 1983: 177), needed for

people in China to engage in environmental action. Here I am thinking of the digital sense of compression, where the quality is forsaken in order to reduce the quantity of storage space taken up by a video or picture, for example. The two case studies discussed here also have their own set of implications. For instance, what will oversight of environmental governance look like if there are no human individuals doing the overseeing? Additionally, in what way does a lifestyle regulated by algorithms that are beyond our control constitute a "green lifestyle"? I will return to these questions in the conclusion by thinking about how the compression of labour is similar to the discussion of the postmodern condition of time-space compression (Harvey, 1989). Previous scholars have recognised this as digital technology's contribution to globalisation (Cairncross, 1998).

In China, it is possible that for some rural migrants, the creation of a digital self may allow them to feel more at home in the social relationships they have on social media than those they have in their villages or factories (Wang, 2020). Moreover, the different kinds of digital currencies available in China allow migrant workers to construct diverse forms of sociality that were perhaps less available to them through the use of paper money (McDonald 2020). We also know that the state security system in China has captured the everyday digital lives of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang province through excessive surveillance that can also generate profits for corporations selling digital tools and services (Byler, 2019). The current article will examine the way that digitalisation has become a part of our interactions with the non-human environment, which has also resulted in changes to social relations among my informants in Chengdu.

Digital Control, Labour and Social Relations

Digitalisation in China is often discussed primarily in the context of technological advancement and business innovation, particularly because of the rise of corporate stars like Ma Yun's Alibaba and Ma Huateng's Tencent. In this article, the digital world I am referring to is not just these computational technologies but also the cultural logic that has emerged along with the use of these technologies. Franklin argues that the cultural logic of digitalisation, namely increased control over social and biophysical processes, has become entangled within "a system of value production that can produce profit only by exploiting and dispossessing human life" (Franklin, 2015: xviii). This is an astute point from which to begin a critical analysis of the role digitalisation plays in urban development. However, it also suggests a paradox when digital technologies are used in, for instance, smart cities to promote sustainability - which at least on paper should aim to improve human well-being and reduce negative impacts to the environment (Kong and Woods, 2018). It is also useful to consider the role of platform urbanism (Rose et al., 2019), as big data is collected, analysed and translated into measures of control over an urban environment. While there may be ways to avoid these measures of control (Graham, 2020), it will be useful to examine such processes in other socio-cultural contexts, such as in mainland China, to determine the full range in which digitalisation affects human engagement with the environment. While increasing digitalisation may have a variety of implications for environmental consciousness (Lyons et al., 2018) it is important that we explore them critically.

Most analyses of environmental consciousness tend to focus on the way individuals perceive their environment or the discursive and ideological interpretations of the environment. When we do talk about environmental action, it is often discussed as behaviour rather than work. Only a handful of scholars have investigated the tasks of officials within environmental protection bureaus (Robertson, 2010; Ding, 2020) or the work that goes into making an

environmentally sustainable household (Peattie, 2010). Most of this literature is still concerned with norms, attitudes or the way people think, rather than the actual labour that goes into these activities. Some scholars have also explored the way digitalisation extends the exploitation of labour through the rearranging of socio-spatial relationships between producers and consumers (Graham and Anwar, 2018). Others have identified some unreflective literature describing how digital technologies will make the work of being environmentally friendly easier and effective (Kitchin, 2014; Mercea, 2012, Strengers, 2011). This kind of literature can be found in descriptions of China, where advances in monitoring technologies will reduce the need for officials to spend time in the field collecting environmental data (Fang et al., 2014). Similarly, it is said that Chinese households will live in smart cities and housing estates that make it easier to reduce, reuse and recycle (Tan-Mullins et al., 2017). There is a need to critically explore the impact of these technologies upon environmental action and social relationships through more empirically grounded studies; this study makes a contribution to this aspect of the problem.

The rise of digital technologies has certainly created new social relationships, but it has also served simply to extend older social relations in new directions (e.g. Sassen, 2002). Labour is one of those processes that creates social relations that should continue to have our deserved attention as digitalisation continues. In this article, I use labour to analyse the impact of new technologies on environmental action, not just to talk about the work that is supposedly made easier, but also to examine the way such changes are shifting how we relate to each other socially. There is a long history within social science research on China studying the maintenance of social relations, or *guanxi* (Yang 1994; Smart 1993), as well as the connection between social relations and labour (Walder 1986, Harrell 1985). While studies of automation and big data in Chinese factories have noted that workers find being replaced by robots to be a "natural" part of technological progress (Sharif and Yu, 2019), it is not entirely clear what this means for the social relations between workers themselves. Many studies have critically examined the way Big Data, social media, and automation are changing the way relate to each other (Ekbia et al., 2015; Sassen, 2002; Ziewitz, 2016). This article is an initial attempt to examine what these changes mean for the work residents of Chengdu do to live more sustainable lives and the way we relate to each other through such work.

Methodology

Much of the data in my research dealing with environmental action was collected ethnographically between January 2014 and July 2015. At the time I was quite interested in how different social groups perceive and act towards their local urban environment. In order to better understand how people in Chengdu live with a variety of environmental issues on a day-to-day basis, I conducted unstructured interviews in Chinese with 40 urban residents. I lived in Chengdu in an academic capacity for more than seven years and many of my initial informants were long-term friends who in turn introduced me to others. This included Qi Daina, who works for an institution that specialises in environmental impact assessments as detailed below. My conversation with her led me to explore the digitalisation of environmental impact assessment and what that meant for environmental governance in Sichuan.

Between August 2014 and April 2015, I also collaborated with a group of undergraduate researchers to conduct a study of environmental consciousness in seven housing estates in Chengdu. Chengdu's environmental NGOs and local neighbourhood management offices were in the process of developing ecological housing estate projects to create more sustainable ways of living in these communities. They had asked us to take a survey of residents' environmental perceptions and actions where these projects had been developed, as well as in

some communities where these projects had yet to be implemented.[1] Below I mainly discuss our survey of Tiramisu, one of the housing estates in our study, which is a massive, luxury housing estate with more than 2000 households located along Chengdu's Funan River. It is unique not just to Chengdu, but across all of Southwest China in its claim to be the first smart housing estate in the region. For comparison, I also briefly mention what we learned in Eastern Star, a slightly older housing estate that had approximately 200 households. Beyond the survey data we collected, I also conducted separate interviews in Chinese with members of the Tiramisu housing estate resident committee and the staff working for the housing estate management company responsible for onsite administration, security and maintenance. Detailed fieldnotes were taken during these interviews. It is through these interviews that I learned about the "smart" aspects of the Tiramisu housing estate discussed below.

In the following sections, I will first discuss the use of digital platforms for managing environmental impact assessments (EIA) and the automated control of pollution from centres of industrial production. In this section I will focus on the way big data and automation are influencing the labour of environmental protection officials in Chengdu and the relationships they have with managers of industrial sites. I will then discuss the operation of the "smart" aspects of Tiramisu, such as the water recycling system and the housing estate smartphone app where residents can check their energy usage. Here I will explore the way these supposedly labour-saving technologies affect social relations in the housing estate while allowing for a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. These two cases of digitalisation share a commonality in that the labour individuals use in order to be more environmentally friendly has been compressed. I then proceed to unpack the implications of this compression for Chinese society and governance.

Big Data Environmental Governance

Digital platforms of big data and automation are now becoming an integral part of conducting environmental governance in China. This can be seen most directly in the digitisation of China's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system. EIA is an internationally accepted set of principles used to help policy-makers come to a decision about implementing development projects based on how much damage or benefit the project is likely to bring to the environment where the project is meant to be implemented (Ortolano and Shepherd, 1995). While this technocratic interpretation of EIA (Formby, 1990) has been popular in China, since 2003 the government has taken steps toward the incorporation of more than just a biophysical perspective of the environment into their analytical toolbox. The recent inclusion of social impact assessments and requirements for social participation in the assessment process have made EIA in China an effective political tool for preventing unrestrained development of the environment (Tilt, 2015). In China, conducting an EIA would normally require the scientist making the assessment to go to a local site and collect baseline environmental data to determine what might be affected by the implementation of a new development. It would also mean gathering data from local environmental protection agencies on the quantity of pollution currently emitted by nearby developments to determine if adding a new source of pollution would affect the environment's carrying capacity, or the maximum impact that can be sustained by the local environment considering the resources available. Most recently, the Chinese state has also required by law that all EIAs become transparent and accessible to the public (Ministry of Environmental Protection, 2013). This nationwide determination to increase transparency

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[1] For a detailed methodological description of the benefits of using mixed methods to study these sustainable urban renewal projects and analysis of the way these projects did and did not affect environmental consciousness see Schmitt et al. (2021).

within the EIA system began about a year after my key informant, Qi Daina, had started her new position with an office specialising in EIAs in Chengdu in 2012. [2]

When these new transparency measures first started as trials organised by the Ministry of Environmental Protection in Beijing during late 2013 and early 2014, there was a great deal of trepidation among officials in Qi Daina's office in Chengdu. At the time, Qi explained to me:

> Right now, everyone is pretty nervous about the idea of allowing the public access to all of the EIAs. In particular, some of the older officials are not worried that the database will reveal their laziness in the past, but rather that they just do not know how to do their job very well. Most likely the older EIAs are a mess; so they are not excited about sharing that fact with the broader public. [3]

At first, it was not entirely clear how the digital EIAs were meant to be presented to the public. All they knew was that part of the new requirement included entering all the information in past EIAs into a digital platform. By early 2014, it had become more apparent that the Ministry of Environmental Protection intended to model their new digital EIA system on similar tools already in use by various security agencies around the country. For instance, in January 2014, as part of the training process Qi Daina and her colleagues took a trip to a state security department in Chengdu where they were able to interact with a platform shared with multiple security agencies. The focus of this platform, however, was religious centres throughout Sichuan Province. One of the features of the platform was that a user could click on any of the religious centres, say a Tibetan Buddhist temple in Western Sichuan, and gain access to the personal information of the monks registered within the temple complex, as well as any reports prepared by the Public Security Bureau related to the centre. The platform could also analyse the potential risk of social disturbance based on the data contained within the system, but they were not provided with details about how this worked.

Such an analytical system has large implications for the way Qi Daina previously conducted her job. Rather than going into the field to interact with local officials and the constituents affected by their decisions, big data analysis would allow much of this work to be done at a distance. That also would mean preventing Qi Daina from establishing social connections with officials and residents in these communities. This kind of work would then be different to the face and performative projects common in the performative governance used by environmental protection agencies in China (Ding, 2020).

While there has been a significant and effective crackdown on corruption throughout China (Keliher and Wu, 2016), this has not necessarily reduced the importance of social connections or even the material exchanges that accompany them. For instance, after a trip to a small county in southern Sichuan in 2014, Qi Daina came home with a massive box of mandarin oranges. When I inquired about the box, she replied:

> Well, they certainly cannot hand me an envelope full of cash anymore. To be honest, I like the oranges better, it is a specialty in their county. I will never be able to eat them all myself and can share them with my friends. Plus, I do not feel under as much of a moral obligation to help them as I would if they

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[2] All names used throughout are pseudonyms.
[3] Personal interview, Chengdu, March 19th 2014.

> provided cash. To me it just means that they recognise my authority in the
> matter, but I do not think they are necessarily attempting to sway my decision
> with a box of oranges. That would just be silly.[4]

Here we can see that even in an era of corruption crackdowns, the need to establish face-to-face relationships and perhaps even receive gifts is considered important for environmental governance, or likely any kind of governance, in China today.

From this perspective, it is important to think about what an EIA system driven by big data will mean for the future of environmental governance, since this is the kind of platform that Qi Daina's office wishes to develop. Future EIA applications in Sichuan will utilise big data analysis methods to determine if the plans for a new project would push the carrying capacity of a region within Sichuan Province to unsustainable limits, and hence require adjustments to be made to the project's design. This is possible because all EIAs in China will also be connected through a GPS-linked platform, thereby integrating a measurable spatial element into quality control. Moreover, EIA is simply the first step a project must complete before gaining approval for construction. Afterwards, a project must continue to ensure its production processes conform to environmental quality regulations determined by regular monitoring.

In fact, the Sichuan Environmental Protection Agency had already been developing such a system for some time. In 2014, they released a "Pollution Source Map" to the public (Zhu, 2014) that allows users to determine whether a polluting industry is located near their home. By clicking on an industry in the platform, a user can discover the information that would be essential for filing an official complaint with the EPA. A second more extreme example is the use of perpetual environmental monitoring systems, such as in the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP) in Jiangsu Province which links the monitoring system to a production facility's electrical grid connection (Ning, 2014). If at any point during the production process the monitoring system discovers levels of pollution in excess of the original design of the EIA, for instance from excessive dumping of pollutants into the local area's waterway, the system will automatically cut off the facility's electricity supply. While Sichuan has yet to implement such measures, Qi Daina visited SIP in March 2015 with officials from the Sichuan EPA as, according to her, it represents the future model of environmental management in Sichuan. Yet she was also wary about what such changes might bring, since it would mean she would no longer have any physical interaction with the industries and the local residents her work is supposed to govern. There is currently a dialectal relationship between the physical and digital ways in which she does her job that is already reconfiguring the way environmental management is done in China. By this I mean she currently still needs to go to the local area in question to take environmental measurements and interact with local officials to collect the data she needs which is then input into a digital database to complete her assessment. When this dialectic is completely separated, as it is at SIP, it will likely mean a further reconfiguration of the labour and social relationships needed for protecting the environment.

Some scholars still argue that there is not enough research available to justify integrating the use of big data into the evaluation of environmental performance for cadres or corporations in China (Song et al., 2018). This may be just a matter of time. These technologies appear to be rapidly coming online, with Sichuan recently announcing the establishment of a "three lines

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[4] Personal interview, Chengdu, November 6th 2014.

and one list"[5] digital platform for creating environmental impact visualisations, intensification of analysis on environmental data, and ensuring "smart" environmental decision-making (Department of Ecology and Environment of Sichuan Province, 2020). The use of big data and automation for environmental governance in China is premised on a state security framework, which ensures a certain amount of distance between officials and the people they govern. Such frameworks allow officials to search for and analyse data without ever having to set foot in the field or communicate with people who might be impacted by the decisions made by their analyses. In this way, we can see that the labour of environmental officials becomes compressed as their work can all be done remotely through cloud computing and the reporting of data through digital platforms.

Smart Housing Estates

There is a great deal of promotion surrounding the development of China's Smart Cities (Sze, 2015), but some have noted how these projects can mask the contradictions that emerge between urban development and environmental protection (Pow and Neo, 2013). These "smart" concepts have also been scaled down to influence the design of entire housing estates. As mentioned above, the housing estate Tiramisu in Chengdu was one of the first to be designated as "smart" by the city government. Chengdu even provided financial support for the construction of the housing estate in order to draw the investment to the city and to keep it within a competitive market price. The city hoped that as a smart housing estate it would act as a model for future housing estate designs and stimulate interest in the Chengdu public for living in more environmentally friendly residences. Of course, there are a number of features that contribute to Tiramisu's "smart" status, most of which have some kind of automated or digital characteristic and are not necessarily environmentally friendly.

For instance, the central air unit of the entire housing estate is regulated by a geothermal heating and cooling system. During the construction of the foundation, a system of holes was dug deep into the crust beneath the building with one set to absorb warmth from closer to the Earth's mantle and a shallower set that would draw from the Earth's cool crust. Together this system provides cool circulated air for the housing estate during the summer and warm air during the winter.[6] Residents control the temperature in their house through a digital thermostat that will automatically regulate the flow of cool and warm air from beneath the surface directly to their home, providing them with the ideal temperature of their choosing. Residents are not charged according to their usage of this service but rather each household pays a set fee that is included in their other maintenance and management fees.

During our survey of Tiramisu, we interviewed 69 households and, to our surprise, discovered 28 households who owned stand-alone air conditioners. One household even placed an air conditioner in each of their four rooms, because they felt it might be necessary to keep their home feeling comfortable. While few residents complained about the central air system, we also found very few who were excited about or even recognised the fact that it is regulated

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[5] The three lines and one list refer to a red line for ecological conservation, a bottom line for environmental quality, an upper-limit line for resource use, and a list of environmental permits. These are four complex, interconnected policies that have been promoted by the central government for the past five years (Ministry of Environmental Protection 2016) and deserve more attention from academic literature (but see Wang et al., 2020; Cheng and Li, 2019).

[6] The latter is particularly special for Chengdu residents as the city lies just below a geographic line that the Central Government designates as ineligible for investment in central heating. While winters in Chengdu are not particularly long, residents generally have to rely on wearing multiple layers of clothing all day long or use electric heaters to stay warm.

by geothermal energy technology that is unique to Chengdu. The staff who worked at the housing estate were the most excited about the geothermal system and they took me on a brief tour of the system to show off its advanced features during one of my follow-up interviews.

Another "smart" feature promoted by the housing estate was the digital metering system for water, electric and gas usage. While digital metering is common in Chengdu housing estates, Tiramisu had integrated their system into the Internet of Things (IoT) concept. Meter readings were sent to a digital platform in the housing estate that can be viewed through an app on a resident's smartphone. Technically, residents can pull up reports about their usage according to the month or even time of day to determine their peak usage and make attempts at further conservation. Residents can also set up automated payments for their usage by connecting their online bank account to their housing estate account. All the residents I talked to paid their bill in this way. Thus, while the digital system could provide them with greater information about their usage, once the bill became automated, they primarily forgot about this feature. Only when a sudden high charge was charged to their bank account would they think about using the service to inquire more closely about their usage of these natural resources. Residents explained that they very much enjoyed the convenience of these features, but none of them described how they used these digital technologies to reduce their levels of resource consumption.

Another prominent "smart" feature that touches on an environmental issue is the facility within the housing estate that separates drinking water from toilet water. All of the water that comes into the housing estate from Chengdu's urban water supply is first used in the kitchen and showers of individual households. Any excess water that flows into the household's drains is then collected by the housing estate, filtered and pumped back to the household to be used to flush toilets, which is then released into the Chengdu sewage system.

This system can be contrasted with a water conservation system I studied in an older housing estate called Eastern Star. In this case, residents worked together, travelling to landfills and construction sites to find materials to construct a large rainwater collection system within the central courtyard of their housing estate. Once the system was constructed, residents could use the water for flushing toilets, mopping floors or watering their gardens. Households collectively pooled money to fund the project and held regular meetings to discuss managing the system so it would not become clogged with leaves or become infested with mice in the dry season. Everyone we talked to in Eastern Star was quite proud of the success of this project and used the water when it was available. More importantly, residents appreciated the social connections that the project helped established between neighbours.

In contrast, most of the residents in Tiramisu we talked to about the water recycling system did not seem to pay much attention to it. Moreover, during our survey we also asked residents in Tiramisu whether or not their household had any means of conserving water and 39 residents said that they did not conserve water at all. This of course could be because they felt they did not need to actively conserve water since the water recycling system did it for them. However, we did encounter five residents who specifically mentioned the water recycler and another five who mentioned recycling shower water as an example of their conservation methods. Thus, it is possible that only a minority of the residents were aware that the automated nature of the water recycling system is helping reduce their impact on the environment.

Management of these "smart" systems is quite complex and requires that a housing estate management company hire employees with a certain amount of expertise in the use of

similar technology, as well as training them in how to manage the more unique features found at Tiramisu. In fact, in the first year after the housing estate was opened, a disagreement between residents and the original housing estate management company resulted in the company being removed from its position by the local government for negligence at the request of the residents (the details of the disagreement were kept private from me). It turned out that there was only one other company in all of China that the housing estate could hire as a replacement. As the Vice-Chairperson of the Resident Committee explained to me:

> Now we have a comparatively good relationship with the management company, but at the same time it is somewhat disconcerting that we are so dependent on them. There was a two-week period during the transition between the two companies where if something went wrong with any of these systems they simply could not be fixed. That, in fact, is what spurred us into forming a Resident Committee to ensure that a replacement for the management company could be found as quickly as possible.[7]

Making such collaborative decisions in Tiramisu is not easy. During my time at the housing estate, I discovered residents had very little social interaction with each other. According to one housing estate committee member most of the residents were from the smaller cities of Sichuan province.[8] Purchasing an apartment in Tiramisu was thought to be a good investment and it provided residents with the opportunity to shift their *hukou* (household residency) to Chengdu. In some cases, the houses were registered in the names of young children so that they would be able to attend good schools in Chengdu, a school gentrification process known in China as *xuequfang* (Hu et al., 2019). Because residents came from diverse backgrounds and different locations throughout Sichuan, it was quite difficult to establish a social network in the housing estate.

With this in mind, the new housing estate management company teamed up with a software engineering firm to develop a special app to connect residents to each other through their smartphones. It was through this app that residents could also follow their consumption of water, electricity and natural gas as well as input their bank information to setup automated payments. Additionally, residents had to use the service to make maintenance requests from the management company. Some residents told me that it was this second feature that was most successful at helping them become more accustomed to using the app. Finally, both the Resident Committee and the management company told me that they had high hopes that the app could be used in a manner akin to a WeChat Group, thereby helping stimulate social activity in the housing estate. Primarily, the Resident Committee hoped that the app would build greater solidarity should future conflicts arise which might require support of the majority of residents to resolve. However, none of the residents we interviewed used the app to organise any kind of social activity among housing estate members. In contrast with the regular physical social interaction found in the recycling and water conservation practices at Eastern Star, the

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[7] Personal interview, Chengdu, December 16th, 2021.
[8] The reason for this is complex. Tiramisu is located in central Chengdu (within the 2nd ring road), but it is not a particularly popular neighbourhood. The housing estate also opened during the chaotic re-construction of the 2nd ring road. Wealthy Chengdu residents at that time were more likely to purchase a second home in the quickly developing south part of Chengdu as they did not need another home in the central part of the city. In contrast, wealthy residents from other cities in Sichuan were quite excited with the opportunity to purchase such a centrally located home. The re-construction of the 2nd ring road did not necessarily bother them because they might not need to move into the new apartment right away.

digitally-dependent interaction found in Tiramisu had not translated into a more vibrant sociality.

Digital Ecology in Chengdu: Compression of Time-Space, Compression of Labour

From what I have been describing in these two case-studies, there is an element of digitalisation that is working against the hope of the Tiramisu Resident Committee that things like their smartphone app will build greater solidarity in their community. Much of the globalisation literature has examined the way that technology has affected social relationships around the world. Technology has definitely played an important role in changing society, particularly in the compression of our conceptions of time and space (Hannerz, 1992). The way technology results in the compression of time and space has exacerbated the social inequalities that are created from the dominance of a global capitalist system (Harvey, 1989). The machine was the technology during the industrial revolution that helped Marx understand the crucial connection between labour and social class (Hornborg, 2001). Similar to the prolific use of the machine, technologies of automation when employed by corporations and the state can be used to erode solidarity within communities, who might benefit from cooperation, ensuring further exploitation of the labouring classes. I interpret Hornborg (2001) as saying that the use of machines and automation is a kind of compression of labour, and that the resulting social inequality is not unlike what has occurred due to the compression of time and space by technology as described by Harvey and other scholars of globalisation.

While previous scholars have noted that this time-space compression due to technological change is exploitative of labour (Franklin, 2015), more recently others have argued that space is not necessarily compressed for everyone, but rather is "continuously being reconstituted and reformed" (Graham, Andersen and Mann, 2015: 338). To a certain extent this is true within the two cases we have discussed here. Digitalisation has not occurred simultaneously across the Chinese technoscape, which is why Qi Daina was traveling to Suzhou to learn about the way automation and digital platforms could be used for pollution control. Moreover, to move beyond Franklin's (2015) primary concern about labour exploitation, the present study has asked a different question that reflects on how digitalisation is being used for environmentalist purposes. Here we are looking at the use of digitalisation for protecting the environment or supporting an environmental action. While labour exploitation may not be occurring in these cases, the digitalisation of environmentalism is changing social relationships in China, and it is worth reflecting on what that means for Chinese society.

Thus, this paper argues that digital technology is working to compress the labour of protecting the environment, but we can only understand this if we also recognise labour as a crucial component, not just for the creation of surplus value but also for the formation of social relationships. For instance, in the first example of the digitalisation of environmental governance, we can see that the labour of environmental officials becomes compressed as the collection and analysis of data can all be done remotely through cloud computing and the reporting of data through digital platforms. This has a dramatic impact on the social relationships between those who are responsible for ensuring that development projects reduce their impact on the environment. Primarily they no longer have to visit the actual location, resulting in a lack of familiarity with the individuals who are planning to implement the development project. To a certain extent, this is precisely the point of digitalising EIA and environmental monitoring. If government officials are less familiar with those implementing such projects, such as private contractors or CEOs, it reduces the opportunity that such officials might be bribed or coerced into ignoring obvious environmental violations. It is perhaps too

early to say if this aspect of digitalisation will be successful or not. However, another point is that these same officials will also not have the opportunity to become familiar with the local residents who will have to cope with the impact these development projects will have on the surrounding environment. When residents engage with the public participation aspect of an EIA to provide their own concerns, the lack of familiarity between the officials and the residents ensures that the impact such development projects could have on the community will seem all that more alien to an official responsible for reviewing the case of the EIA. This is most likely equally true for the state security technologies used to monitor religious organisations in China that gave birth to this form of environmental monitoring, as I described above.

Through the example of Tiramisu we can also see that digital technology compresses the labour of environmental action. The geothermal central air system in Tiramisu means that residents can live in a comfortable digitally regulated temperature that has minimal impact on the environment and they do not have to change anything about their lifestyle. Because residents can set up automatic payments from their online bank to cover their expenses accrued from using water, electricity and gas, a kind of "set it and forget it" mentality takes over, leading to questions about whether such systems even result in a net benefit to the environment (Herrero, Nicholls and Strengers, 2018). Additionally, with regard to the automated nature of the water recycling facility at Tiramisu, we have to question what it means to engage in an environmental action. The apparent lack of intentionality in recycling the water is definitely an example of compressing the labour that goes into conserving water. Without this intentionality many residents seem to be oblivious or lose interest in whether or not the technology is environmentally friendly. This begs the question whether environmentally friendly practices without intentionality can give rise to an environmental consciousness among residents. Finally, while there are other pre-digitalisation aspects of Chinese society, such as the *hukou* system, that play a role in the changes to a community's level of sociality, the compression of labour for protecting the environment should also be considered an important aspect. Even though Tiramisu tried to create a special app to connect residents, the Resident Committee discovered it was not necessarily useful for constructing sociality. It could be that Tiramisu was lacking the dialectal relationship between the physical and the digital that would allow for a reconfiguring of urban relationships in the community.

The two case studies of digitalisation of environmental action in China are revealing examples of the way digitalisation is changing society and the way we interact with the non-human environment. Monitoring technologies and big data allow EPA officials to govern the environment from a distance, making interaction with those impacted by their decisions supposedly instantaneous. Residents within a Smart Housing Estate can monitor and control the impact their apartment has on the environment from any location and receive continuous up-to-date information about their environmental impact. We can also see how relations between the non-human world and between members of society are impacted by the time-space compression that is a feature of digital technology. Although these two cases are mediated by digital technology, that does not make the relations they create any more or less real, it just makes them qualitatively different. In addition to the time-space compression created by digital technology, the two cases from Chengdu highlight that this qualitative difference in social relations emerges through the compression of labour that affects our interaction with the environment. As stated in the introduction, here I am specifically drawing on the compression metaphor from within digital technology; that we forsake the quality of our labour relations to compress the quantity of them. Again, the compression of the quality of our relationship with

the environment and with each other does not make such relations any less real. However, it certainly makes them different.

Acknowledgements

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Strange New (Old) Worlds: Chinese Identities in Port Cities

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Abstract

Observers of migratory Chinese in port cities have been producing writings that highlight the diversity of "Chinese" identities and lifestyles throughout collecting micro stories of individuals. Simultaneously, their publications —newspaper, magazines, and encyclopaedia—functioned as a transnational platform linking different Chinese communities in different locations.

Keywords: Chinese identity, port cities, history of Hong Kong, history of Singapore, Chinese migration

"I can't define myself." This is how my friend, who was born in Hong Kong, then raised and educated in the UK, described herself a few years ago. What she said made me ponder: how can we narrate the history of migratory Chinese and Asian people whose identities have been extremely flexible and diverse, and sometimes difficult to define even for themselves?

Long before the current pandemic and the rise of anti-Asian hate crime in Anglophone countries (Parveen and Huynh, 2021; Ramos, 2021), scholars working on Chinese descendants or nationals living and moving within port cities like Singapore, Hong Kong, Yokohama and San Francisco, have faced and addressed a similar conundrum. In these trading centres that function as sites of interactions, languages, ideas, and identities are being redefined and transformed (Harper & Amrith, 2014). As a researcher of the history of Chinese in port cities, I believe the concept of "Chinese" is still a valid analytical tool, since the word embraces contradiction, flexibility and multiplicity, rather than a homogeneity.

From past to present, journalists, travellers and historians have made efforts to capture the complexity of the Chinese communities in the borderland. Consciously or unconsciously, both internal and external observers of the migratory Chinese wrote a detailed biography of individuals and tended to take prosopographical approaches, a research method which focuses on a specific group of people. Carl Thurman Smith, a missionary and a historian of Hong Kong explored the numerous lives of the marginalised Chinese in nineteenth century Hong Kong (Smith 1985; Smith 1995). During his initial research on the missionaries, Smith realised that there was a "paucity of detailed information about the Chinese converts" and switched his research topic to Chinese Christians (Wong 2010: 231). Who were they and where did they come from? To which economic and social groups they belong? Were they "less Chinese" or "more Westernised"? To answer these questions, Smith focused on traders, criminals, women and boat dwellers living around the city, instead of colonisers, governors, bureaucrats, and missionaries alike. The archive of his almost 140,000 hand-written note cards is still one of the most useful databases for the historians of Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangzhou (Wong 2010: 231). Recognising the complex and rich history of Chinese settlers and migrants in Hong Kong,

Smith meticulously recorded lives of Chinese individuals. Thereby he avoided describing the Chinese community as a homogeneous group.

Internal observers themselves faced the difficulties of clarifying who belonged to which group of "Chinese." The identity of Wu Tingfang 吳廷芳 (Fig. 1), the Qing government's Minister to the US (1896–1902, 1907–1909) is a case in point. Wu was born to a Cantonese father and Hakka mother in the Straits Settlements in 1842. After being educated in Guangzhou and Hong Kong, he went to the UK and studied law at University College of London. Following his return to Hong Kong in 1877, he became a barrister and the Chinese Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council. In the early 1880s, Wu moved to Tianjin and started working with Li Hongzhang 李鴻章. Subsequently, the Qing government appointed him as a minister to the US (Cook 1907: 92-93; Pomerantz-Zhang 1992: 1-3, 26). Experiencing hierarchical racism in Hong Kong and anti-Chinese racism in the US, Wu strengthened his nationalist identity (Pomerantz-Zhang 1992: 34–35).Wu's own identity can be characterized as shifting due to his transregional career and background.

Figure 1. Wu Tingfang, *(Bain News Service, 1908), the Library of Congress, Accessed at:* https://www.loc.gov/item/2014680380/, *12 December 2021*

External observers tried to clarify the obscure identity of Wu. In March 1897, the editors of the *Straits Chinese Magazine*, emphasised that Wu was essentially a "Straits Chinese', in response to Hong Kong newspapers who had called him a "Hongkong boy". The article on Wu in the magazine stated as follows:

> To speak of him in that way is to leave out of the account the early part of his life which he spent in these parts. No doubt it was in Hongkong that His Excellency first attracted the attention of the Chinese government; but we can scarcely credit him with being ashamed or reluctant to acknowledge himself as a Straits-born Chinese. His countrymen here ought to look up to him as a brilliant example of a successful self-made man (*The Straits Chinese Magazine* 1897: 29).

The Straits Chinese, a group descended from Chinese migrants who had settled mainly in Penang, Malacca, and Singapore, were proud of Wu's success and career in China, but at the same time, they claimed that Wu was originally from the Straits Settlements and not from the Middle Kingdom or Hong Kong. Frost argues that the Chinese settlers living beyond the

territory of the Middle Kingdom gradually developed "a self-conscious sense of unique regional identity" during the early twentieth century, as can be seen in the case of the Straits Chinese (Frost, 2005: 47).

Their departure from homelands whether imaginary or real did not necessarily mean Chinese migrants were fragmented and isolated. They exchanged news, opinions, thoughts, and feelings via the publication of books, newspapers, and magazines. In 1921, the Chinese Students' Union at the University of Edinburgh printed their own magazine, *The Chinese Student* (Fig.2). Its readers were in the UK, Iceland, Cape, Greece, Romania, and other countries in which members of the union resided (Edinburgh Chinese Students' Union, 1921b, 19). The two volumes of magazines included articles on the history and economic, social, and political environment of the Chinese in South Africa, Trinidad, Dutch Guiana, Singapore, British Columbia, and the Republic of China (Edinburgh Chinese Students' Union, 1921a, 1; 1921b, 19). Reporting different lives of overseas Chinese in different places, *The Chinese Student* enabled its readers to understand the global context of their migration and local lives.
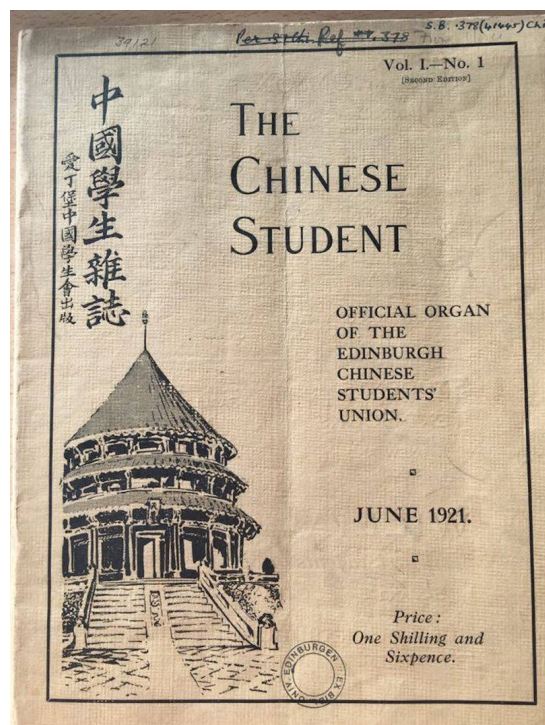
Figure 2. The Chinese student: official organ of the Edinburgh Chinese Students' Union, Vol.1 No.1 (Edinburgh Chinese Students' Union, Aidingbao Zhongguo xueshenghui 愛丁堡中國學生會, June 1921).

Migratory Chinese also solidified their senses of belonging to local and global Chinese communities throughout participation in the compilation of an encyclopaedia about themselves. *Present Day Impressions of the Far East and Prominent & Progressive Chinese at Home and Abroad* was a thick encyclopaedia on key Chinese figures and their living worlds in Southeast and East Asia (Feldwick, 1917). From today's viewpoint, the use of the term "progressive" was questionable as it implied non-Anglophone Chinese could be "unprogressive." Nevertheless, photos and detailed descriptions on buildings, parks, companies, factories, individual biographies, cityscapes included in the encyclopaedia demonstrate the diverse range of different cultures and societies of the Chinese communities in different places.

Anglophone platforms sometimes enabled cross-ethnic exchanges of ideas. Facing the rise of nationalism in their homelands, Chinese and Indian citizens in the Malay peninsula discussed questions related to race and nationhood between 1929 and 1930 in the columns of the *Malaya Tribune* (Chua, 2014: 62–63). Migratory Chinese understood the experiences of other Chinese and other ethnic communities through engaging with these platforms and thereby they retained and redefined the sense of "being Chinese."

Chua argues in reference to the experiences of "Anglophone Asians" in the Malay peninsula that "being 'Chinese' or 'Indian' could encompass a range of political, cultural, and linguistic characteristics" (Chua, 2014: 77). The term, "Chinese" did not necessarily represent a coherent singular identity shared among a particular group of people speaking the same language in a specific geographical territory managed under a single government. Similarly, Carroll discusses how the Chinese elite in Hong Kong developed peculiar local identities by cooperating with both the British colonial and the Qing authorities in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The "collaboration" with the British colonial authorities, encounters with racial barriers, the surge of Chinese nationalism, and mass strike caused by the anti-European sentiments among the Chinese working class in the mid 1920s, all shaped the unique consciousness of the Chinese "bourgeoisie" in Hong Kong (Carroll, 2005: 148). As it can be seen in Chua and Carroll's works, both internal and external observers of migratory Chinese communities recorded, reported and narrated historical transitions of manifold Chinese identities. Drawing on the body of such works, historians can keep investigating a critical issue – namely, how the social, political, cultural, global, and local conditions have defined a wide range of Chinese identities in the past.

In July 2021, in the podcast of the Asia Society, Alice Su, the Beijing Bureau Chief of the *Los Angeles Times*, who has provided a detailed account of the key issues in present-day China based on her first-hand observations, concluded her talk with the message that Chinese people in China are not "monolithic". She emphasised the importance of understanding stories that take place at the "granular level of individuals" and that "there was a wide range of people in China, like 1.5 billion, living different lives" (Alice Su, 2021, between 50:30-51:25). Likewise, the meanings of "being Chinese" and the concept of "Chinese-ness" are not monolithic. Focusing and narrating the stories at the "granular level of individuals," it is possible for historians of the port cities to highlight the heterogeneity of "Chinese" culture and people.

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Emerging Pan-Asian Identities in Chile in #StopAsianHate

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Abstract

This position paper highlights the emergence of "Asian Chilean" identities and "anti-Asian racism" discourses during #StopAsianHate social media campaigns in Chile. We argue that while panethnicity can critically respond to and visibilise the shared racialisation of ethnic Chinese and Asian persons in South American contexts, public discussions must also distinguish between ethnic Chinese persons, Chinese-owned private and state enterprises, and the PRC government, as well as highlighting the diversity within these groups and others often considered as "Chinese" in Latin America. Both approaches are necessary to apprehend the multifaceted implications of geopolitical shifts in the region without promoting biased anti- or pro-China attitudes.

Keywords: panethnicity, pan-Asian, anti-Asian racism, Chile, Latin America

In Chile, the term "*chino*" does not only refer to a person of ethnic Chinese ancestry, but has also been historically used as a colloquial term to refer to anyone of East or Southeast Asian appearance. Thus, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in Chile, when problematic discourses of the "Chinese virus" dominated in the United States, the term "oriental virus" was used in Chilean mainstream and social media. The term "oriental," which has connotations in Chile of everything that is located outside of the "West" (Chile included), reinforced associations between the virus and not only the ethnic Chinese but also the Asian population in general. During this time, ethnic Chinese and Asian persons in Chile were verbally and physically attacked (Velásquez & Radovic, 2020); flyers calling for "chinos" to "go back" to "their country" were distributed in the town of Villa Alemana; racist and xenophobic memes were circulated on social media; a doctor said on public television that all that came from "China" (using air quotes) was "dangerous" (Chan & Montt Strabucchi, 2021: 382). In such a context where the lines between the categories of "Chinese" and "Asian" are blurred, anti-Chinese racism is also anti-Asian racism. Unfortunately, but not unsurprisingly, such expressions of anti-Chinese and anti-Asian racism largely were not explicitly condemned by politicians or public intellectuals.

A year later, however, an unprecedented discourse of "Asian Chilean" identity and "anti-Asian racism" emerged on social media. In the wake of the Atlanta spa shootings in March 2021 that killed eight people, six of whom were of Asian descent, several young women who identified as Asian and Chilean spoke up on social media about their experiences with racism in the country (Astaburuaga Coddou, 2021). Clearly inspired by #StopAsianHate and #NoSoyUnVirus movements, these women framed their experiences in terms of "Asian" persons and spoke of "anti-Asian" racism and xenophobia, while simultaneously referring to

their own ethnic origins and ties to Chinese or Korean languages and culture. Their emphasis on using the term "Asians" (*personas asiáticas*) can be read as a form of resistance to the derogatory, essentialist, and predominant use of the terms "*chino*" and "*oriental*" to refer to Asian persons. They eloquently and movingly spoke about how anti-Chinese racism affects all people of Asian appearance because they do not "look Chilean." In contrast to the historical silence in Chile on anti-Asian racism, these personal narratives are exceptional. Furthermore, they explicitly claim to "visibilize the racism that Asian people suffer, how cruel it is, and how little it is discussed" (Sua, 2021).

This organic emergence of a pan-ethnic Asian identity in Chile recalls Teresa Ko's provocative suggestion in 2016 that "panethnicity can be a way to contest a historical lack of recognition" in Argentina for Asian-Argentines (Ko, 2016: 273). In her essay, Ko draws on how, in the United States, panethnic organising and panethnicity emerged as a "political and scholarly strategy" to "confront shared processes of racialisation rather than as a cultural bond" (282). Thus, she proposes that an "Asian-Argentina does not imply an exclusive and essential Asian Argentine culture, but it can shed light on how orientalist ideologies have historically blurred heterogeneities" and shared experiences of racism by Asian persons (282). However, Ko's proposal was troubled by the lack of "self-recognition of Asians in Argentina" at the time (284). Asian people did not self-identify in pan-ethnic terms; co-ethnic "*colectividades*" were instead the norm, or identification with Chinese, Korean, or Japanese ancestries, cultures, and languages. Nevertheless, she argued that an "Asian Argentine" approach can reveal what the dominant national discourse conceals: that their national identity is organised around a racial hierarchy based on the exclusion and "presumed absence" of Asian people (284).

The emergence of a pan-Asian discourse in Chile - at least in this initial stage - appears to fulfil the critical potential that Ko had hoped for in a South American context. In speaking about how the Covid-19 pandemic has increased racism and xenophobic attacks against Asians in Chile, rather than exclusively referring only to "Chinese" or "anti-Chinese" experiences, the young Asian Chilean women are also critically problematising essentialisms associated with the category "Asian." Instead, they use panethnicity to raise awareness about an issue that is rarely spoken of in Chile, in contrast to the hypervisibility of anti-black racism and xenophobia faced by Afrodescendant migrant populations in the country. Their self-identification as "Asian persons" calling out anti-Asian racism evidences Diana Yeh's (2020) declaration that "Chinese studies" must recognise how the "Chinese" are not only an ethnic but also a racialised other "the way in which the racial violence – its impact and the resistance towards it – cannot be contained within the borders of Chineseness."

In light of Yeh's incisive critique and such panethnic identifications and incipient movements, we ask: is the category "Chinese" still socially, politically, and analytically relevant in Chile? Precisely due to the racialised and Orientalist imaginaries, ideas, and affects that the terms "China" and "Chinese" evoke, we believe that analysis of the shifting ideas about, attachments to, and distances from these categories remains important. These terms provoke and materialise—through racist or Orientalist memes, Sinophobic discourses, yellowface performances, and homogenising stereotypes—effects in the lives of diverse Asian people in Chile.

Furthermore, the identity categories of "Chinese," "ethnic Chinese," or "Chinese diaspora" (*zhongguoren* 中国人*, huaren* 华人*, huaqiao* 华侨*)* may be strategically mobilised

in order to organise for a common cause. Following Rogers Brubaker, ethnicity as a "category" can be performative, and is "designed to stir, summon, justify, mobilise, kindle and energise" a collective or public (2002: 166). In their research on how ethnic Chinese in the capital of Chile organised a protest and other activities to confront public insecurity, particularly concerning assault and theft on the streets and in their shops, Carolina Ramirez and Carol Chan found that individuals and groups may strategically and temporarily downplay internal (linguistic and regional identity) differences to affirm a common identity as Chinese (*zhongguoren*). Informal and formal leaders on online social media groups and offline organisations evoked affective loyalty to a "Chinese community" to mobilise volunteers and participants in activities that were deemed beneficial to members of the perceived co-ethnic group, such as night patrol or protests (Ramirez & Chan, 2020).

In other words, although "Chinese" (*zhongguoren*) or "Asian" may not be a salient identity category in the everyday lives of ethnic Chinese people in Santiago, during times of crisis, identifying as "Chinese" or "Asian" cannot be seen as merely a self-essentialising and problematic category, but also as a strategic and political act. This is particularly true in contexts such as Chile where Asian persons are rendered irrelevant to the national imaginary and identity, or relevant only in terms of their foreignness and rejection. However, such strategies such as panethnicity must go hand in hand with greater clarification of what we refer to when talking about "China," "the Chinese," and "Chinese companies," to name a few terms. In this historical moment where the trope of "the rise of China" is more salient than ever, the foreignness and racialisation of Asian persons is undoubtedly linked to perceptions of "China's" absolute cultural and political difference to Chile, where the latter often self-identifies as an "Western" or "Occidental" country.

For example, heated public debates took place in Chile in 2020 when a PRC state-owned company, the State Grid Corporation of China (国家电网公司), bought over 96% of the shares of one of the biggest electrical companies in the country, Compañía General de Electricidad (CGE). CGE owns approximately 40% of energy distribution in Chile (Comisión Nacional de Energía, 2021). The strong symbolic and political significance of "China" and "Chineseness" was clear in these discussions, where economists, lawyers, and politicians disagreed on whether such a purchase was legal, whether the purchase posed a risk to free market competition, or if the presence of Chinese state-owned companies in Chilean strategic sectors posed a national security threat. In these discussions, issues of "Chinese culture" were often implicitly assumed, evoked, and conflated with the "Chinese companies," which were also conflated with "the PRC government." This example highlights the relevance of Chinese studies in addressing the complex challenges that Chinese state-owned companies present and face in national economies such as Chile. Due to the highly charged and historical symbolic imagery that "China" and "the Chinese" evoke, matters that should be analysed in terms of legal and institutional frameworks and processes may instead take on "culturalist" and thus prejudiced turns.

Precisely because of the frequent erroneous conflation of ideas, imagery, and values associated with "China," "the PRC government" and "Chinese people," it has become increasingly challenging to call out unfair anti-China bias and anti-Chinese racism without appearing - as scholars and/or public intellectuals - to defend the PRC government. As scholars based in Chile, we face an additional challenge in the fact that contemporary racialisation is intimately linked to methodological nationalism where Peruvians, Colombians, Haitians, and

Argentinians, for example, are stereotyped and racialised according to a national category. In this scenario, the "Chinese" (and by default most East or Southeast Asian appearing persons) are strongly linked to the PRC.

In this context, we find it encouraging that local protests against Chinese infrastructure projects in southern Chile have not resorted to xenophobic or racist discourses and slogans. Instead, young activists have framed their concerns about the environmental impact of a dam construction in terms of the need for dialogue with executives of the China International Water & Electric Corporation (CWE; 中国水利电力对外公司), and called out the indifference and complicity of Chilean local state representatives. Alongside supporting and uplifting Asian Chilean identities and voices, we call for scholars in Latin America in particular to carefully distinguish between ethnic Chinese persons, Chinese-owned private and state enterprises, and the PRC government, as well as appreciate and highlight the diversity within these groups: the diversity of Chinese persons, Chinese businesses, and even state actors and specific state institutions within the PRC government (see Lee, 2017). Careful distinction between and attention to the diverse non-Chinese actors and institutions that are also involved in social, economic, and political phenomena in the region that are often attributed to "Chinese" agents and the PRC government, is the first step towards promoting and participating in critical discussions about racialisation of ethnic Chinese and Asian persons, anti-Asian racism, and China's presence in the region.

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Disrupted Nationality: Revisiting 'Chinese' in the Era of "Stop Asian Hate"

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Abstract

Drawing on a two-year ethnography focused on the transnational academic trajectories of Chinese international students in London, I provide a ground-driven account of how Chinese nationality was consistently enacted, negotiated, and contested in the pandemic crisis such that it reshaped the everyday experiences of these students as oversea Chinese. As such, I shift attention to the real-life complexities, as well as the emerging inequality associated with national categories which were rendered as insignificant under the trending discourses of "Stop Asian Hate".

Key words: Chinese nationality, Stop-Asian-Hate

In May 2021, one of my previous students from China talked to me about his latest endeavours in supporting what is now called "Stop Asian Hate" – a movement which originated in the US and that claims to counter the surge in hate crimes against Asians (at first specifically directed at American Asians and then more generally at Asians) since the global outbreak of COVID-19. Doing his undergraduate degree at a leading American university, he happened to be involved in the initial stages of the movement when students began to join the rallies, an experience that he recalled as "so revealing that it forced me to rethink who I am." With conspicuous excitement, he described in detail how he upgraded his participation from street protests to activities that he saw as more important, which included sharing his experiences as an Asian student at campus events, writing on social media to raise anti-racist awareness, and helping to form a large social network whose aim is to fight for racial equality in the long run. As his former teacher, friend, and as someone who had been confronted with virus-related violence in London on numerous occasions, I was very much impressed by what he had achieved under the harsh conditions of the pandemic crisis. Yet, I was not convinced by who was represented in the discourses of "Stop Asian Hate", particularly after hearing how national terms such as "Chinese" were problematised for their anti-solidaristic connotations and replaced by the term "Asian" in the activist organisations he was a member of. "You and I are Asians," he said. "Fighting for Asians as Asians is the best way to go."

Born in Beijing with a Chinese passport, I have always considered myself a mainland Chinese. In this sense, I am an Asian from a geographical perspective, which seems to verify the assumption that fights for Asians in general are also fights for me. But if we wind back time to January 2020 when COVID-19 first appeared in newspaper headlines, I do not remember it as an Asian affair. Instead, what I heard – sadly, I remember it vividly – were phrases such as "Chinese virus", "Wuhan pneumonia", "bat-eating Chinese", "kung flu" (a portmanteau of "Kung Fu", referring to Chinese martial arts, and "flu"), and a Twitter hashtag then as popular as #StopAsianHate became, #ChinaLiedPeopleDied. I heard these terms being employed not only by people in the so-called West, but also from Asians, some of whom were distinguishing Chinese people from Asians more diligently than ever in my anecdotal experience. Now, after

a year of tensions, conflicts, and mental issues resulting from the stigmatisation of Chinese during London's lockdown, I found myself categorised by my student and probably thousands of "Stop Asian Hate" supporters as an Asian who should pursue the collective interests of Asians. My Chinese nationality seems to have lost its relevance, omitted from mainstream discussions along with the consequences it brought about to those somehow associated with it through the pandemic.

This seemingly 'best-for-all' downplaying of national categories, as well as the union of Asian people prompted by such activist appeal, does not necessarily align with the lived experiences of overseas Chinese (that is, Chinese citizenship holders who live abroad). At least for Chinese international students in London like myself, with whom I have been doing ethnographic work for years seeking to understand their transnational academic trajectories, our nationality has never been so highlighted as at the beginning of the pandemic – so much so that it thenceforth reshaped the mundane knowledge production within and about this community. As I have shown elsewhere (Du, 2020), Chinese nationality was persistently invoked in everyday interactional practices dominated by COVID-19 matters (e.g., in common questions such as "Do you know about Wuhan?") in ways that positioned Chinese international students as obliged to respond to, if not take the blame for, the disastrous crisis faced by the entire population, either inadvertently or deliberately. As such, Chinese nationality, a buzzword deeply implicated with Donald Trump's China-targeting political propaganda, contributed to the victimisation of Chinese international students. In my fieldwork that foregrounded the everyday experiences of Chinese students in London, I got to witness how the fear of being maliciously identified as the 'source of virus' escalated among them, which reached a peak after an Asian student from the university where I conducted my research was seriously injured in a racist assault. Back then, the attacker's words – "I don't want your coronavirus in my country" – became a trending topic within the community of Chinese students in London. Everyone lamented how this rather vague utterance was interpreted via a provocative consensus on social media; that is, "your coronavirus" referred to China and the Asian student was probably targeted for being mistaken for a Chinese. Online discourses seemed to transfer the blame from the attacker to all the Chinese in the UK, based on the logic that it was Chinese who demonised all Asians in the first place by infecting the world with a "Chinese virus."

In addition to the intensified anti-Chinese sentiment in the UK, Chinese nationality was also foregrounded in the emerging "narrow nationalism" (Freeden, 1998) in China which raised controversies over who counted as "real" Chinese in the pandemic. This was shown in April 2020 when the Chinese government announced that it would arrange chartered flights to evacuate Chinese international students in the UK in response to its inefficient domestic control of COVID-19. To Chinese students, especially those who planned to go home but failed to secure a plane ticket before the UK lockdown, the announcement to some extent mitigated our concerns about the drastically growing number of cases and the normalization of racial brutality in London. However, long before the date of implementation, the way in which this arrangement had been received by the Chinese public had destroyed our ecstasy at being offered the opportunity. For example, in the comment section of the announcement on Weibo, thousands of netizens in China participated in a debate about whether it was worth saving overseas Chinese at the risk of increasing cases in China. Despite the different opinions, it was generally agreed that Chinese international students did not constitute a community that automatically deserved the government's services for Chinese people. One popular comment that continues to haunt me today perfectly illustrates this point:

我们得首先搞清楚这些留学生到底是些什么人。他们是一群脑子里只

有移民英国，留学就是为了和外国人厮混，刚出国就喷国内不好，还在一月时跑到所谓西方发达国家避难现在舔着脸要回来的人。他们根本不能算什么中国人，他们的死活我们管不着。国籍什么的在他们身上没意义。

We need to clarify who those Chinese international students really are. They are a group of people who went to the UK for migration, who did a degree to hook up with western people, who badmouthed China right after leaving, and who escaped to where they called the developed West for safety in January and now desperately wanted to return. Those people are not real Chinese and we don't need to care if they die or live anymore. Their Chinese nationality means nothing to us. (Translation by the author; this comment has been adapted for ethical concerns and to ensure anonymity)

As similar and even more hurtful messages were disseminated across major online platforms, Chinese international students were devastated by a painful irony: in London, our Chinese nationality subjugated us to racial violence for being the "virus-carrying" Chinese; in China, our Chinese nationality was interrogated in response to imagined collusions with the anti-China imperialist countries on our part. One of my research participants summed up the conundrum when I asked how they felt about the awkward position of Chinese students in the pandemic, "Shall we just tear our passports and claim refugee status so that both British here and Chinese back home can be satisfied?"

The compelling negotiations over Chinese nationality noted above marked the daily communication that I had documented in my fieldwork, which mediated what it meant to be Chinese international students and overseas Chinese in general in the COVID-19 era and the now post-COVID era. In other words, far from being an Asian affair construed in Asian terms as proposed by "Stop Asian Hate", Chinese nationality, together with other national categories in my opinion, carries the unbearable weight of the lived experiences of and voices from individuals on the ground. These voices and experiences are marginalised by the essentialising as well as homogenising nature of the production, circulation, and domination of particular narratives legitimised in an activist vision – the symbolic violence of "normative" language use in Bourdieu's (1986) term. In line with this observation, I argue for an ethnographic lens that shifts from examining Chinese nationality as a value-free representation of a fixed demographic group towards viewing it as a resource that channels the semiotic process of categorisation. Research should focus on how it is enacted and mobilised, where and when, by whom, for what purposes, and how this process is linked to the emergence of "new" Chinese identities anchored in the specific material and discursive conditions of the pandemic. Only through this lens can we document the real-life complexities hidden behind the "natural history" of COVID-19, which has been characterised by the flattened social hierarchy, that is, the imagined all-mankind progress from Asian hate towards "Stop Asian Hate". Left out of the discussion are the long-standing historical, socio-political, and cultural orders that impose strict gatekeeping onto this progress.

At the end of the conversation with my student, he asked how I could contribute to "Stop Asian Hate" with my training in anthropology and sociolinguistics. I did not answer directly, but instead explained my concerns in a similar way as the present essay. Although he was disappointed with what he called a counter-productive stance of mine, he seemed to agree with me that more questions needed to be asked about the on-going Asian movements. What questions should then be asked? Perhaps start with a fundamental one: "By whom am I still

considered a Chinese?"

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Chinese Identity Construction and Deconstruction as a Response to Pandemic Orientalism in Canada

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Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Chineseness has been embedded in a set of efficacious public health practices employed by China, Hong Kong and Taiwan to prevent virus spread. These measures were interpreted apprehensively by the West, including Canada, highlighting the knowledge hierarchies between the West (norm) and the East (other) as constructed by an Orientalist mindset. To Canadian Sinophone communities, these knowledge conflicts serve as a medium through which identity is constructed or deconstructed. Their trust in the public health measures has competed against other forces in political dynamics, which allowed them to generate a unique positionality to examine any given discourses, such as Chineseness and Canadianness.

Keywords: Orientalism, Chinese immigrants, Hong Kong, Taiwan, mask, Canada

As Edward W. Said demonstrates, Orientalism is a "political-intellectual culture" (Said, 1978: 12). Epidemic Orientalism can be traced back to the 17th century mentality where the imperialist West depicted themselves as "victims" in need of protection from foreign threat (White, 2018: xi, 6 & 25). In this version, medical knowledge and disease management strategies become extremely crucial (White, 2018: 7-8 & 26). Hence, during the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak in Canada, as opposed to the "pre-modern" Chinese, the West gained an elevated international reputation through its "knowledge, skills, education, as well as cultural advantages" (Stavro, 2014: 172). Again, during the pre-vaccine phase (January 2020 - January 2021) of the COVID-19 crisis, a mindset that deciphered the epidemic as a sign of Chineseness as embedded in images of contamination, underdevelopment and uncivilization was catalyzed. Within such a climate, it has been a daily chore for many Chinese Canadians to compare Canadian and Chinese protocols surrounding personal hygiene, inter-human relations and ideas of rights and responsibilities. As a minority ethnicity, how have these differences been interpreted and has their Chinese identity been transformed, solidified or challenged along with these struggles?

In response to the spread of COVID-19, in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, governments took aggressive measures such as masks, self-containment, and border restrictions to control the spread of the virus: "[t]he more we are being controlled, the more we are in control" (Kloet et al., 2020: 636). The biopolitical measures mobilised a campaign of national pride. Taiwan's constant pursuit of membership of the World Health Organisation intensified (Kloet et al., 2020: 637). In Hong Kong, a larger disparity between the city and the mainland appeared (Kloet et al., 2020: 639). As for China, the distinction between "efficient China" and "inefficient West" was highlighted (Kloet et al., 2020: 638). On the contrary, in the West "Pandemic Orientalism" (Godamunne, 2020), or "Corona Orientalism" (Debeuf, 2020), strengthened the symbolic hierarchies in knowledge between the West and East. The disease

was exteriorised, which explains the West's underestimation of the pandemic in its early stages (Zhang Mingyuan, 2021). China was portrayed as an authoritarian rulership in contrast to the democratic West (Mérieau, 2020; Zhang Yunpeng & Xu Fang, 2020; Zhang Mingyuan, 2021). Due to the West's "complacency (Debeuf, 2020)", "(the West) couldn't even understand that non-white leadership was possible" (Samarajiva, 2020).

In Canada, because it took the public health authorities months to comprehend and adopt "Asian" measures, a high price - including increases in infections and deaths - was paid. Furthermore, before mask wearing was required in public spaces in May 2020, "maskaphobia" (Gao, 2021: 208) or "mask-based stigma" resulted in "criticism of a common Asian cultural practice" and exposed many Asians to verbal and physical assaults (Mamuji et al., 2020: 9-10). The notion of "cultural practice" reveals that medical protocol as a knowledge form or habitus is not neutral, but political and social. The conceptualisation of "mask culture" exemplifies the Orientalist grounds that allow the West to attribute masking to the essentialist and culturalist stereotypes of the obedient Asians (Zhang Mingyuan, 2021).

Therefore, many Chinese immigrants have been left frustrated by the gap between expectations and reality. It has hindered their "subjective identification with the host societies" (Gao, 2021: 208) and caused distrust of Canadian authority and society (Lin, 2021). For example, in the beginning of 2020, when the government seemed uninterested in imposing any measures on border control that was later condemned as "knee-jerk reactions" by the Prime Minister, an online Sinophone news website user argued: "Often, Canada is really weird… This time they are ignorant and inactive, but they are proud because they think they are special" (kan shei xiao dao zuihou, 4th February 2020). Furthermore, it reinforced their affirmation on how China tackled the pandemic (Gao, 2021: 208; Lin, 2021). Another user commented: "China is well aware of the fierceness of the virus so they prevented it with extreme ways long time ago. Not long from now only Chinese people will survive in the world" (ANSION2012, 16th January 2021).

Nonetheless, there is not just a single kind of identity. In fact, many Chinese immigrants remain critical of the Chinese government, and this has led to various interpretations of the Canadian discourse (Gao, 2021: 211-2; Lin, 2021). For example, one online Sinophone news website user responded to those criticising the "ignorant" anti-mask and pro-freedom Canadian protestors as follows: "this type of freedom determines that nobody can make decision on behalf of the people… If you try by all means but still do not understand the life and values here (in Canada), you can leave" (xly_ 0601, 14th July 2020). Moreover, stronger voices against the Chinese government can be heard among Taiwanese and Hong Konger communities. In Taiwanese online media, terms such as "Wuhan pneumonia" have been widely employed (Chang et al., 2020). One Hong Konger described how they perceive the poor performance of Canadian public health officials, "there are always times we shake our head and roll our eyes." However, it did not affect their preference for Canadian values because "a person against the Liberal Party (the majority party) would not be questioned as a traitor to Canada (*Jiajian* 加奸) selling the country out" (Shiu, 4th April 2020). While disappointed with the Canadian government's handling of the pandemic, the user appreciates that they can still voice their displeasure toward the governing body without being treated as a traitor, whereas any critique of the CCP in Hong Kong is akin to betrayal.

Thus, identity is triggered during a situation with a unique spatiality and temporality. In the context of Pandemic Orientalism, Chineseness is manifested in a set of public health practices that allows Chinese people to differentiate themselves from Canadian norms. Even though Chinese norms were deemed as "subjugated knowledge" in Foucault's terms in the West (Zhang Yunpeng & Xu Fang, 2020: 212), Chinese immigrants constantly complained

about the "ignorance" of the West. Ultimately, identity is formed within the interplay of many complex power dynamics. To many immigrants from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, the political tension back home overshadows the multiple conflicts around them and dominates identity formation. Within a "particular situatedness in a field of sociopolitical relations" (Chun, 2017: 191), identity is positional and relational rather than static and self-evident. Therefore, the fluidity and contingency of Chinese identities allow them to remain relevant. Sinophone communities may be minoritised, but their awareness and response to power dynamics is solid, enabling identity to reshape or crumble, and providing the communities with a unique positionality to observe and examine given discourses, whether it be Canadian, Chinese or beyond.

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Overseas Taiwanese Negotiation of "Chinese Identity" in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In this article, the author examines how Belgian Taiwanese immigrants negotiate their ethnonational identity, especially the term "Chinese" in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study finds some differences of identity negotiation and performance strategies applied by different generations of immigrants.

Keywords: Belgium, Chinese identity, Covid-19, ethnic boundaries, Taiwanese immigrant

The first confirmed case of Covid-19 occurred in Wuhan, China, and the disease then rapidly spread around the world. This pandemic has not only infected and killed millions of people but has also had significant negative impacts on the economies, communities, and healthcare systems of the majority of countries. Although there is still no consensus or clear conclusion in the international community about whether the virus was leaked from Wuhan's medical laboratory, many politicians and members of the public believe that the virus originated in mainland China. Therefore, they utilise negative symbols to draw connections between the virus and people who speak Mandarin Chinese. It was common to read and hear terms such as "Wuhan virus," "China virus," "Chinese virus," or even "Kung-flu" being used by ordinary people, politicians, and news reporters (Masters-Waage et al., 2020: 2). These terms have had significant negative impacts on people from pan-Chinese societies, including mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, whether they are domestic residents or living overseas. Because of these negative connotations, incidences of violent anti-Asian and anti-Chinese crimes have increased in American and many European host societies (Gover et al., 2020: 648-649). The racial discrimination caused by the pandemic has resulted in uncertainty among pan-Chinese people, especially those living overseas, about how to perceive and perform their Chinese ethnic identity, as the reputations and images of people who speak in Mandarin Chinese have worsened during this pandemic period (Wang *et al.*, 2021).

This article documents and examines how Taiwanese people living overseas perceive the concept of Chinese identity and question their ethnonational identity in the time of the pandemic. There are several reasons why the author chose Taiwanese people as the research subjects. First, Taiwanese society is still influenced by traditional Confucian and Chinese cultures. Additionally, it has the largest Mandarin Chinese-speaking population aside from mainland China (Huang & Wu, 1994: 69-70). Finally, Taiwanese people have experienced significant changes in their ethnonational identity in the past two decades, particularly during the pandemic. Thus, in this article, the author will further examine how Covid-19 has impacted Taiwanese living overseas on their perceptions and interpretations of their Chinese identity.

Before entering into further detail, it is important to briefly sketch changes in ethnonational identification that have taken place in Taiwanese society in the past decades, as

this is critical background to discussion of this issue. Figure 1 is based on a longitudinal survey conducted by National Chengchi University, for which data has been collected annually from 1992 (National Chengchi University, 2021).
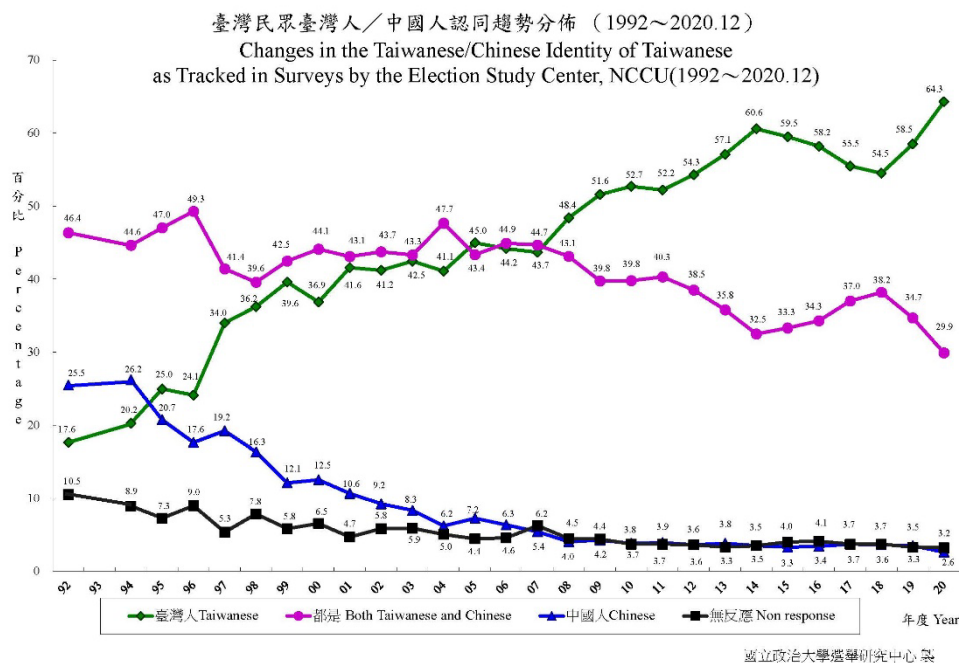

臺灣民眾臺灣人／中國人認同趨勢分佈 （1992～2020.12）
Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of Taiwanese
as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU(1992～2020.12)

Figure 1: Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese Identification among Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU (1992~2020.12), *(National Chengchi University, 2021)*.

As the graph shows, in the early 1990s approximately 20%–25% of people in Taiwan identified themselves as solely Chinese, and nearly half of the population considered themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese. The percentage of the population who identified as Taiwanese accounted for less than 30% before 1997. However, after the mid-1990s, the percentage of people who identified themselves as Taiwanese officially surpassed the percentage of who identified as Chinese. During the early to mid-2000s, the Taiwanese identity percentage increased annually from 36.9% in 2000 to 48.4% in 2008. In the same period, the Chinese identity percentage dropped from 12.5% to 4.5%. Furthermore, the category of "both" identity (people who identified themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese) remained at around 40%. However, this trend changed significantly in the late 2000s. In 2008, the Taiwanese identity percentage surpassed the "both" identity percentage for the first time. The Taiwanese identity percentage grew sharply from 48.4% in 2008 to 64.3% in 2020. In comparison, the Chinese identity maintained at a static low of below 5% in the same period. Additionally, the "both" identity decreased annually from 43.1% in 2008 to 29.9% in 2020. This survey shows a clear trend that consists of a rapid decrease in the categories of Chinese and "both" identity percentages in Taiwan occurring before and during the outbreak of Covid-19. By contrast, a greater percentage of people in Taiwan are now more likely to identify themselves as Taiwanese only (Lin, 2020a).

However, the main concern of this article is how Taiwanese living overseas perceive and negotiate their "Chinese identity." The following examples draw from my own fieldwork experiences during my PhD project at KU Leuven in Belgium. Over the past three years (2017-2020), I conducted online and offline fieldwork at the Ecole Sun Yat-sen School (École Sun

Yat-sen de Belgique) in Brussels and in several virtual communities on Facebook established by immigrants from Taiwan. I collected data by conducting participatory observation in the field both online and offline and within the Taiwanese diasporic community in Belgium. Accordingly, those participants who had emigrated to Belgium over a year earlier and who had long-term plans to live in the host society were invited to join further semi-structured interviews. A total of more than forty people participated in my project. They had diverse socio-economic backgrounds, emigration pathways, ages and religions etc., given that the study incorporated a diverse range of participants from the elderly generation of restauranters, young generation of working-holiday makers, students, immigrant housewives and high-skilled migrant workers. To ascertain how Belgian Taiwanese immigrants have navigated their ethnonational identity during the pandemic, I further conducted interviews in 2021 via several online platforms, namely, LINE, WeChat, Facebook message and Skype (Lin, 2020b).

Influenced by homeland politics in Taiwan, there are two main ethnonational identities in the Taiwanese immigrant community. Elderly immigrants (aged 60 and above) are more likely to identify themselves as Chinese. In contrast, most of the younger generation (aged 40 and below) identify themselves as Taiwanese. There are two reasons to explain why many elderly Taiwanese immigrants have kept their Chinese identity even after having emigrated overseas. Firstly, most of these immigrants grew up in the 1950s, and at that time, the Kuomintang (KMT) government educated people to identify themselves as Chinese, encouraging people to believe that one day the government would take the fight to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and return to mainland China. Thus, influenced by the KMT's Chinese nationalist educational ideology, many people in Taiwan identified as Chinese at that time (Su, 2006). Many of the elderly interviewees in this study retained this identity after emigrating overseas because of the CCP government did not allow mainland Chinese citizens to emigrate overseas until it decided to implement economic reform policies and hence opened the border in 1978 (Pang, 2002). Thus, immigrants from Taiwan constituted the majority of the pan-Chinese immigrant community in many European host societies before the 1980s, including Belgium. As a result, as there were few immigrants from other parts of China to compete for the claim to Chinese identity, the elderly immigrants from Taiwan could feel free and safe to retain their Chinese identity in the host society at the time (Lin, 2020b).

However, elderly Taiwanese immigrants began to face challenges regarding their Chinese identity, as many more people emigrated from mainland China to Europe after the 1990s who strongly identified themselves as Chinese. This meant that Chinese identity was held by two immigrant groups from different origins. Consequently, many elderly Taiwanese immigrants felt it has become more difficult to maintain their original Chinese identity, as the mainland Chinese immigrant community in Belgium is 100 times larger than the Taiwanese immigrant community, given that there are approximately 45,000 immigrants from mainland China and only 400 immigrants from Taiwan (Lin, 2018; Pang, 2002).

The competition over Chinese identity has become increasingly severe due to the pandemic, as most Chinese immigrants from mainland China maintain a strong Chinese nationalist identity and continue to maintain that people from Taiwan are part of the People's Republic of China (Best & Huang, 2020). Their assertions make many immigrants from Taiwan feel uncomfortable and offended. Thus, in the face of the identity narratives held by mainland Chinese immigrants, some elderly Taiwanese immigrants feel they have no choice but to modify how they describe their ethnonational identity within their host society. Based on the author's fieldwork experiences and interviews, many of the elderly Taiwanese immigrants in Belgium applied the identity negotiation strategies of "downplay" and "transvaluation" in negotiating and depicting their Chinese identity (Lin, 2020b; Lin et al.,

2020). For example, some interviewees reported that they avoided discussing issues of identity with others, especially with their mainland Chinese peers, as they understand that identity is a sensitive topic. In addition to utilizing the 'downplay' strategy, some interviewees tend to apply the strategy of transvaluation in re-interpreting for themselves the meaning of being Chinese in a foreign land. One elderly interviewee, Alan, modified his own statement of identity from "I'm Chinese" (我是中國人) to "I'm Chinese from Taiwan" (我是來自臺灣的中國人), in elaborating the differences between himself and other immigrants from mainland China.

Another interviewee utilised political virtues as a symbolic tool in drawing the ethnic boundary between herself and mainland Chinese peers. Alice, a 70-year-old immigrant, said:

> "…yes, I still identified myself as "Chinese," however, the Chinese I mean in here is different from the Chinese from the mainland since we are the Chinese [ie. from Taiwan] who embrace and value freedom, democracy and human right[s], but they do not…, so, for me, yes, we are both "Chinese", but we are different…"

However, it is interesting to note that young Taiwanese immigrants apply quite different identity negotiation and performance strategies as compared to their elderly counterparts. Some of them show their Taiwanese identity in their daily lives in very banal ways (Hearn, 2007). Mrs. Yang, for instance, has lived in Belgium for around five years since she married her Belgian husband. After the pandemic worsened in April 2020, she consciously began carrying a Taiwanese-style flower-printed bag with "臺灣, TAIWAN" written on it in big lettering with her every day, as shown in Figure 2. She further explained the reason for her behavior as follows:

> "…[The reason] I wear this bag everyday with me was because during the pandemic, the image of Chinese people in here became more negative than before… I did not like to be regarded as "Chinese", thus, I took this bag with me to show others that "I'm Taiwanese, not Chinese," and "I came from Taiwan, not China"… so, the aim of wearing this bag is to differentiate [myself]…"

Figure 2: Bag and clothing worn by participants. Photographs courtesy of the participants.

Another young interviewee (Eric, a 26-year-old male) bought a special T-shirt, shown in Figure 2, with the words with "I Come From TAIWAN Not CHINA" printed on it. He shared his reason for wearing this T-shirt, especially during the pandemic, stating:

> "…during the pandemic, as so many local Belgians call me as "Chinese," but I did not like to be considered as "Chinese", so, I bought this T-shirt online… and you know, I feel so good wearing this T-shirt and I have to say that because of the pandemic, my Taiwanese identity has become stronger…"

The banal ethnonational identity negotiation and performance strategies applied by young Taiwanese immigrants echo the theoretical concept of banal nationalism (Billig, 2017). From this perspective, people can perform their ethnonational identity in four banal everyday ways, namely, talking, choosing, performing, and consuming the nation. Accordingly, Mrs. Yang and Eric chose to perform their ethnonational identity through consumption, purchasing products with strong national symbols and images rather than loudly stating their Taiwanese identity.

To summarise, as demonstrated in the analysis above, before the pandemic, Chinese identity was gradually losing its attraction for most people in and from Taiwan. Instead, more of the Taiwanese population are identifying themselves as Taiwanese only. The pandemic has boosted this development and further decreased the popularity of Chinese as an identity choice. The author's study and fieldwork experiences echo the perspective that people's ethnonational identity and ethnic boundary are not static but fluid, and can be changed through living in different social environments and interacting with different people (see Davenport, 2020; Sanders, 2002; Barth, 1969).

However, the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the ethnonational identity of Taiwanese people living both domestically and overseas deserve further examination. Moreover, as this study primarily relies on the author's fieldwork in Belgium, it would be interesting to examine Taiwanese immigrants' experiences of identity negotiation in other host societies. Finally, as the voices in this study included only first-generation migrants, the perspectives of Taiwanese migrants born overseas should be taken into consideration in future research.

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Chinese Identity and Intersectionality in an Age of Anti-Asian Racism

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Abstract

'Intersectionality' is central to understanding Chinese identity in an age of anti-Asian Racism and #StopAsianHate. Using and explaining the term in a way that guards against 'Oppression Olympics' and that resonates with some Chinese traditions of thought, can help scholars and students understand and challenge anti-Asian hate in its manifold manifestations. It can help us in our efforts to adopt a critical approach to the term 'Chinese' in this context, and to other identity-markers too.

Keywords: Chinese identity, intersectionality, anti-Asian hate

The wave of anti-Asian hate that has swept much of the world together with the Covid-19 pandemic has been shocking. Abuse and violence against people who are racialised as Chinese has dramatically increased during Covid-19. This has been partly due to the antagonism and division that the pandemic has caused, fuelled by a minority of politicians and hate-groups scapegoating communities for the spread of the disease (Chan et al., 2021; Levin, 2021). Accounts of victimisation of people racialised as Chinese have been lamentably common in the press and on social media. As we write this essay in the UK in particular, many reported instances of violence against people of Chinese descent have targeted lecturers or university students. This hatred is close to home. All of this takes place in the context of a growing and increasingly polarised debate around identity politics, decolonisation, and populism.

A key term in these debates, which we believe to be crucial to thinking sensibly about Chinese identity in the age of anti-Asian racism and #StopAsianHate, is 'intersectionality'. Many academics will have come across the term in the classroom as well as in mandatory diversity training. They may know that the term was most famously articulated by lawyer and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in a 1989 article. Crenshaw argued that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood, and legally accounted for, by simply considering being black or being a woman in isolation. What we must do, she argued, is recognise how these identities intersect (Crenshaw, 1989). Despite, or perhaps because of, widespread familiarity with the term, we believe that 'intersectionality' is commonly misunderstood, and thought to indicate oppressions 'stacking up', rather than merging into distinct forms of oppression. We suggest here that such widespread misunderstanding hampers our ability to understand, challenge, and teach issues relating to Chinese identity in an age of anti-Asian Racism and #StopAsianHate. We also outline what we think is a more productive understanding of the term, and how it may help us respond to this hate in our research and in the classroom.

In a 2021 Facebook post that went viral, PhD candidate Mary Maxfield thoughtfully argues that an appropriate understanding of intersectionality is crucial for conceptualising and articulating events like the racist, misogynistic murders of six women of Asian descent in Atlanta earlier in the year (Maxfield, 2021). She does so by setting out the misconception she previously held about intersectionality, and which many academics may recognise in themselves, in students, and in public debate. On what Maxfield calls the 'additive' model, each of us is positioned at a particular standpoint, where our various identities - like race, gender, and dis/ability - intersect. Oppressions like racism, sexism, and ableism then play out across these identities. Each new '-ism' by which an individual is victimised rather than privileged is understood to compound their experience of oppression. As Maxfield points out, this additive model may be useful for remembering that we all have different experiences of both oppression and privilege, and that social justice can never be single-issue struggles. At the same time, and more perilously, it sets us up for what others have called the 'Oppression Olympics' in a competition to win 'Most Oppressed' at the expense of empathy, coalition, and solidarity (Yuval-Davis, 2012; Hancock, A.-M., 2011). Who is more oppressed? A gay Han-Chinese farmer or a disabled Uyghur woman? What if one of them is rich and the other poor? What added identity label would tip the scales in 'favour' of one or the other? There is no way to 'calculate' answers to such questions, and it is not very useful to ask them.

Moreover, Maxfield points out, it is not intersectionality. The important point about intersectionality is not that oppressions add on top of other oppressions, so that it's harder to be identified by devalued identity (A) if we're also identified by devalued identity (B). The important concern of intersectionality is what it's like to struggle at the standpoint where (A) and (B) are interwoven so that you cannot tell them apart. In other words, it's about how numerous forms of oppression are experienced in ways that make them inextricable from one another. If you're in the middle of the Wudaokou 五道口 intersection in Beijing, you can't say whether you're on the intersecting Chengfu Road 成府路 or Zhongguancun East Road 中关村东路 – it's made up of both roads, it is more than both, it is mixed. Through this intersectional view, Chinese women, for example, experience racism and sexism in a form where you cannot tell where one stops and the other starts. They are targeted by a racialised misogyny and a misogynistic racism directed specifically at people who are identified as Chinese women – and who may or may not identify themselves as such.

Let's consider an example from the representational side of intersectional analysis, as it may crop up in our own classrooms. If we're teaching about anti-Asian hate in Chinese studies through white supremacist projections such as the fictional Fu Manchu character and the idea of the Sick Man of Asia, the racialised stereotypes of Chinese people that we teach our students to recognise and resist are really the racialised stereotypes of Chinese men (many of these are analysed for example in Frayling, 2014). If we think about anti-Asian hate through centring women, we encounter completely different stereotypes, including the sexualised stereotypes that were used on social and other media to rationalise and dismiss the murder of women of Asian descent in massage parlours and spas in Atlanta, which in turn prompted Maxfield's reflections. Anti-Asian hate looks different for people who are racialised at different points on the spectra between disabled and enabled Chinese, straight and queer Chinese, urban and rural Chinese, rich and poor Chinese, Han and 'minority ethnic' Chinese, cis- and transgendered Chinese, and so on. They may all experience racism, but those racisms may target them in a wide range of different ways.

Racialisation of Chinese men is, of course, also gendered. However, it is gendered in ways that get generalised as representative of racialisation of Chinese people as such, when in

fact it is not. It is how Chinese men are racialised. The point is not to rank the racism encountered by different groups and individuals from awful, through more awful, to most awful. The point is certainly not to suggest that some forms of anti-Asian hate are more acceptable – they are not. The take-home point is rather that if we pretend that oppressive forces like 'anti-Asian hate', 'sexism', and 'ableism' are separate, we can become blinded to the manner in which people are targeted in particular ways where these forces intersect. A consequence of such blindness is that we fail to recognise and resist the numerous permutations of Asian hate that exist. We struggle to build alliances between its wide range of victims. In order to effectively understand, unpack, and undo racism, sexism, ableism - and all the other forms of identity-based oppression – we need to recognise the ways in which they merge in specific ways in specific contexts.

In Chinese studies, we may underline the appropriateness of reading intersectionality in this way by pointing out to ourselves and others its resonance with some traditional Chinese understandings of the non-essentialised self (Nordin, 2020: 103). For example, we can illustrate it through the Daoist *yin-yang* diagram, where a dark and a light half together form a circle, with a dark dot in the light, and a light dot in the dark.

Figure 1: Yin-yang *(Wikimedia Commons, 2012)*

Many will recognise its thinking from concrete everyday practices such as cooking and traditional Chinese medicine, others from exciting new academic debates that it has inspired in the last decade or so (see Ling L.H.M, 2014; Qin Yaqing, 2018 for examples from the discipline of International Relations). It illustrates a form of thinking through which we can read intersectionality to underline its potential for broader decolonial alliances, in and beyond Chinese studies. Not only does *yin-yang* thinking offer a vocabulary of qualitative contrasts which are applicable to specific situations, and which enable us to make specific distinctions without excessive generalisation (Hall and Ames, 1995: 261). Notably, it underlines a view of the Self as an always incomplete process of becoming, where neither the Self, nor any understanding of it, can ever be one, whole, or finally inclusive (Hall, 1994: 230). No identity, Chinese or otherwise, can be taken as essential, pure, or true. All identities must instead be understood as dynamic manifestations of changing relationships, dependent on their articulation in relation to other identities. No identities are complete or self-same, isolated from others. There is always some darkness in the light. There is always some light in the dark. Just as in our simile of intersecting roads, the circle is made up of both, it is more than both, it is mixed. As such, its vocabulary points towards one entry point to "finding varieties of 'self' in the 'other'" as a hopeful path ahead (Tan Shzr Ee, 2021).

The vocabulary of *yin-yang* thinking of course does not guarantee an anti-racist politics – like any other terminology, it can be mobilised for different political purposes, including thinking in binary terms. Nonetheless, it arguably offers an entry-point for developing

conversations about intersectionality that is specific to Chinese studies, and which can allow us to unpack these different politicisations inside and outside the classroom.

The take-home point that we want to underscore is that 'intersectionality' has become a common term in parts of public debate, classroom discussion, and academic research around identity politics, decolonisation, and populism. It is central to understanding Chinese identity in an age of anti-Asian Racism and #StopAsianHate. Using and explaining the term in a way that guards against 'Oppression Olympics', and that resonates with some Chinese traditions of thought, can help scholars and students understand and challenge anti-Asian hate in its manyfold manifestations. It can help us in our efforts to adopt a critical approach to the term 'Chinese' in this context, and to other identity-markers too. It helps us do so without losing the ability to call anti-Asian hate by its name in order to resist it and, one day, stop it.

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Chinese Identities in Australia amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: Backgrounds, Challenges, and Directions for Future Research

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Abstract

Although they are often perceived as one group, significant diversities in culture, language, social class, and political opinions exist among people who identify as Chinese in Australia. More academic attention should be given to internal variations among these people, as they immigrated to Australia in different historical periods and from different localities. The Chinese identities in Australia have been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its intersectionality with anti-Asian racism globally, warranting new empirical analysis and theoretical reflections.

Keywords: anti-Asian racism, anti-Chinese rhetoric, Chinese identities, Chinese Australian, Chinese migrants, COVID-19

People who identify as Chinese in one way or another had become a part of Australian society long before the Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901. They remain a significant part of contemporary Australian society.

Among Australian citizens and permanent residents, those with Chinese heritage are often perceived as one group despite their significant diversities in culture, language, social class, and political opinions. This paper argues that more academic attention should be given to the various identities within this group, as people of Chinese ancestry immigrated to Australia in different historical periods and from different localities. We also argue that the COVID-19 pandemic and its global intersectionality with anti-Asian racism have further complicated Chinese identities in Australia, warranting further empirical analysis and theoretical reflection. To articulate our arguments, we start by providing a brief history of Chinese immigrants in Australia, then discuss some essential complexities underlying the Chinese identities in Australia before raising some emergent issues regarding Chinese identities in Australia amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the first Opium War of 1839-1842, a time of rebellion and warfare, many people emigrated from China to overseas destinations - including Australia - in hopes of escaping poverty, famine, overpopulation, and natural disasters (Ryan, 1995:15). Many early Chinese pioneers sought fortune in the goldfields. While some were successful in accumulating wealth, many remained in poverty. The increasing Chinese population in Australia soon led to racial discrimination and the introduction of racist policies imposed by colonial authorities, such as the 1855 anti-Chinese immigration legislation in Victoria to exclude and remove Chinese immigrants (Ip, 2012: 159).

Anti-Chinese sentiments played an essential role in Australia's federation in 1901, after which the so-called "White Australia Policy" was further strengthened. The White Australia Policy was an immigration policy and a nationalist ideology that reflected Australia's desire to maintain itself as a white, British nation (Tavan, 2004: 109). Its mechanisms were geared toward protecting the interests of the Anglo-Australian population, in particular through imposing taxes on all Chinese migrants and through the use of the "dictation test", which required migrants who entered Australia between 1901 and 1958 to write 50 words in any European language selected by an immigration officer (Thompson, 2007). The test was designed to exclude applicants deemed as undesirable, such as those from China.

Across the first six decades of the 20th century, very few migrants of Chinese ancestry emigrated to Australia (Jayaraman, 2000). However, with the introduction of multiculturalism as a policy discourse in the 1970s, Australia has seen a growth of new Asian migrants from the South-East Asian bloc. Reasons for migration varied, and the range of migrants has been diverse, from ethnic Chinese immigrants seeking political asylum as refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia to families seeking economic opportunities and educational prospects from Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia (Jupp, 2002). Since the early 2000s, the rise of new middle classes in East Asia has resulted in a growth of Chinese people from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan settling in Australia (Tao & Stapleton, 2018).

Today, all these immigrants and their descendants may identify as being "Chinese", but what constitutes being "Chinese Australian" is highly diverse. According to the latest available census data, as of 9 August 2016, 1,232,900 Australian residents self-reported that at least one of their two primary ancestries was Chinese, accounting for 5.27% of the entire Australian population as of the census night. At the same time, there were 770,068 (3.29%) Australian residents whose parents were both born in the Greater China region, and 927,944 (3.97%) Australian residents for whom a Chinese dialect was the most frequently spoken non-English language at home (Tao & Stapleton, 2018).

Through quantifiable attributes such as ancestry and language, census data may reveal some factors that shape Chinese identities in Australia. However, compared to people born in Northeast Asia such as mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, those from other places such as Southeast Asia face more structural restrictions toward articulating their family backgrounds in the census. As a result, the census data may conceal how immigrants and their descendants perceive their Chinese identities. According to Ang (2001), being Chinese varies from place to place, moulded by the circumstances in different parts of the world where people of Chinese ancestry have settled and constructed new ways of living.

It should be noted, however, despite internal diversities in how a person may define their Chinese identity, all Chinese Australian citizens and permanent residents are "visible migrants" who look physically different to the dominant Anglo-Australian population. As a result, the notion of "otherness" and exclusionist rhetoric directed against Chinese Australian citizens and residents have long existed in the Australian social landscape. Moreover, representation of Chinese Australians in news and media is minimal and often generalised to perpetuate stereotypes of Chinese people, neglecting the significant diversities in this group. For example, Chinese Australian citizens and residents are either romanticised as culinary experts in Chinese cuisine on TV programs such as MasterChef Australia or as naive migrants

smuggling prohibited goods into the country on an ongoing weekly program called Border Security: Australia's Front Line.

Today, anti-Chinese rhetoric remains a prevalent sentiment in contemporary Australian society, albeit more often masked as covert forms of micro-aggression through the reproduction of reductionist narratives about the "foreign other". For example, during a 2020 Australian Senate Committee public hearing, a Liberal senator questioned three experts of Chinese heritage if they unconditionally condemned the Chinese Communist Party, which was not relevant in any meaningful way to the hearing's purpose (Mann, 2020).

Frequently viewed as visible "foreign others", Chinese Australian citizens and residents are convenient targets of racial discrimination and scapegoats for economic and political tensions. Unsurprisingly, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic triggered a significant resurgence of anti-Chinese rhetoric in Australia. Since early 2020, reports of abuse and racism directed at Chinese Australian citizens and residents have risen (Tan, 2020). The number of hate crimes towards people of Chinese heritage in Australia has also significantly increased (Kassam & Hsu, 2021). In addition, many Chinese international students, regardless of their individual political views, were put in awkward situations created by increasing diplomatic tensions between China and Australia (Tao, 2021). This unfortunate resurgence of anti-Asian racism in Australia amid the COVID-19 pandemic provides opportunities to answer a series of significant empirical and theoretical questions.

Firstly, during the wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, many hate crimes and incidents of racial discrimination in Australia targeted not merely immigrants of Chinese heritage but people of Asian appearance. Therefore, similar to as happened in the United States (Chaffin, 2021), widespread anti-Asian racism may foster a stronger desire among people of Chinese heritage in Australia to embrace a pan-Asian identity. Meanwhile, the political tension between Beijing and Canberra may make some people of Chinese heritage in Australia, especially those who do not identify with the People's Republic of China, feel the need to highlight their non-PRC identities. Therefore, we can ask whether the resurgence of anti-Asian racism make Chinese identities in Australia more fragmented or more closely aligned and integrated into the broader Asian identities.

Secondly, anti-Asian racism amid the COVID-19 pandemic is not exclusive to Australia. It reflects "a long-running 'otherness' that Western society has attributed to Asian peoples" (Roberto et al., 2020: 364). Still, the government and politicians in different western countries have adopted significantly different political rhetoric through the COVID-19 pandemic. Donald Trump, for example, frequently used racist epithets such as "Chinese virus" or the "kung flu". However, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison explicitly and repeatedly praised the Chinese community for their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. What are the impacts of the political rhetoric on anti-Asian racism and Chinese identities in different Western countries?

Finally, incidents of racial discrimination against international students, temporary visa holders and people of Chinese heritage during the COVID-19 pandemic are regularly featured by media in Australia and China. Since February 2020, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation has extensively reported both explicit cases of abuse and a general trend showing increased abuse and racist attacks against Australian residents of Chinese heritage (see respectively Bell, 2020; Walden, 2020). The Chinese Ministry of Education's warming against

studying Australia, citing racial discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic, was also heavily featured in the Chinese media (Tao, 2021: 302). Compared to their peers stranded in China, Chinese international students who resided in Australia during the pandemic were more likely to experience anti-Asian racism. However, they were also better positioned to closely engage with the Australian community, including observation of the anti-racist efforts that took place. Will perceptions of racial discrimination thus differ between onshore and offshore Chinese international students? And what are the differences and similarities in "Chinese identity" between these two groups?

We anticipate that the answers to many of the questions we raised in this paper will probably not be straightforward. However, in-depth analysis of the Chinese identities in Australia based on timely empirical data will return fruitful academic outcomes. These outcomes will provide a much-needed snapshot of how the Chinese identities have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its global intersections with anti-Asian racism. They will also contribute to many ongoing theoretical discussions on migration, identity, and globalisation.

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Global Communities of Difference: Chinese Identity in an Age of Anti-Asian Racism and #StopAsianHate

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Abstract

Covid-19, western Sinophobia and geopolitics are raising new questions about Chinese cultural identity, which has become an increasingly contentious terrain at the current historical moment. Stuart Hall's work provides a way to think beyond racial, cultural and state impositions of cultural identity through ideas of self-positioning, difference and hybridity. Chinese cultural identity as difference and hybridity, however, faces real world challenges in spaces of contested identity such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, and from Sinophobia.

Key words: Chinese cultural identity, Sinophobia, Stuart Hall, Covid-19, difference, hybridity

Chinese identity is marked by difference. It is linked to racial and ethnic questions, as well as political, historical and geographical environments (Chen, 2006: 6). Chinese identity is increasingly global, encompassing diverse communities across the world and online.

The Covid-19 pandemic raises new questions about Chinese identity as it is refracted in western countries through old racial demarcations of Sinophobia. The pandemic has thrown national and geographical boundaries into new relief, with borders, travel restrictions and access to vaccines determined primarily by nation states and global-power blocks, then often equated with identity groupings. How might Chinese identity be thought beyond racial, ethnic and state boundaries, in order to encompass the diverse communities that form it? As western voices, how can we contribute to global communities of difference to combat anti-Chinese and anti-Asian hate?

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall offers a model for thinking of cultural identity as global communities of difference. In his essay "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall argues that cultural identity is not only a matter a "being" but of "becoming" (Hall, 1994: 225). While Hall's idea of cultural identity emerged from the diasporic Afro-Caribbean experience, contemporary Chinese and global identity can be thought productively as ontologically diasporic, as constituting narratives of difference. The current historical conjuncture constitutes a crisis point inflected by the contours of global neoliberalism, including spatial displacement, economic financial abstraction, disruptive virtual technologies and impending climate catastrophe. Hall's idea of identities which are "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, 1994: 235) offers one model for thinking about identity that exceeds racial, cultural and state divisions.

Hall outlines that cultural identity can be viewed from different perspectives. In a first perspective, cultural identity appears as a sort of "one true self," grounded in common history and ancestry and "shared cultural codes" (Hall, 1994: 223). While this perspective is premised on what is shared or common, it can lead to the imposition of essentialist and hegemonic

identity. In the West, the "one true self" conception of identity easily lapses into racial designations of the Chinese/Asian other and Sinophobia. The Chinese government meanwhile is seeking to impose a hegemonic conception of Chinese identity, based upon a claimed common history and ancestry, on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and (to some extent) Chinese overseas communities.

In a second perspective, Hall demarcates cultural identity as a dynamic that encompasses "similarities" but importantly "deep and significant differences" and "discontinuities" (Hall, 1994: 225). Identity in this perspective is "not an essence but a *positioning*" (Hall, 1994: 226). This second perspective allows more individual and collective agency, as identity is shaped through narratives of difference, which transcend essentialising cultural identity in destructive notions of race and nation. Hall suggests hybridity and pan-identity as alternatives to hegemonic and essentialist identities (Hall, 1994: 235).

Hall's model of cultural identity as difference and hybridity offers a way to challenge perceived homogenous and hegemonic Chinese identity, opening a way to think about cultural identity in a broader context of communities of difference. Such a project avoids the association of Chinese identity with the mainland or Chinese state, surpassing racial and national categorisation. This offers a starting point for opening up a radical egalitarian conception of identity that embraces common history and ancestry, while seeking to recognise identity as a sphere of difference, including gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class and so on. This dynamic creates the possibility of what I will call 'voluntary communities of difference', and for the narration and self-positioning of cultural identity in online spaces.

Although Hall's work preceded the advent of social media, his diasporic conception of identity translates well to a world conditioned by the prevalence of virtual technologies. In its best form, social media offers a medium for presence-forming, where we may position ourselves in voluntary communities. Online voluntary communities of difference offer spaces and linguistic operations through which we may position ourselves, recognising difference as common becoming. Such communities, pan-Chinese or pan-Asian for example, allow reimagining cultural identity beyond designations determined by economic, state and military competition. These voluntary communities can be distinguished from the often involuntary communities of race and state, through which the parameters of identity are normally conceived.

While voluntary communities of difference offer a model of identity, there are challenges in the encounter with real world political and state actors wielding cultural identity as a weapon. The hope for a pan-African identity, for example, has been thwarted by real world divisions of conflicting religious, tribal, ethnic and linguistic groupings, both on the continent of Africa and in the African diaspora. A hybrid or pan-Chinese/pan-Asian identity faces similar challenges from both western Sinophobia and the Chinese state. The racialising of the Chinese/Asian other in western countries forces an involuntary designation of identity on people. Likewise, the Chinese government's assertion of a hegemonic "Chinese" identity and rule in Hong Kong and Taiwan seeks to impose an identity on the peoples that live in those spaces. How does diasporic and hybrid identity react when it runs into powerful and dominant states wielding cultural identity as a weapon? How do ideas of a pan-Chinese/pan-Asian cultural identity function in relation to two problematic areas of Chinese identity and real political flashpoints, namely Hong Kong and Taiwan? How can western voices join the communities of difference to prevent real world military, economic and state competition?

Hong Kong and Taiwanese identity are often positioned by geographical, historical and narrative difference to mainland China. At the same time, temporal and generational divides in

both Hong Kong and Taiwan mean that the desire for a distinct identity is by no means homogeneous. Ackbar Abbas famously identified the emergence of a Hong Kong cultural identity in the 1980s and 1990s as a "first-line defense against total political absorption" by China (Abbas, 1997: 142). Hong Kong's cultural identity was conceived by Abbas as hybrid, hyphenated and anticipatory, while also fundamentally precarious (Abbas, 1997). Hong Kongers' apparent desire for a distinct cultural identity poses a challenge to China's desire to absorb the territory under its jurisdiction and to impose a hegemonic Chinese identity. This dynamic broke out into open conflict in mid-2019 following the Anti-Extradition Law Movement and, for the present, the possibility of a distinct Hong Kong identity has been suppressed by China's state violence, arrests and legal repression.

Taiwanese identity is also often hybrid as "few people share a common national identity in Taiwan because of its peculiar history" (Wang, 2014: 35). Taiwan's "peculiar history" involves the mix of indigenous, local and Chinese populations, a legacy of Japanese colonialism and Guomindang rule, as well as a more recent democratic legacy that positions Taiwan as different from the Chinese mainland. Since 1991, people living in Taiwan have identified themselves increasingly as "Taiwanese," rather than as "Chinese," or pan-Taiwanese/Chinese (Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, 2021). This new Taiwanese identity has embraced the linguistic and ethnic diversity of the common space of the island of Taiwan (Yueh, 2020). The desire for a distinct "Taiwanese" identity, however, faces challenges from Taiwan's geo-political situation and the very real threat of military aggression from China.

In western countries, the rise of Sinophobia and xenophobia towards Chinese and Asian communities following the Covid-19 pandemic imposes involuntary identity along racial lines. Sinophobia is also increasingly wielded by western state-actors to counter China's growing economic and military power. The (re)emergence of Sinophobia and anti-Asian hate means that it is imperative for western voices to proffer solidarity against racial conceptions of identity. Such a moment of crisis as the current historical conjuncture should lead us to ask questions about our own identity, how we position ourselves as global citizens and how we assert that there is only one identity, that of the communities of difference who compose the global body politic. Such a notion of identity leads to the question of wider global justice and how we may face collectively the challenges of our world, questions that were central to Hall's conception of cultural identity as difference.

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British Chinese or British ESEA? Articulating Creativity and Care Across Scales and Disciplines

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Abstract

This position paper advocates for more scholarship on British Chinese and ESEA communities in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. It briefly outlines our vision for future research in relation to visual arts and other forms of creativity but also presents some thoughts that could inspire new research directions for scholars with other disciplinary backgrounds and interests.

Keywords: creativity, care, British Chinese, British ESEA, visual arts

The COVID-19 pandemic brought anti-Asian racism to the fore globally, with the shootings in Atlanta in March 2021 being only the latest and most violent instalment in a much longer history of discrimination and structural exclusion. While media coverage typically focuses on the US, the UK has also seen a spike in hate crimes against East and Southeast Asians since the start of the pandemic. UK police data indicates a 300% rise in hate crimes towards East and Southeast Asians in 2020, as compared to the first quarters of 2018 and 2019 (Clements, 2021). Recent testimonies on podcasts and social media by British East and Southeast Asians (henceforth ESEA) give ample evidence of deep-seated experiences of exclusion and aggression, highlighting that aggression during the pandemic reopened much older wounds.

In this position paper, we encourage more scholarship on British Chinese and ESEA communities on two basic grounds. First, there is a dearth of research on these communities to date (for some notable exceptions dealing with British Chinese communities, see Benton & Gomez, 2008; Francis et al., 2017; Kwan 2020; Thorpe & Yeh, 2018) in comparison to their American counterparts. While comparison with ESEA diasporas globally may be useful, we would caution against the direct application of frameworks derived from the much better documented American experience to the UK context.

Second, as academics currently or until recently based in the UK with long-standing commitments to anti-racism, we feel a moral obligation to understand the experiences of British Chinese/ESEA communities and advocate for equity. Since the start of the pandemic, UK news outlets have paid only belated attention to the racial violence encountered by British Chinese/ESEA communities. However, the media tends to paint these as individual tragedies; it often fails to portray them as an effect of systemic injustices and neglects to show how British Chinese/ESEA communities rallied in response. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated not only hatred, but also community and creativity. On these grounds, we advocate

for research which plays an active and proactive role in collaboration with British Chinese/ESEA communities to showcase and understand the diverse forms of creativity, resilience, empowerment and care these communities enact, and how they evolve in relation to shifting social, political, economic and cultural environments.

Here, we briefly outline our vision for future research but we also hope to present some thoughts that could inspire new research directions for scholars with other disciplinary backgrounds and interests.

The first and most fundamental issue revolves around choices over which category of identification researchers may focus on. We strongly argue that the answer cannot be prescriptive, but needs to be flexible and adapt to its context. The ESEA label, which gained traction around July 2020, can be read as a 'call to action' among East and Southeast Asians (Phung, 2021); communities which are rendered invisible by contemporary Black and Minority Ethnic ("BAME") multiculturalism. This label has been the springboard for the creation of new alliances, movements, and organisations to mobilise British ESEA individuals, including besea.n Covid-19 Anti-Racism Group, End the Virus of Racism, East and Southeast Asian Scotland, ESEA Online Community Hub, and the newly inaugurated ESEA History Month in September.

Recent calls to turn scholarly attention to the newly invigorated category of British ESEA (for instance, Yeh, 2021) have responded proactively to the rise in prominence of this category for identification by focusing on it, as the best scholarship should. There are of course strong reasons for supporting calls for developing wider solidarities and forms of intersectional ally-ship, such as across Chinese, East, and Southeast Asian communities, which we wholeheartedly support. We encourage scholars to develop this research focus further with detailed studies of online and offline coalitions and community organisations, as we have begun doing and hope to continue in the coming months and years.

However, we remain mindful of positionalities and voices that may be erased or side-lined in pursuit of broader networks of solidarity. We encourage scholars to enter this field of research with an open mind as to where, when, why, by whom and with what outcomes the categories British ESEA or Chinese are mobilised. An attention to generational differences and different waves of migration for instance, may yield very insightful results. Kwan's (2020) work is commendable for examining generational differences in the ways in which belonging is articulated among British Chinese living in London. Equally, the mobilising potential of embracing different forms of belonging and identification will vary across a range of sites of representation, including cultural and creative industries (see Yeh 2021), entrepreneurial networks, social media platforms, the visual arts, community centres, and East and Southeast Asian shops and restaurants, which may become loci for community building.

With a geographical and anthropological lens at hand, we would encourage researchers to take seriously the notion of scale. The scale at which belonging is articulated is entwined with choices over the labels employed and the contexts in which they may be mobilised. With the term scale, we refer to every level from individual embodiment to identifications with global diasporic communities, and the many gradations in between. We note, for instance, that the label British ESEA has particular appeal for younger generations as they interact online. Conversely, it may be that older generations who interact less via Instagram and Twitter (though this may be changing) are more closely aligned with the identifications enabled through Chinese community centres (see for example Kwan, 2020). An individual's levels of proficiency in English and in the various ESEA languages plays

an important role in determining how communities are formed too. This may result in older generations remaining keener to identify as British Chinese, while younger generations may align with the broader label British ESEA. We call on scholars to critically interrogate how identification as British Chinese or ESEA, or other emergent and established categories (including BAME), may operate differently at different scales and through different forms of creativity and empowerment.

A related geographical point pertains to the regional focus of research within the UK. We encourage scholars to engage more with community organisations that operate beyond London. There, British Chinese/ESEA communities may face different challenges in light of their relative isolation, the smaller size of those communities, an ageing population, and even more limited resources for community advocacy. The geographical diffusion of British Chinese communities has roots in the catering industry. Competition between family-owned takeaways necessitated that families moved far apart, hindering British Chinese individuals' ability to organise collectively prior to the advent of the internet (Benton & Gomez, 2008). Today, researchers in support of #StopAsianHate should remain cognisant of this history, by attending to communities and organisations outside London. The most productive approach may be to combine an analysis of online mobilisation and creativity with in-depth case studies involving semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldwork. Might it be possible to engage with both newer British ESEA-oriented organisations and decades-old Chinese community centres, which are adapting to changing times? This would allow a productive comparison of how different labels for identification are mobilised in different contexts and with what effects.

The third point revolves around interdisciplinarity. The substantive gap in scholarship on British Chinese/ESEA communities requires more concerted efforts to research these communities in all their complexities and diversities, whether they be in terms of geographical, linguistic, generational, class, sexuality or other differences. Interdisciplinary collaborations would fruitfully combine research methods and approaches. Given our expertise, we pursue a dual focus on anthropology and the visual arts, which illuminates the creative practices of British Chinese/ESEA communities and situates them within a wider social context. That said, we encourage scholars with different specialisms to explore creativity and agency as they are expressed in other fields. Food seems to hold a particularly productive potential (Truong, 2021), also in the visual arts (see Figure 1), but other forms of creativity and empowerment could be equally stimulating.

Figure 1: Yeu-Lai Mo, Foodscape: Tank 3, 2000, lard, hundred-year-old eggs (preserved duck eggs), water, seaweed, lily bulbs, fine vermicelli noodles. Image used with permission. Yeu-Lai Mo's artworks of the early 2000s involved food. What she describes as 'borrowing from the kitchen' saw ingredients used in Chinese fast food, taking up new lives in the display spaces of the contemporary art gallery. Her Foodscape tanks focus attention on the senses, emotions and the body, with a set of references to intergenerational relationships and family memory.

The fourth and final point relates to a participatory approach to research and community involvement. We strongly advocate developing research projects that are meaningful for and committed to empowering the communities with which they engage and which grant them the space to be genuine stakeholders in those projects. Crucially, researchers ought to remain cognisant of the dangers of essentialising or homogenising communities, or taking the voices of some to be representative of all. For this reason, a project that engages a broad range of community members from an embryonic stage could ensure that they also collaborate in envisioning relevant initiatives for community engagement. Bao's (2021) survey of the needs and demands of British ESEA individuals is an inspiration and a resource in this respect. By investigating community needs, researchers can position themselves alongside existing struggles, and ensure that their critique remains constructive. We look forward to a time, hopefully in the near future, when research beyond online mediation and representation can resume through extended in-person interactions to examine how community is articulated and challenged through the transformative potential of embodied and material practices.

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How Can We Talk about China and against Sinophobia without Feeling Guilty, Apologetic or Defensive?

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Abstract

Drawing on our experience as early career researchers who identify as Chinese, we discuss how such an identity has inevitably and unjustifiably come to entrap us in the politics of the great power rivalries of our time. We call for attention to the discrimination against Chinese scholars in the process of academic knowledge production, in particular, in peer review processes.

Keywords: Sinophobia, discrimination, academia, peer review

The COVID pandemic has led to the resurgence of anti-Asian sentiments around the world, adding to the history of Sinophobia that dates back to Sino-Western relations of the colonial era. While 'orientalism' has been lambasted for nearly half a century following Edward Said's (1978) seminal work *Orientalism,* East Asians have remained marginal in global intellectual movements against imperialism, coloniality, and racism.

Against this backdrop, we hope to contextualise, and attempt to address the question of how we can talk about China and against Sinophobia without sounding or feeling guilty, apologetic or defensive. We write from our experiences as early career scholars with the heritage of being Chinese; that is, we identify as Chinese in some form or other, whether in ethnic, cultural, or citizenship terms, or in combination of some or all of the above. It is important to highlight that while we broadly identify as 'Chinese', we feel that such an identity has inevitably and unjustifiably come to entrap us in the politics of the great power rivalries of our time, particularly as they play out in the academic realm. We are thus offering this opinion piece as a critique of the Sinophobic identity politics, explicit as well as covert, conscious as well as unconscious, that have become rampant in our times.

Although we acknowledge the inadequacy of the term 'Chinese' to refer to such a heterogeneous group, we deploy this term as we feel such an identifier constitutes the basis of today's increasing Sinophobic and, by extension, anti-Asian discrimination. As we have seen since the outbreak of COVID-19, hatred directed towards Chinese has resulted in racism against all Asians.

In a dangerous trend towards the politicisation of science, national governments are becoming more cautious in employing scientists with multiple identities, especially if they are seen to be serving two governments simultaneously. This is evident, for example, from Chinese scientists being denied visas for short or long-term visits to the US for academic collaboration (Sharma, 2020), from the presumption of guilt of Chinese American scientists (Toomey & Gorski, 2021) and unfounded accusations laid against scholars associated with Confucius Institutes (Schengenvisainfo News, 2020). While such trends are more obvious in the natural

and applied sciences, we have discovered through our communication with fellow researchers that indirect discrimination against Chinese scholars in the social sciences and humanities has become a recurring feature as well.

Discrimination against Chinese scholars in the process of knowledge production is, of course, not new; it has long been part of the institutional racism that denies the value of knowledge produced by non-Western people (Vukovich, 2012). This history of anti-Chinese discrimination is longstanding and dates back to the Enlightenment philosophers. As a good example, Immanuel Kant, who is commonly upheld as the Enlightenment's foremost philosopher, had the following to say about the Chinese: "Philosophy is not to be found in the whole Orient… Their teacher Confucius teaches in his writings nothing outside a moral doctrine designed for the princes… and offers examples of former Chinese princes… But a concept of virtue and morality never entered the heads of the Chinese… In order to arrive at an idea ... of the good [certain] studies would be required, of which [the Chinese] know nothing." (cited in Ching, 1978: 169).

At best it can be said that this contempt for or disapproval of oriental and other non-Western thought systems is ostensibly based on different criteria of what constitutes valid knowledge. At its worst, it attests to the deep racism and epistemic violence of the European Enlightenment, with talk of 'criteria' merely serving as acceptable 'intellectual' cover for the latter. Kant continues on to state that Confucian morality and philosophy 'are nothing more than a daily mixture of miserable rules that everybody knows already by himself…the entirety of Confucian morals consists of ethical sayings that are intolerable because anyone can rattle them off' (cited in Reihman, 2006: 58).

Today, discrimination against non-Western knowledge production typically occurs in a less overt fashion. Even so, academia has become increasingly hostile. For example, it is not uncommon for Chinese scholars to receive intrusive questions such as "What's your relationship with the Party?" There have also been instances of warnings being issued against works written by Chinese scholars because of their connections with Chinese officials, even when such works have been essential to understanding how Chinese politics work.

As early-career Asian scholars on Chinese affairs, we are particularly affected by the peer review publication process. Implicit discrimination in the publication processes is difficult to detect because the review comments are usually not publicised. It is also difficult to reject as young and early-career scholars have little to gain and too much to lose in protesting against what they feel constitutes implicit discrimination. This is especially the case if the review has already been endorsed by editors since any sort of objection necessarily risks ruining their prospects for publication.

An example of discriminative review feedback starts as follows: "This paper reads as though it is written from a Chinese perspective…," before proceeding to criticise the author's ideas for "resembling Chinese propaganda", being "apologetic or defensive", or "rehabilitating Beijing's position", without giving a convincing argument against the evidence-based paper it is criticising. Cloaked in scholarly peer review, this discrimination reflects the uncritical Enlightenment-based conceit of universalism and its intolerance of non-Western forms of knowledge, as well as the belief that Chinese authors are incapable of thinking independently because of the alleged influence of the Chinese state.

Undeniably, knowledge production in China is heavily influenced by the state, which plays a critical role in guiding research through funding and censorship. However, the conflation of Chinese authors with the Chinese authorities seems to be made too quickly too often, despite the diversities within the imagined community that 'looks' Chinese on paper.

Double-blind review does not prevent reviewers from speculating about the author's national, ethnic, and/or cultural origins through questioning topic selection or the writing style of someone whose first language is not English, and, as a consequence, from making inferences about their intellectual and political orientations.

The post-pandemic world is heavily polarised and divided, and it is a form of intellectual 'laziness' to conflate Chinese people and their beliefs with that of the Chinese authorities (Lee, 2021: 19), to say the least. It makes it easier to dismiss views that people in the West find uncomfortable because of their 'otherness' when they are labelled as 'Chinese propaganda'.

This discrimination is particularly relevant to China Studies. As Daniel F. Vukovich (2012: xii) discusses, writings on China seem to qualify what Edward Said wrote about Orientalism – "not classical, literary types of discourse about an essential other, but a social-scientific, Cold War-inflected writing that is less overtly orientalist and racist and more full of detail. More modernizationist than exoticizing." Whereas classical orientalism stresses difference from the West, Vukovic's argument is that contemporary sinological orientalism emphasises sameness or equivalence and, therefore, the expectation that China will become more like the West in the course of its modernisation.

At any rate, whether the emphasis is on China's difference or sameness, for over several centuries, the "Western imaginary of China" (Lee, 2018: 3) has remained dominant in knowledge production in the Anglophone sphere. It is evident when we look at the institutions where research centres and major contributors to China Studies are based. Reviewing early generations of scholarship on Chinese politics and political culture, Harding (1984), Perry (1994), and Moody (1994) cite primarily scholars based in the West. Early scholarship in this field is replete with "Western sentimental misinterpretations" (Moody, 1994: 734), the essentialist gaze at the 'otherness' of the Chinese polity as something distinct from Western democracies (Harding, 1984: 298). Perry (1994: 708–709) specifically discusses how concepts originated in the West, such as 'civil society', have been applied in a decontextualised way. A few decades on, China Studies is still dominated by leading institutions and journals based in the West, where established paradigms and the heightened ideological tensions of the past few years have made it harder for young scholars to challenge long-standing misconceptions about China.

It should be clear that this paper does not seek to give justification to those wishing to police academia and to deflect criticism. While we acknowledge that diversities exist within the 'West', we also note the conspicuous emergence of a dominant echo-chamber of anti-China sentiments in Western media—sentiments that reflect the international political concerns of Western elites on the one hand and their need to answer to populist constituencies on the other.

How can we talk about China and against Sinophobia without feeling guilty, apologetic, or defensive? The solution we propose is simply that we return to the demand for empirics and evidence: evidence-based research deserves evidence-based criticisms. Recent experience shared by a number of Chinese researchers calls for much more rigorously substantiated criticisms than those that reject a paper simply because it looks too 'Chinese'. The avoidance of such identity-based politics in the production of knowledge is important for ensuring the credibility of all scholarship.

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