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**Articles**

**Drifting Through the Capital: 'Floating' Migrants and Masculinity in Xu Zechen's Fiction**  
-- Pamela Hunt

**Gorbachev's *Glasnost* and the Debate on Chinese Socialism among Chinese Sovietologists, 1985-1999**  
-- Jie Li

**Essays & Notes**

**Taiwanese Media Reform**  
-- Ming-yeh Rawnsley, James Smyth & Jonathan Sullivan

**Taiwan's 2016 Presidential and Legislative Elections**  
-- Jonathan Sullivan & James Smyth

**Book Reviews**

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**Contents**

**Articles**

- Drifting Through the Capital: 'Floating' Migrants and Masculinity in  
 Xu Zechen's Fiction 1  
*Pamela Hunt*
- Gorbachev's *Glasnost* and the Debate on Chinese Socialism among  
 Chinese Sovietologists, 1985-1999 35  
*Jie Li*

**Essays & Notes**

- Taiwanese Media Reform 66  
*Ming-yeh Rawnsley, James Smyth and Jonathan Sullivan*
- Taiwan's 2016 Presidential and Legislative Elections 81  
*Jonathan Sullivan and James Smyth*

**Book Reviews**

- Ifan Williams, *Created in Canton: Chinese Export Watercolours on Pith* (Craig  
*Barclay*) 113
- Yang Chia-Ling and Roderick Whitfield, *Lost Generation: Luo Zhenyu, Qing*  
*Loyalists and the Formation of Modern Chinese Culture* (Marjorie Dryburgh) 115
- Peter Kitson and Robert Markley (eds.), *Writing China Essays on the*  
*Amherst Embassy (1816) and Sino-British Cultural Relations* (Cheng Jin) 118

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## **Drifting through the Capital: “Floating” Migrants and Masculinity in Xu Zechen’s Fiction**

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### **Abstract**

*The figure of the traveller has long been used to explore material and spiritual changes in China. Xu Zechen, an increasingly well-known writer and editor in Beijing, writes of migrants moving from the countryside to the capital city, referred to as his jingpiao (“Drifting through the capital”) series.*

*In these short stories Xu has built up an extensive, complex network of the meanings behind travel and the figure of the traveller. Travel is linked to the image of floating, and is associated with a combination of subversion, marginality, moral agency and the creation of new networks. In this way, Xu’s works continue to explore a series of themes that have preoccupied writers in post-reform China.*

*This article demonstrates this through the close reading of two short stories: “Running through Zhongguancun” and “Xi Xia”. It also shows that, for all of the attempts at subversion, Xu’s male protagonists comply with surprisingly conservative ideals of masculinity. The result of this is that women remain voiceless victims of the city, unable to participate in any of the agency that travel might bring.*

*This article provides the first English-language analysis and close reading of Xu Zechen’s work. It argues that, as we begin to parse out the ways in which travel and travellers feature in contemporary Chinese fiction, we must also take masculinity and its representations into account. More broadly, it stands as an argument for considering constructions and performances of masculinity within any explorations of transgression and agency in Chinese literature, something that has been surprisingly overlooked.*

**Key words:** *Postsocialist fiction; migrant literature; urban literature; mobility; the traveller; agency; morality; masculinity; floating.*

Renewed opportunities for movement must stand as one of the most momentous changes that have taken place in mainland China since economic reforms took off. The effects of these changes—vast waves of migration, a new “floating” population—have become one of the most visible symptoms of postsocialist modernity, a major topic of study and a theme that runs through much of Chinese cultural production, becoming a trope which contributes to an overarching sense of a “Restless China” (Link et al. 2001).

Just as with so much else in postsocialist China, this new development might spell more freedoms, but it also creates precarious new situations; uncertainty and danger arrive alongside liberty and adventure.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, long before reform and opening-up provided China’s citizens with the opportunity to move again, representations of various forms of travel have been a means for authors to survey the trajectory of the nation, a way of exploring the link between the individual and society and a discussion of the development of the self, and an exploration of the possibility of agency (Lee, 1985; Cai, 2004: 127-154). Thus, as Rong Cai has put it, the figure of the traveller “is deeply embedded in the historical imagination of both modern and contemporary China.” (Cai, 2004: 128). Travel in literature and film, then, is a familiar trope which allows authors to explore material and spiritual changes.

Xu Zechen is one such author who shows a preoccupation with new modes of travel in China, and the ways in which this reflects vast changes in the country over recent decades. Born in 1978, he personally experienced the journey from countryside to city as he moved from his hometown in Jiangsu to Beijing to study at Peking University. He is now editor of *People’s Literature* magazine (*Renmin wenxue*), and is an acclaimed author; his work is often praised as providing honest depictions of the instability of contemporary China, and compassionate explorations of the inner lives of China’s more vulnerable citizens (Shao, 2007; Ma & Suo, 2008; Jiang, 2009). While he is increasingly well-known within China, however, there are no existing studies of his writing within English-language academia.<sup>2</sup> Xu is best known for a series of short

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the definition(s) of postsocialism, and the anxieties and opportunities that this new condition has wrought, see Lu, 2007; McGrath, 2010; Hockx, 2015:12–18.

<sup>2</sup> Xu’s growing acclaim is evidenced by the number of literary prizes he has been awarded. Most recently he was awarded the Lao She Literary Prize in August 2014 for his novel

stories that critics have given the title *jingpiao*, a term that could be translated as ‘drifting through the capital’, and which are tales of migrant workers who move from the countryside to Beijing. His characters are almost invariably flushed with a kind of travel fever. As he has put it:

[My characters] always want to go, to leave, to drift. To use a popular and rather clichéd expression, they are always “on the road”... They never want to stay within their prescribed limits, always wanting to “go” (Huang, 2009: 111).

As this quotation might suggest, and as this article will discuss, Xu’s interest in migrant workers is not solely an attempt to document a social phenomenon. Rather, the rhetoric of leaving and drifting in Xu’s works appears to stand as a means of exploring broader, vital, questions that run through contemporary China: about freedom and agency, social responsibility, and ways of existing in a fast-moving, and ever-globalizing world. In going, they move beyond their ‘prescribed limits’, and as such, travel implies an act of agency, especially oppositional agency.<sup>3</sup> By extension, writing about travel becomes a way of exploring the nature and possibility of transgression.

In this article I will trace the way in which the idea of leaving, drifting, and pushing beyond prescribed limits is explored through Xu’s stories of travellers, and in the process will demonstrate the inherent complexity of such topics in contemporary China. Xu’s stories reveal the manifold, and often contradictory, ways in which topics such as movement, agency and transgression can be delineated in fiction, as they criss-cross with other pressing concerns: urbanisation and the market economy, the breakdown of old networks and construction of new ones, and troubled gender relations.

It is this last element that I will particularly consider in this article. It is especially striking that Xu’s stories of migrants focus almost entirely on a male protagonist and tend to equate movement only with men. Many studies have

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*Jerusalem (Yelusaleng)* and, in the same year, the Lu Xun Short Story Prize for his story “If We are Snowed In” (“Ruguo daxue fengmen”).

<sup>3</sup> I employ the word ‘agency’ here as meaning ‘acting on the world...in a way that furthers one’s values and purposes’ (Knight, 2006:15).

pointed to the way that mobility is invariably gendered, while a longstanding discursive tradition within China equates travel with masculinity (Mann, 2000; Huang, 2007; Mahler & Pessar, 2003, 2006; Cresswell & Uteng, 2012). Equally, this article will demonstrate how even as Xu Zechen's tales focus on the image of the traveller to explore the effects of postsocialist modernity, they also demonstrate the ways in which gender cuts insistently into all of this, colouring any exploration of agency or transgression that might appear in his works. There has been a notable dearth of studies of Chinese masculinity in post-1989 literature.<sup>4</sup> This article argues that, as we begin to parse out the ways in which travel and travellers feature in contemporary Chinese fiction, we must also take masculinity and its representations into account. More broadly, it stands as an argument for considering constructions and performances of masculinity within any explorations of transgression and agency in Chinese literature.

I will first lay out ways in which migration and travel might be approached within the context of postsocialist China. I will then discuss an essay by Xu as a starting point for his approach to the figure of the traveller, since the scene that he depicts in this essay acts as a template, introducing the major themes that appear in his short stories: mobility, transgression, morality and masculinity. After this, I will provide a close reading of two short stories as case studies: "Running through Zhongguancun" ("Paobu chuanguo Zhongguancun") and "Xi Xia".<sup>5</sup> By focusing closely on just two stories, we can consider the full richness of his texts, and their complexities—the ambivalences, the paradoxes—that appear as the author tackles the subject of mobility and migrants in the postsocialist city, as well as the ways in which the question of masculinity cuts across it. I ask: what is the meaning of mobility for Xu Zechen's travellers? What does the traveller reveal to us about the relationship between self and society, and individual agency in a postsocialist world? How do constructions of masculinity cut into the narratives of mobility?

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<sup>4</sup> For examples of studies of masculinity in modern Chinese literature before 1989 see Zhong, 2000; Lu, 1995; Louie 2002.

<sup>5</sup> These short stories were first published in the following publications: "Paobu chuanguo Zhongguancun" in 2007 in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* 1 and "Xi Xia" in 2005 in *Shan hua* 5. They were then collected into a book published by Chongqing daxue chubanshe in 2008. The following references will come from this later collection (Xu, 2008b).



I will argue that the narrative of these travellers—and the rhetoric of floating in particular—is in fact a multifaceted, occasionally paradoxical study. Xu’s depiction of the traveller is tied to themes of marginality, transgressive agency, morality and the creation of new networks. However, he also explores these themes in a way that emphasises traditional roles of masculinity. The result is a surprisingly conservative exploration of the “floating” migrant, which reserves agency for men alone.

### **Mobility and China**

As I have suggested, Xu’s *jingpiao* stories go beyond an intention to document migration or life in the city, and are written within a broader tradition of journeys and the traveller in Chinese literature. For this reason, it is useful to consider his stories within a comprehensive framework of mobility, and under the general theme not just of migration but of travel, the corporeal movement of people “for work, leisure, family life, pleasure, migration and escape” (Urry, 2002: 28). I follow Cresswell’s understanding of mobility—rather than movement—as “socially produced motion...imbued with meaning and power” (Cresswell, 2006: 3–4). As Cresswell and Uteng note, these meanings “given to mobility through narrative, discourse and representation have...been clearly differentiated by gender” and, equally, “narratives of mobility and immobility play a central role in the constitution of gender as a social and cultural construct.” (Cresswell & Uteng, 2012: 2). Gender thus both constitutes and is constituted by mobility, a vital thread in narratives of journeys.

The trope of travel in Xu’s work is constructed against the backdrop of the momentous changes that have taken place in terms of population movement in China. Migration and rural-urban relations, most commentators agree, have been one of the most pressing social issues in the PRC since the opening-up reforms commenced, and there has been a vast amount of scholarship on this topic (Williams, 2010: 41; Iredale & Guo, 2015; Yan, 2008).<sup>6</sup> It is not the purpose of this article to provide a detailed analysis of the situation, nor do I intend to chart whether Xu’s literary representations are a fully accurate

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<sup>6</sup> According to the 2010 census, the size of the floating population has swelled to over 261 million (Zhu et al., 2015: 48)

representation of the Chinese migrant/traveller experience. Nevertheless, the debates that surround the issue of migration surely inform Xu's depictions, and will inevitably affect how we as readers react to his work. It is thus necessary briefly to consider rural-urban migration, the floating population and general travel in contemporary Chinese discourse, before considering Xu's own literature.

In his survey of mobility in modern Western societies, Cresswell observes that rhetoric surrounding mobility is ambiguous: an act that is presented as positive and threatening at the same time (Cresswell, 2006: 1–2). Equally, discourse surrounding the migrant traveller in contemporary China is highly contradictory. On the one hand, the migrant is often presented in public rhetoric as the “hero” and role model of the modern Chinese world, as he or she forms part of the “labour army” vital for economic development (Lin, 2013: 2). At the same time, however, migrant workers are also widely considered a “major problem” in China's cities, presented as foreign, subaltern or marginalised beings at best, and “dirty, uncivilised and backwards” at worst (Lin, 2013: 2, 30–32; Dutton, 1998: 8–10, 78–80). When it comes to describing the migrants, it is striking that public rhetoric tends to employ phrases that connote drifting or floating, using in particular the word *liu* (*liulang*, *mangliu*, *piaoliu*, *liumang*), or *piaobo*. These phrases are used by commentators and the migrants themselves, frequently in a pejorative sense (Dutton, 1998: 78; Link et al., 2001: 279).<sup>7</sup> As is evident in his comment quoted above, and as I will explore further later on, Xu also engages with this discourse of floating.<sup>8</sup> However, the images of drifting or floating in his work are not simply pejorative, but take on a more nuanced tone: words that connote rootlessness are employed to capture the exhilaration and adventure combined with the loss and instability that migrants face. The sensation of floating not only reflects the material uncertainties, but also conjures up more broadly the

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<sup>7</sup> However, as Dutton has observed, the terms are rather inaccurate: *mangliu*, or “to drift blindly”, for example, belies the fact that “there is nothing blind in the travels of these people”, who come to the city with the very specific purpose of finding work and earning a wage (Dutton, 1998: 8).

<sup>8</sup> Besides the short stories analysed here, floating appears in a number of his other works, including “We Met in Beijing” (“Women zai Beijing xiangyu”) (2009) “Ah, Beijing” (“A, Beijing”) (2008) and “I've Been on the Road these Past Few Years” (“Zhe xie nian wo yizhi zai lu shang”) (2009). See also Jiang, 2009 and Shao, 2007.

psychological effects of travel and life in the city. In this way, Xu's imagery brings to mind Marshall Berman's oft-cited depiction of the maelstrom of modernity, characterized by the promise of adventure and joy as well as the threat of disintegration, in which "all that is solid melts into air" (Berman, 1983).<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, Xu writes within the context of the phenomenon of the floating population, highlighting the particular difficulties that rural-to-urban migrant workers face, adopting (and adapting) much of the common terminology associated with them. We might also set Xu's narratives against the more general upsurge in movement in post-reform China—whether it be migration, emigration, business travel or tourism—which is woven into the very fabric of post-reform China, closely linked to the discourse of modernization (Sun, 2002; Notar, 2006; Nyíri, 2010). As Nyíri (2010) has put it, mobility prompts Chinese subjects to "negotiate their position as a modern subject" (163). As already noted above, journeys have long been of "representational interest" in modern Chinese literature as well (Cai, 2004: 130). Leo Ou-Fan Lee (1985) has traced the figure of the solitary traveller from the late Qing period to the Maoist era, from the scholarly, late Qing traveller to the May Fourth sojourner whose ideological and cultural alienation is reflected in his anxious journey, to the revolutionary traveller, happily taking the "pilgrimage along the road to socialism" (305). All of these examples reveal the tendency to equate traveling with an exploration of the self and of the link between individual and society, and as a response to the upheavals—internal and external—of modern life. Continuing this research, Cai has shown how post-Mao literary representations of the lonely traveller also appeared as a response to new discursive systems, combined with new modes of travel and socioeconomic upheaval. For Cai, as with Lee, literary representations of journeys are a symbolic act of progression which mirrors the "national journey of China" and is also representative of the "individual's vertiginous experience" (Cai, 2004: 130). Cai goes on to consider how the figure of the traveller and authorial representation of the self tie into the issue of agency. With reference to the 1980s fiction of Yu Hua and Zhaxi Dawa, Cai argues that journeying, in fact, "testifies to the inability of the self to exercise its active agency" (133). As will

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<sup>9</sup> I am indebted to Sabina Knight for this observation.

become clear, I argue the opposite when it comes to Xu Zechen's narratives, which demonstrate how a journey from countryside to city, whilst perilous and lonely at times, leads to an assertion of various forms of agency.

A final element of this context worth considering now is the historical link between masculinity and mobility in China. Susan Mann (2000) and Martin Huang (2007) have both detailed how, for centuries, extensive travel was generally restricted to men while women—elite or commoner—remained in the home. Sojourning also relied on male networks; it was a male occupation which served to further reinforce the importance of homosocial bonds. Thus male friendship and male travel has a long cultural history in China.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, literary representations of decisively male travellers abound; take, for example, the figure of the *youxia* (knight-errant), or the figure of the *haohan* (“good fellow”), both immortalised in such classics as *Water Margin* and both long-standing cultural ideals of masculinity. Such figures would typically roam on the margins of society, far from the reach of the authorities, relying on their own personal codes of morality and honour.<sup>11</sup> As we will see, echoes of these archetypes appear in Xu's fiction.

This all stands as the broader context to Xu's stories; in considering Xu's depiction of migrants in Beijing, we might approach their mobility as socially produced motion constituted by, and constituting, gender. We might also take into account the experience of rising migration—and travel in general—in the PRC, which not only ushers in immense socioeconomic change but also becomes a means of negotiating the postsocialist condition, and one's position within it. Combined with this, we must also consider the literary tradition, which utilises the narrative of mobility to explore national change, the development of the self and the possibility of agency, alongside discursive traditions which associate certain archetypal masculinities with mobility.

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<sup>10</sup> Of course, this is not to say that female travellers do not exist in China, only that there is a strong tradition of equating travel with masculinity and male bonds; for a study of the female migrant experience, see Pun, 2005 and Yan, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> For studies of the *haohan* and the *youxia*, and their continuing relevance today, see Liu, 1967; Jenner, 1998; Louie, 2002: 78–97; Song & Hird, 2013: 46,47,197.

*“Going Out Into the World”: Xu Zechen’s Travellers*

I will now take as an example a discussion of travel and the traveller from one of Xu’s essays, first published in 2011 in a collection titled *Going Out into the World*. The essay stands as a useful illustration of his specific approach to this topic, and an introduction to the major themes of his literature, which will be unpacked in more detail in the final section of this article. In his essay, Xu describes to the reader a scene that, he says, has played on his mind for years. It is of a young man, standing on the edge of a small town at dusk, watching a train that pulls into the station and then leaves again, racing off into the distance (Xu, 2011b: 1). The young man desperately wants to go with it, “far, further, further still”, but he knows he cannot. It is a scene seeped in the longing to travel and to move beyond his normal bounded life, an impulse that Xu calls “the secret desire to go out into the world.” (Xu, 2011b: 1). Just as this image has haunted Xu Zechen, the emotion behind it pervades virtually all of his writing.<sup>12</sup> Desiring to go out into the world, moreover, is inherently tied up with rebellion; journeying away from home, Xu writes elsewhere, can symbolize an unfettered way of thinking, an exploration of “limitless possibilities”. More than this, it prompts a “reaction against and subversion of life as we know it today” (Xu, 2012). Xu has stated that his migrants’ travels are a form of rebellion against the pressures of society, in particular against the expectations that people face in terms of social responsibility, education, and work in today’s China (Xu, 2013).

The image of a young boy standing on the outer edge of a small town also hints at another preoccupation of Xu’s fiction—the experiences and the desires of those on the margins of society. Xu is known for writing stories about *bianyuan ren*, a term that I shall translate here as “marginal people”, and that, following Xu’s own understanding of the word, incorporates not only economically and socially disadvantaged groups, but also those who feel a certain opposition to what are perceived to be mainstream values and rules (Xu, 2013). Xu’s *jingpiao* protagonists live on the margins in all of these senses. They come from the countryside – as in the case of his young boy on the rural platform, on the edge of a rural town—and even as they move to the city, they

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<sup>12</sup> Besides the *jingpiao* stories, other words by Xu that centre around the longing to travel include *Night Train* (*Ye huo che*) (2009) and *Jerusalem* (*Yelusaling*) (2014).

continue to live on its fringes, holding a rural *hukou* that also leaves them in a socioeconomically marginalised position. All of Xu's protagonists live on the so-called "lower rungs" of society: they are prostitutes, pirated DVD sellers, unlicensed taxi drivers and so on. Working illegally in the capital, they are accustomed to having to circumvent rules. Life on the margins, then, prompts the same kind of adventure and subversion that travel implies. Yet, for all his romantic yearning for mobility, travel to and life in Beijing is by no means a wholly positive experience in Xu Zechen's *jingpiao* stories; the excitement and freedom brought by travel to the city are accompanied by rootlessness, loneliness, and loss. This is why the imagery of floating is so apt for Xu's fiction, a reflection of the doubled-edged sword that is greater mobility in contemporary China.

Some of the elements that Xu appears to associate with the act of "going out into the world" in this scene do not match with what a reader encounters in his fiction. One clear paradox lies in the emphasis on the idea of the individual. The boy staring at the train is alone, and he dreams, we are led to believe, of solitary travel.<sup>13</sup> If we remember that Xu has argued that the impetus to leave is to escape social responsibilities and expectations, then it is perhaps not surprising that his characters seek a solitary, unburdened lifestyle. We might also see this emphasis on solitude as a reflection on the breakdown of social ties in China. Postsocialist reforms, as many commentators have observed, have severed networks that had existed in earlier times (Kleinman et al., 2011: 19–20; Visser, 2010: 259–260; Knight, 2006). Institutional and ideological changes have spelled the end of the collectivist structure, and with it the end of the collective network, with a new emphasis on the individual in society over familial or state ties, a condition that the new mobility reinforces (Kleinman et al., 2011: 2). As Xu Zechen says of the friends who have inspired his characters, "they are entirely alone", with neither family nor friends in the city before they arrive there themselves. (Xu, 2011: 16). However, this picture does not, in fact, fit with the stories that emerge from Xu's *jingpiao* works. Journeys might be undertaken alone, but they lead invariably to new

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<sup>13</sup> This is in keeping with traditional dealings with travel in Chinese literature; see Lee (1985). Although, strikingly, this contrasts with what sociologists have observed of the realities of rural-urban migration, where there is much emphasis placed on continuing ties to the former village and to fellow villagers within the city (Wu et al, 2013: 100–120; Dutton, 1998: 79).

connections. One of the main narratives of these stories is that of the development of responsibility for others, and the creation of new relationships between two individuals, normally between two drifters.<sup>14</sup> They are relationships based on the precarious new lives that these people lead, on the loneliness they are prone to feel, and on a personal sense of morality.

As such, the agency that characters find and express in Xu's *jingpiao* stories is not simply one bound up with a transgressive desire to travel. It is also a moral agency that is exercised when a person realizes his ability, and desire, to help other people. Sabina Knight (2006) shows how ethical dilemmas and moral agency have dominated Chinese fiction for at least the last century. She demonstrates how this preoccupation has taken on a new hue since China's economic reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, with some fiction revealing a "troubled yet enduring relationship to Confucian or Enlightenment ideals of social responsibility and progress toward justice and human dignity" (Knight, 2006: 223). These ideals, which Knight describes variously as compassion, loyalty, and "human-heartedness", work to "contest the determinism of free market capitalist fundamentalism" (223). Robin Visser (2010) also notes that literature in the 1990s began to explore the ethical quandaries that citizens of China were placed in as the opening-up reforms gathered pace. Market reforms had created a situation where "altruism, or the aspiration to a 'higher' ideal than pure self interest, is considered irrational behaviour"(259). These are values that clash with the "shadows" of socialist and Confucian ethics, which advocated the sacrifice of the self for the benefit of society. Thus authors began to write works that were, "permeated with questions of individual morality and 'ultimate concerns'" (263).

Xu's work continues this preoccupation with the problem of social responsibility in a new world, as I will discuss in more detail in the case studies below. The moral agency that I identify in Xu's work is born out of this new mobility. Presented as it is as emerging from the margins and in opposition to the demands of the market, it ties into Xu's interest in transgression and marginality in contemporary Chinese society. As such, I concur with Knight's assertion that an exploration of moral agency has "important philosophical

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<sup>14</sup> These themes of morality, responsibility and spiritual connection have also been identified by Chinese readers of Xu's fiction. See for example Ma & Suo, 2008; Jiang, 2009; Zhang, 2008.

implications and even political significance” (Knight, 2006: 19). I suggest, as Knight has also hinted, that a deliberate exercising of moral agency in the face of the hegemony of consumer capitalism can work as an act of resistance (222–223). As we shall see, Xu’s characters not only question the “logic” of the free market, but also, by opening themselves up to close human connections within the vast and lonely city of Beijing, seek to resist the logical outcome of urbanization in China today.

Let us return now to the scene from Xu’s essay, and consider a final element: the person watching the trains is male. The gender of Xu’s travellers might appear at first rather inconsequential—and it is indeed a detail that critics and readers have thus far failed to comment upon—yet, as we consider the discursive links between Chinese masculinity and mobility, then it is apparent that the gender of Xu’s travellers is a detail worth exploring further. This becomes all the more evident when we see that Xu’s *jingpiao* stories focus particularly on the male traveller. From the young boy in the small town to the young men who drift through Beijing, men dominate Xu’s fictional journeys; it is the men who want to move, to adventure, to subvert. The overwhelming majority of women in Xu’s fiction either remain at home or are in Beijing but are still associated with domesticity. Additionally, it is clear that the stories reveal a consistent, and perhaps at first rather surprising, return to conservative male images, even as their characters are in a self-consciously marginal position and even as they seem to seek adventure and engage in a free-floating subversion.

In this way Xu’s male characters recall the figure of the marginalised man, first formulated by Connell in his framework of Hegemonic Masculinity, and which can help us conceptualise this seemingly odd position (Connell, 1993, 1998, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Understanding masculinity as plural, fluid, hierarchically arranged and in large part defined by interactions between men, Connell determined the presence of four loose groupings—or, as later reformulations put it, discursive strategies—of men within a specific culture: hegemonic, marginalised, subordinate, and complicit (Connell, 2005; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). While hegemonic masculinity was the currently “most honoured way of being a man” within a given culture and period, marginalised masculinity referred to those who, due to class or race, cannot



live up to the most ideal modes of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 836).<sup>15</sup> However, crucially, this marginalised position inspires feelings of anxiety and powerlessness; this in turn prompts men to engage in behaviours that are associated with men in more dominant positions, or with pre-existing cultural archetypes which ostensibly signify the ideal man. That is to say, socioeconomically marginalised men often engage in behaviour that overtly complies with some hegemonic norms of masculinity, ultimately benefitting from, and contributing to, what Connell refers to as the “patriarchal dividend”, which is “the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women” (Connell, 2005: 79).

Xu’s characters exhibit the same paradoxical condition of marginality combined with an eventual claim to the patriarchal dividend. As well as being marginalised in a socioeconomic sense, they mirror the figure of the marginalised man in their initial anxiety about gender roles. Xu’s protagonists are markedly anxious in their masculine performances; there are constant debates, with themselves, with others, about whether they are behaving as a man ought. In this we can perhaps discern echoes of a wider cultural phenomenon, of a so-called “crisis of masculinity” in contemporary China (Zhong, 2000: 15-17, 46-51; Yang, 2010; Song & Hird, 2013: 9,11,126-127).<sup>16</sup> Yet, amidst their uncertainties, their self-consciously marginalised identity and even their deliberate attempts at moving beyond prescribed boundaries, Xu’s protagonists repeatedly return to pre-existing ideals of archetypal masculinity within the Chinese context, emphasising, for example, the sanctity of male friendship, the masculine imperative of striking out on one’s own, and, paradoxically, their role as provider for, and saviour of, women.<sup>17</sup> The result of

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<sup>15</sup> Although Connell refers here to a singular “way”, reformulations of this theory point to multiple coexisting models of ideal masculinity within a given time and culture (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Chen, 1999; Beasley, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Changing state policy, economic reforms, interaction with the wider world and the growth of a variety of “competing discourses” of masculinity have prompted a widespread sense of Chinese men as either broken, lost or confused (Yang, 2010; Song & Hird, 2013: 10). The “crisis”, as many of the above cited studies have noted, is more perceived than actual.

<sup>17</sup> In this way, Xu’s male characters continue a trend identified by Zhong Xueping in her seminal study of the “besieged” male writer of the 1980s, reeling in the face of immense change, anxiously seeking membership of the modern world, and concerned about perceived national and cultural weaknesses. This, combined with a sense of male “crisis”, prompted

this, as I will argue in the following readings, is that women remain objects that need to be protected or saved, victims of migration, rather than agents grasping their own destiny in their own hands.

Travel and the figure of the traveller in Xu's short stories therefore hold within them a great network of different themes and discourses, to be tested and realised as his travellers move: adventure and transgression; freedom and rootlessness; self-sufficiency and social responsibility. These themes stand against the backdrop not just of increased travel but also on-going, anxious explorations of moral agency and "ultimate concerns" in a postsocialist China. There are a wealth of studies that have considered how these themes have appeared in post-1990s Chinese literature (Cai 2004; McGrath 2010; Knight 2006; Visser 2010). None of them, however, has considered in detail how the representation of male characters cuts across these topics. The following readings will suggest that masculinity, mobility and agency are themes that are closely linked together, and that Xu's stories of travel must also be considered against the backdrop of marginalised men, a perceived "crisis" of masculinity, and the continuing resonance of historic cultural ideals of manhood. I will now turn to two of Xu's short stories to explore in greater detail how these many themes interact within the figure of the traveller, and what this might mean for the questions I asked at the beginning of this article: what is the meaning of mobility for Xu's travellers; what does the traveller reveal to us about the relationship between the self and society, and individual agency in a postsocialist world; how do constructions of masculinity cut into narratives of mobility?

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male writers to express a strong sense of marginalization; yet this was in turn marked by a strong desire to "return to the centre" and to search for a "real male identity" (Zhong, 2000:22).

*“Running through Zhongguancun”*

“Running through Zhongguancun” follows the experience of Dunhuang, a man in his twenties from the countryside, who has moved to Beijing.<sup>18</sup> It is worth first outlining the plot, which is rather convoluted yet captures well the way in which travel leads both to a sense of instability and the creation of new connections in the city. At the start of the story, Dunhuang has just been released from prison after serving time for selling fake certificates. Heading straight back to Beijing, he meets and moves in with Xia Xiaorong, a woman who sells pirated DVDs for a living but who longs to return home to the countryside. Dunhuang takes up the same trade as her, hoping to raise enough money to get his friend Bao Ding out of jail. In the meantime, he also searches for, and finds, Bao Ding’s girlfriend Qi Bao, having promised Bao Ding he would look after her. Dunhuang and Qi Bao eventually become an item, until it is revealed that Qi Bao, unbeknownst to Dunhuang, has been working as a prostitute. The story concludes with a group of policemen chasing Xiaorong’s boyfriend for selling pornographic DVDs. Dunhuang, not wanting the now pregnant Xiaorong to be left alone, takes the blame. As he is arrested, Qi Bao calls to reveal that she is pregnant too. The story presents, on the face of things, a picture of agency curtailed. However, I argue that a muted optimism is threaded through the tale; “Running through Zhongguancun” might be read as a miniature coming-of-age story, as Dunhuang’s journey to the capital shows an emotional maturation and a developing sense of morality.<sup>19</sup>

The story opens with a sandstorm, a visual manifestation of Xu’s favoured motif of drifting. Sandstorms punctuate the rest of the narrative, alongside a series of other images of floating: steam rising in a crowded hotpot restaurant; Beijing dust which pervades every inch of the city, sometimes hanging suspended in mid-air; or a recurring dream Dunhuang has of a friend fluttering away off a bridge (192,196). Dunhuang starts off as a carefree young man, as

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<sup>18</sup> The story was recently translated into English by Eric Braahamsen under the title “Running through Beijing” (Xu, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> This matches Hua Li’s description of a Chinese Bildungsroman (*chengzhang xiaoshuo*) as a narrative which includes “setting out on a journey...ordeal by love, and the search for a vocation and a philosophy of life. Its aspect of inward reflection deals mostly with individual subjectivity along with emotional and cognitive maturation.” (Li, 2007: 31).

wild and as uninhibited as the sand and dust that blow about him. “I’m out”, he exclaims in the opening lines, and then leaps on to the next passing truck, saying, “Take me anywhere, as long as you get me into Beijing” (Xu, 2008c: 120). Much of the first part of the story sees him rambling aimlessly through the city; but while he is perfectly content at first, the freedom that this brings morphs into a profound sense of not belonging, as he feels “on the outermost edge of the world”, clinging on like a “hateful tumour” (150).<sup>20</sup> When he finds himself homeless for a couple of evenings, Beijing’s sandstorms, which had earlier reflected his free-spiritedness, have now become a force he cannot reckon with:

He walked through wind, stopping and starting, his mouth filling with grains of sand...He felt as if his body was getting lighter and lighter...If it wasn’t for the three bags he was shouldering he felt like he might be carried up into the air (Xu, 2008b: 152).

It is a scene that underlines the fine line between a joyous freedom and an alarming lack of control over one’s life. Mistaken for a beggar the next morning, Dunhuang experiences a momentary loss of identity:

On the corner he passed a convex traffic mirror. He looked into it and saw a self he did not recognise. His whole face and head was covered in dust. Tracks ran down his face from where he had cried. It looked as if he was wearing some kind of face paint. His hair had turned completely grey...if he wasn’t a vagrant then what was he? If he wasn’t a beggar then what was he? (154).

Mobility, here, appears to bring about an almost entire negation of the self. However, as the tale progresses, Dunhuang is able to establish a far more confident identity, and to assert his own agency within the city. He begins to

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<sup>20</sup> While this serves to emphasize the outsider stance that migrant workers often inhabit within the city, the metaphor of the tumour has also served in Chinese literature to highlight a general sense of alienation amidst urbanites and a “postsocialist subjective experience”. See, for example, McGrath’s analysis of Zhu Wen’s 1990s fiction (McGrath, 2010: 88–91).

rely on himself in a more mature way, and starts to take responsibility for the fate of others. This responsibility is framed through the role of either male-as-provider or the loyal male friend.

Dunhuang's changing attitude towards Xia Xiaorong is a case in point: his first encounters with her reveal him to be a feckless young man, unsure of his own position at first and repeatedly wrong-footed by her attempts to strike up a more personal connection with him when all of his interactions with people in the city up to this point have been "transactions conducted for the sake of money" (124). He quickly realises, though, that she can be a source of food, drink, cash and shelter (124). Even as this setup appears to subvert usual gender roles, it is striking that Xiaorong emphasises immediately, and repeatedly through the narrative, that she longs to return to her own hometown, get married, and have children. Thus the longstanding equation of woman as domestic and man as traveller is a starting point for their friendship.<sup>21</sup>

It is not too long, however, before Dunhuang starts to establish a form of self-sufficiency, selling his own DVDs separately from Xiaorong, and bringing back food for her because "he did not want to become her responsibility" (147). This is the beginning of Dunhuang's life as an agent. He is not only "free", but focused, no longer the feckless drifter we saw at the beginning of the story:

He felt refreshed and revitalized, as if he had just come out of the bath...The most important thing was that he had started again as an entrepreneur, which meant that he had started a new life in Beijing. He was doing this for himself. He repeated those words to himself incessantly, hoping to instil himself with confidence (144).

This connection between entrepreneurship, freedom and power runs through much of the discourse surrounding postsocialist Chinese society (McMillan, 2009: 16). As we will see, Xu Zechen problematizes the idea that

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<sup>21</sup> This is a pattern repeated in a number of Xu's works. See, for example, "Ah Beijing" ("A, Beijing"), in which the male character Bian Hongqi is drawn to the capital city while his long-suffering wife waits for him to return to their rural home (Xu, 2008a).

entrepreneurial activity is a source of untrammelled freedom, but Dunhuang's plans are presented as at least promising some kind of agency. It is also worth noting that entrepreneurship in postsocialist China is particularly associated with new forms of masculinity.<sup>22</sup> In "Running through Zhongguancun", Xiaorong highlights this very point, when, hearing that Dunhuang wants to sell his own DVDs, she complains, "men are all the same. You all want to go your own way, work alone, and cast the women aside" (143).

However, it is not true that Dunhuang's actions are conducted entirely for himself, nor is Xiaorong's accusation that he is "casting her aside" completely fair. Dunhuang's self-sufficiency very soon develops into a desire to help and protect others, including Xiaorong. By the end of the story, he is so concerned for her welfare that he risks returning to prison for her and her unborn baby (221). He also shows concern for one of his DVD clients, a woman he barely knows, running over to her apartment when he has not heard from her for a while (193).<sup>23</sup> It is significant that neither of these acts hides a sexual motive; Dunhuang has become a man who acts purely out of a sense of concern for another human being, it would seem. However, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that his successful transformation still remains complicit with traditional gender roles. He acts as the provider in order to protect women, in line with a widely received wisdom of post-reform China that it is always the man's responsibility to take care of economic burdens within a social unit (McMillan, 2009: 15–16; Evans, 2002; Song & Hird, 2013: 135–7).

This relationship between moral agency, friendship, and traditional gender roles can be further explored in the relationship between Dunhuang, his incarcerated friend Bao Ding, and his girlfriend Qi Bao. Recalling *haohan* ideals which present male bonds as sacrosanct, held in higher esteem than government law, Dunhuang's friend Bao Ding had willingly taken the blame when they were arrested for certificate fraud. Bao Ding is therefore still in prison; as a result, Dunhuang feels an immense debt to Bao Ding, deciding

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, the words of an entrepreneur in E.L. Zhang's study, who stated that, "When I worked for a state-run business in the past, I acted like a *taijin* (eunuch)! Only since I started my own business have I gained my own independent personality." (Zhang, 2001: 235).

<sup>23</sup> The woman is housebound, offering us another image of a mobile man contrasted with a static, domestic, woman.

early on in the narrative to save up all of his money to get him out of jail. Therefore Dunhuang chooses to sell pornographic DVDs, which can be sold for a higher price but would earn him a far greater fine or sentence if raided by the police. This reveals an intriguing, slightly subversive take on the values that a neoliberal market is supposed to instil in someone. He might be economically and socially marginalised, but Dunhuang in “Running through Zhongguancun” must still negotiate the neoliberal market, and its influence on human relationships. As Knight notes, “Risk-taking, gambling, outsmarting others, and hardnosed ‘pragmatism’ all connote hallowed capitalist values”, while the free market system assumes that all human beings are fundamentally “self-seeking” (Knight, 2006: 224). What is interesting about Dunhuang’s engagement with the new economic system is that he is indeed complying with these values, but not for his own personal gain. Whilst utilizing the options—fraudulent and highly risky—available to him in a postsocialist China, Dunhuang upends them by doing so to help a friend.

As he chooses to engage with the economy in this way, Dunhuang’s actions appear as a form of moral agency; at the same time, this morality is in defiance of the values that a capitalist economy is supposed to instil in one. As such, these acts also establish an attitude towards the market economy which is ambivalent, or even subversive. Another significant facet of Dunhuang’s actions lies in the fact that he does this specifically to help his “brother” out of prison; it is, therefore, an agency that emphasizes again the importance of *haohan*-inflected homosocial bonds. In a revealing scene, Dunhuang responds to a girlfriend’s complaint that he is wasting his time attempting to save money for Bao Ding. He responds, simply, “Women will never understand men’s business” (Xu, 2008b: 204). Recalling Connell’s marginalised masculinities, Dunhuang seeks to rise above his socioeconomic subordinate position and reassert his own masculine authority, through recourse to a set of expected behaviours – as breadwinner and loyal friend.

As well as earning and saving money for his friend, Dunhuang takes on another task. This is to find Bao Ding’s girlfriend for him, a young, lively, woman called Qi Bao. Dunhuang is unsure at first at how to find her, as he has only ever seen the back of her clearly; then he realises that he remembers her “pretty nice behind”, and he could probably tell Qi Bao’s behind from anyone

else's (133, 172). Deciding to look for her, Dunhuang begins a long period of staring at women who pass him on the street. It is a neat picture of the kind of social connection that exists in Xu Zechen's Beijing: tangential, or heavily reliant on chance, and on first impressions rather fragile. It also creates a situation whereby women are reduced to just one part of their bodies:

For the next few days he looked at countless bottoms. Big ones, small ones, fat ones and thin. Round ones, flat ones, developed ones and undeveloped ones, shapely ones and unshapely ones. He looked until his vision blurred, until, when he closed his eyes, he thought he could still see two fleshy objects undulating in front of him (172).

Ma Ji and Suo Luo have argued that Dunhuang's willingness to look for Qi Bao, all for his friend in prison, is an indication of the morality at the heart of Xu Zechen's work (Ma & Suo, 2008:172). It is indeed possible to read this as a positive affirmation of the importance, and continued possibility, of a strong and lasting male friendship. It is also apparent that this positive exploration of *haohan* camaraderie results in a denial of agency to women in the story. In this formulation, the two humans that connect are two men. Qi Bao is objectified on a number of counts: she becomes an object to be protected while her man is imprisoned; she is an object to be gazed upon, and she is reduced to a fragmentation of body parts. As a character, Qi Bao is feisty, strong and rebellious, yet even this cannot detract from the fact that her role in the plot is essentially to be a means of demonstrating the strong bonds between Dunhuang and Bao Ding. Dunhuang and Qi Bao eventually become a couple, which might at first appear to complicate the claim that this storyline indicates a celebration of loyal friendship. However, in a scene which recalls Sedgwick's (1985) notion of the homosocial desire, the love triangle culminates in the two men affirming their friendship for one another, while Dunhuang casts Qi Bao in the mould of the femme fatale, cursing to himself that she must be, 'the child of a fox spirit' (207).

The culmination of Dunhuang's emotional and spiritual growth comes when he decides to take responsibility for another person's crimes. This takes the narrative full circle, as he was initially released because of Bao Ding's sacrifice.



However, we are left with a final ironic twist: Dunhuang's decision to give himself up for the sake of Xiaorong and her boyfriend's unborn child might be an act of moral agency and great sacrifice, but it backfires in the final lines, when Qi Bao calls him, furious, to tell him she is carrying his baby (222). What are we to make of this last revelation? As Dunhuang is arrested, he is forced back into stasis; any attempt at going out into the world has failed, his attempt at social responsibility fails as well as he has now left his own child fatherless. However, the crucial fact is that he attempts this agency—we are reminded of the tight strictures within which Xu's marginalised men live, but we can see at least that they can, and do, act. "Running through Zhongguancun", for all its negative portrayals of travel, the city, and agency, still affirms the possibility of human connection and the possibility of emotional and spiritual growth. This echoes the observation that Sabina Knight makes of Weihui's *Shanghai Baby*, in which the protagonist "seeks to transcend the insignificance of isolated selfhood through testifying to the importance of others" (Knight, 2006: 257). Equally, Dunhuang's actions refer back to the Confucian notion that "feelings of unique worth grow through responsibilities for others" (254).

Yet, while Dunhuang engages in all of the elements of travel that Xu highlights in his fiction—pushing against strictures, seeking independence, but also constructing new connections—this narrative ultimately reaffirms the role of men as protector and provider. Women are either, like Xiaorong, desperate to raise a family back in their hometown, or, like Qi Bao, are simply "damned fox spirits", still returned to the traditional female sphere of motherhood by the end of the story. To focus on the curtailed agency of Dunhuang, therefore, would be to miss the point that the agency that is attempted is centred around conservative gender roles. The women in "Running through Zhongguancun" are satellites of the male characters—objects to be gazed upon, saved, protected. The agency that I identify in this story—moral agency, and oppositional agency—is therefore the preserve of male travellers.

“Xi Xia”

Conservative gender roles are revealed still more clearly in the next story I discuss here, “Xi Xia”.<sup>24</sup> Compared with other *jingpiao* stories, its ending is notably happier, revealing a cautious optimism in the possibility of a long-standing, loving relationship between drifters (Xu, 2008e: iii). “Xi Xia” is narrated by Wang Yiding, a single man in his twenties from outside Beijing, who now owns a small bookstore in the city. One day a woman appears, with two striking qualities: she is very beautiful, and she is entirely mute. She is ‘delivered’ to him, bearing a note that simply asks for Wang to look after her well and informing him of her name—Xi Xia. Wary of this stranger who has no capacity to explain where she has come from, Wang attempts repeatedly to get rid of Xi Xia, but she refuses to leave, devoting herself to looking after Wang as if she were his wife. An understated narrative highlights Wang Yiding’s emotionally closed life; it is only when Xi Xia appears, and remains, that Wang slowly becomes able to express his emotions. Moved by her kind-heartedness and her beauty, Wang eventually falls for Xi Xia, despite several warnings from friends and neighbours. The turning point of the story comes when Wang begins slowly to embrace the idea of love and connection to another human being. Just as we saw with Dunhuang in “Running through Zhongguancun”, Wang is eventually able to accept the role that Xi Xia expects of him, and which everyone else has warned him about – this is not only the role of a lover, but also of a provider. The story ends with the news that Xi Xia’s muteness might be cured. Wang hesitates for a moment, fearing that any change in their relationship might cause him to lose Xi Xia. In the final sentence, however, he accepts a call from a doctor who might be able to help.

“Xi Xia” works, then, as a kind of optimistic counterpoint to other *jingpiao* stories, revealing a warmth and contentment that is not visible in his other writing. Starting with another “floating” man in Beijing, feckless, anxious and alienated, “Xi Xia” quickly places interpersonal relations at the very core of the

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<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that Shao Yanjun does not view “Xi Xia” as an example of *jingpiao* fiction, considering it instead as an example of what she calls Xu’s “enigma” (*mituan*) stories. As will be clear in the following discussion, I believe that “Xi Xia” can be considered alongside the other *jingpiao* stories quite comfortably in its depiction of migrant life on the margins of the city, and the emotional/spiritual repercussions that such a life brings (Shao, 2007: 27).

story, and demonstrates the possibility of establishing a sense of belonging, and of responsibility for another human being (Shao, 2007: 27). If Xu Zechen's *jingpiao* characters are all "on the road", the end of "Xi Xia" signals the tantalizing possibility of finding one's way home. However, as before, this new and redemptive responsibility is clearly guided by traditional gender roles.

We can see in Wang Yiding the hallmarks of Xu Zechen's other male characters. He is alone in Beijing, with no family in the city, or indeed even mentioned in the entire story. His life seems to be stale, monotonous, and with a nameless, lingering sense of loss. Although we do not see his own journey, we are constantly aware that he has travelled to, and continues to drift through, Beijing, with little expectation of returning to a more settled life in his hometown. Again, imagery of floating, rootlessness and drifting appear repeatedly throughout the narrative. Xi Xia herself is described as a person with "no roots, floating in mid-air", by Wang Yiding's disapproving (and concerned) acquaintances. (Xu, 2008c: 32). But she is by no means the only one. In one scene, Wang Yiding looks through the missing persons advertisements, giving the reader a snapshot of the many others who lead a rootless life in postsocialist China: "old people who weren't all there, mentally ill people who had gotten lost, kids who had run away from home to see the world" (22). Beijing, for Xu Zechen, is a city populated by drifter upon drifter, and they move around in an uncontrolled, almost chaotic way, lost and alone. But the main drifter in this story is Wang himself. He refers to himself as a "Beijing drifter", who had spent eight years in the city, "With no one caring for me, no one loving me, suffering and struggling, but with nothing to show for it, and no lovers" (15). Later on, in despair, he asks himself, "I have run this way and that all my life. Where has it gotten me?...I haven't even had a real conversation with anyone recently." (28)

Xi Xia's arrival in Wang's life is a shock to him and to the people around him. A stranger with a mysterious background is a threat to all. It also prompts a meditation on morality, responsibility for others, and social connections. It does not show a very positive picture at first as, in this city of drifters, everyone goes out of their way to wash their hands of Xi Xia. Even those supposed to be in a position of authority and protection are unwilling to take responsibility for a stranger: 'What does it have to do with me?', asks the

policeman who originally “delivered” Xi Xia to Wang Yiding (22). Wang’s landlady will only take her in for one night, and after she discovers Xi Xia’s history, will not put her up any more. More than this, she casts Wang as responsible for the awkward situation, by failing to get rid of her in the first place (14). Wang slowly realizes that Xi Xia has indeed become “his problem” and seeks to resolve it by getting rid of her, desperately trying to affirm his lack of responsibility to her. “You and I have no connection at all!”, he shouts, in a frustrated, bewildered bid to drive her away (15). Yet when the landlady praises him for trying to send her home, Wang feels himself feeling “more and more unsettled, my heart empty” (34).

Wang’s masculine identity undergoes a transformation in “Xi Xia” and, just as with “Running through Zhongguancun”, the protagonist shifts from drifting, marginalised loner to caring, loving man. Perhaps we could read this as reflective of new developments in gender relations in Chinese society. For example, Song Geng and Derek Hird note that a range of modes of masculinity have recently formed, mirroring the idea of a postmillennial “new man” who is emotionally expressive, caring and sensitive (Song & Hird, 2013: 214–215). A number of terms have appeared, largely in cyberspace, which celebrate the gentle male. Consider, for example, the 37°C man (37°C *nan*), so named because 37 degrees represents the comforting warmth that he exudes; a similar term that has appeared, which might be applicable to Wang, is the *nuannan*, or warm guy.<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that, for all the positive connotations of these so-called “new men”, these particular configurations of masculinity continue to conform to hegemonic principles which assign the role of provider to the male. Equally, within “Xi Xia”, the love affair between Xi Xia and Wang Yiding reasserts, rather than redefines, traditional gender roles. This will become evident after a brief consideration of the depiction of Xi Xia.

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<sup>25</sup> For some indication of the discussion that the *nuannan* has inspired, and its implications for gender politics, see Sun, 2014; Zhang, 2015; Wang, 2015. This latter term did not hold much purchase until 2014, long after “Xi Xia” was written, and I do not mean to suggest that Xu deliberately borrowed from these exact cultural typologies in his creation of Wang Yiding. However, it is worth noting that this tendency in Xu’s construction of masculinity is indicative of a much broader trend in contemporary Chinese society towards a demand for more dutiful and sensitive men (Song & Hird, 2013:108).

Unlike Wang Yiding, Xi Xia is able to make her emotions known almost immediately, despite her inability to speak and her apparent ignorance about her own origins. By necessity, her emotions are expressed largely through body language, a fact that allows Xu Zechen to describe Xi Xia's body in fragments; descriptions most frequently focus on her smooth hair, sometimes loose and seductive as she lounges in Wang Yiding's flat, sometimes tied back in a ponytail, twitching as she busily tidies the home, or as she cooks Wang a meal. From the earliest descriptions of Xi Xia, it is clear that she is someone who invites a feeling of protectiveness: she sleeps curled up "like a cat", emitting "loveable" little snores. At other times, she is referred to as a "little girl" or a "small child" (Xu, 2008d: 10, 12, 30). In some ways, she is utterly reliant on Wang Yiding, and when they walk outside she clings on to his arm in a way that emphasizes her helplessness and dependency on him. However, when they move into the domestic realm, Xi Xia is immediately comfortable, "like the hostess in a little home", instantly moving into the kitchen to cook, or happily washing Wang Yiding's clothes, an action which he finds "moving" (7, 11). When she passes Wang some food, she does it "entirely naturally, as if she were a wife serving food to her husband, or a little sister passing it to her brother" (8). It is an irony that, although Xi Xia is most obviously the "traveller" in this scenario, without roots or history, she is far happier to settle into a domestic lifestyle. Despite her status as an "angel" in this story, her feet are very firmly placed on the ground (4). It is Wang Yiding who is left bewildered and anxious about this situation, while Xi Xia is a natural homemaker.

Traditional gender roles thus persist throughout this text. Xi Xia might be an entirely mysterious person to the other characters in the story, but to the reader she appears as an amalgam of every clichéd female type one can imagine finding in fiction: at times she is referred to as an angel from above; a honey-trap; a little girl; a sister; a wife (4, 8, 13, 28). Fears on the part of others that she is a femme fatale prove unfounded, and the eventual formulation that emerges is another traditional one – she is master within the home, her man is master outside of it. In sum, for all of Xu's emphasis on the non-traditional margins of Beijing life, "Xi Xia" is filled with the image of woman as homemaker, and man as economic provider – an equation that holds great currency in post-reform China, as many have observed, and as we have

already seen in the case of “Running Through Zhongguancun” (Evans, 1997: 142; Evans, 2002: 339; Jankowiak 2002: 378).

References to Xi Xia as both wife and child work to build up a power structure within which she has no opportunity, and apparently no desire, to exercise any kind of agency. In the meantime, Wang Yiding becomes the ultimate provider: of a home, of money for her (as a mute it is apparently out of the question for her to find paid employment), and, crucially, the provider of a voice. When Wang hears that a treatment exists that will help her, he panics at first, fearing he will lose her, or learn something of her history that will ruin their relationship. It is then that the full extent of Wang’s power over Xi Xia becomes clear, as the doctor calls, and Wang hangs up on him. Fortunately, he changes his mind, and decides to answer the next call, but the final image we are left with is one of male voice, and female voicelessness:

I looked at Xi Xia, leaning her body towards me, hugging my right leg. Her eyes were closed, her mouth turned up at the corners, opening and closing as if she were eating something. I held the phone with one hand, and stroked her face with the other. I started to talk (Xu, 2008d: 44).

I read “Xi Xia” as an exploration of the possibility of the creation of responsible, loving human connections in a postsocialist traveller’s world. It also asserts a moral agency that contradicts the perceived mainstream views on how to treat unfamiliar, unknowable people in a large, modern city. In other words, protagonist Wang Yiding acts according to his personal sense of right and wrong, which is in opposition to the advice his friends and neighbours give him. As such, this can be read on one level as another form of transgression, pushing against expected behaviour and ‘prescribed limits’ within the new city. Choosing to extend his love and protection to this rootless, history-less woman, Wang explores the possibility that meaningful human connection can happen even in the new, urban China. Masculinity is associated with the restless, marginalised floating sensation, just as in “Running through Zhongguancun”. The difference here is that it is presented in an even less positive light; Wang Yiding is tired of drifting, tired of floating. However, masculinity is also configured as the responsible, morally active

gender; the cure for an aimless sense of masculine rootlessness is, apparently, to stand up as provider and saviour of women. Xi Xia, though undoubtedly an “angel”, is infantilized and flattened, remaining two-dimensional. Wang Yiding, on the other hand, is a complex character who is allowed to grow and develop, all by way of acting as the provider—of home, protection, and especially of voice.

### Conclusion

“Nothing could better capture the chaos and confusion emanating from China’s collective venture than the trope of travelling”, observes Rong Cai of Chinese fiction in the 1980s (Cai, 2004: 130). Travel, and narratives of travel, have long stood as a means of confronting the material and spiritual changes that modernity has brought to China, and a means of negotiating one’s position within it. Xu’s *jingpiao* stories indicate the continuing discursive resonance of the traveller, demonstrating that it is still “deeply embedded in the historical imagination” of postsocialist China (Cai, 2004: 128).

Running through Xu’s works is the markedly appropriate, and versatile, trope of floating and drifting. It reflects the perilous lives that migrant workers lead, but also extends into a metaphor for the spiritual and material upheavals of a postsocialist nation, for the ideological unmooring that comes as market reforms continue apace, and for the new networks that seem to appear in the postsocialist city—random, tenuous, and unsettling. Yet, as is evident from the two stories discussed here, for all that his protagonists do drift, they establish strong, loyal friendships, and discover their own redemptive responsibility for others. Just as 1990s writers were “left with the burden of creating new belief systems” in the face of crumbling socialist ideologies, it seems that Xu has tasked himself with creating a new network of responsibility and morality as old ties break down. (Visser, 2010: 286). Although Xu’s characters come to the city rootless and floating, they eventually find their own particular moral compass to guide them.

I asked at the beginning of this article what meanings mobility might hold in these works of fiction; I have argued that Xu constructs a vast, far-reaching

and intricate web of themes which he then ties to the overarching narrative of travel and travellers. For Xu, travelling is closely associated with marginality; with an adventurous kind of transgression and therefore with an oppositional agency; an attempt to turn one's back on mainstream society and values; and an exploration of a new, personal sense of moral agency. On this point of agency, my reading of Xu's fiction diverges from Rong Cai's analysis of the traveller in post-Mao fiction, which, as noted earlier, is depicted as a testament to 'the inability of the self to exercise its active agency for survival in the age of reforms.' (Cai, 2004: 133). The opposite situation appears here. Travel, in the adventure and transgression it allows for, is a form of agency in and of itself, allowing Xu's protagonists to go, to explore, and to act, despite the strictures that still remain; it also leads to a moral agency that appears as travellers chose to act according to their own sense of compassion, loyalty and social responsibility. It is in this way that travel allows Xu to continue the literary interest in ethical quandaries, and the "ultimate concerns" which were so evident in 1990s urban fiction.

Yet I have also argued that any observations made about agency and mobility mean very little if we do not delve into the gender relations that cut through the tales of these travellers. Masculinity holds a paradoxical place in Xu's fiction, equated with movement, adventure, and transgression, at the same time as being aligned with duty, moral agency, and security. This, as I have discussed, draws on co-existing, and often paradoxical ideals of masculinity that appear in gender discourse: the rugged, loyal *haohan* and *youxia*, the "warm man", and the traditional breadwinners. His male travellers appear to hover between these roles; mirroring the floating sensation that his men experience as they drift through Beijing, their masculine identities are at times unsteady, anxious, and in flux. However, when his characters do find secure ground it is mirrored by an affirmation of these sets of masculine performances, which ultimately are not just not transgressive, but are manifestly regressive in the gender roles they comply with. As marginalised masculinities, Xu's men still assert their power over women through a complicity with hegemonic ideals. Women, as a result, remain in the patriarchal system, not real travellers at all, but victims for whom the men must provide, allowing the latter to establish their own, rooted, identity.



Xu's tales of migrants in Beijing provide fertile ground for an analysis of literary responses to a set of topics which have for decades preoccupied students and citizens of China, including new patterns of movement, moral and ideological shifts, agency and the individual. Just as critics have failed to consider the theme of masculine performance in Xu's work, studies of literature since the 1990s have not explored configurations of masculinity in any great detail. Xu's stories therefore provide a compelling reason to carefully consider the impact of hierarchies of gender, and especially the representations of masculinity, as China's writers confront the consequences of postsocialist modernity.

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## **Gorbachev's *Glasnost* and the Debate on Chinese Socialism among Chinese Sovietologists, 1985-1999**

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### **Abstract**

*Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost (openness) was a popular topic in 1980s China. Existing scholarship remarks that Chinese Soviet-watchers admired Gorbachev's programme as a model for China's democratisation in the 1980s. However, after 1991, because of their impact on China's pro-democracy movement, as perceived by the Chinese government, the same Chinese scholars consistently criticised Gorbachev and his liberalisation policies for being the fundamental catalysts in bringing down the USSR.*

*This paper suggests that the attractiveness of Gorbachev's glasnost policy to 1980s Chinese Sovietologists was not because it symbolised Western-style democracy; instead, they embraced glasnost as a type of government-led democracy. The impact of Gorbachev's policies after the mid-1980s can also be seen in Chinese scholars' use of them to support the reformist General Secretary Zhao Ziyang in his power struggle against the Party conservatives leading up to the Tiananmen Incident.*

*This paper further posits that Chinese scholars' scorn for Gorbachev after Tiananmen was not primarily owing to his role in promoting democratisation; rather, it was because of Gorbachev's soft line approach towards dissent when communism in Europe was on the verge of collapse. By drawing attention to Gorbachev's soft line approach, Chinese critics justified China's use of the Tiananmen crackdown and the brutal measures adopted by Deng Xiaoping to preserve socialist rule and social stability.*

**Key words:** *Mikhail Gorbachev, Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, Chinese Sovietology, Tiananmen, contemporary China, post-communism*

## Introduction

Several previous scholars have noted the enormous impact that the last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, and his political liberalisation policy known as *glasnost* (openness) had on 1980s China (Yan Sun, 1995: 242-246; Guan Guihai, 2010: 511-513; Shambaugh, 2008: 55-57). It has been reported that Gorbachev's programme inspired the former Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang's political reform proposal on the eve of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 (Wu Guoguang, 1997: 306). He was held in enormously high esteem among Chinese intellectuals in the 1980s (Brown, 2007: 107). His enthusiasm for freedom and the reform of socialism were instrumental in stirring up the student protests in Tiananmen Square. Demonstrators used his example to pressure the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping into abandoning the authoritarian rule of the Chinese government (Lukin, 1991: 123). Moreover, the existing literature points out that Chinese Sovietologists admired Gorbachev's political reform as a model for China's democratisation in the 1980s. However, after 1991, because of their impact on China's pro-democracy movement as perceived by the Chinese government, the same Chinese scholars consistently criticised Gorbachev and his liberalisation policies for being the fundamental catalysts in bringing down the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (Marsh, 2005: 105-106; Shambaugh, 2008: 57).

Having examined a range of academic and official articles published in China from the 1980s to the 1990s, I would first argue that the attractiveness of Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy to 1980s Chinese scholars was not because it symbolised Western-style democracy; instead, they embraced *glasnost* as a type of "democracy under socialism", and saw it as being equivalent to the "neo-authoritarianism" of Zhao Ziyang that championed pluralism under a strong government. Moreover, the impact of Gorbachev's policies after the mid-1980s can also be seen in Chinese scholars' use of them to support the reformist leader Zhao in his power struggle against the conservatives within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leading up to the Tiananmen Incident in 1989. This paper further posits that Chinese scholars' scorn for Gorbachev after Tiananmen was not primarily owing to his role in promoting democratisation; rather, it was because of Gorbachev's soft line approach towards dissent when communism in Europe was on the verge of collapse. By



drawing attention to Gorbachev's soft line approach, Chinese critics justified China's use of the Tiananmen crackdown and the brutal measures adopted by Deng Xiaoping to preserve socialist rule and social stability. Having said this, the wave of Chinese criticism was a short-term phenomenon. It gradually subsided after the mid-1990s as a result of the marked improvement in Sino-Russian relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and, most importantly, as a result of China's own reflections on the lessons already learned from the Sino-Soviet ideological disputes that had taken place under Mao Zedong.

With respect to primary sources, it should be mentioned here that this research is based wholly on the "national core journals" (*Guojiaji hexin qikan*) published in the People's Republic of China (PRC), and mainly on the following four categories of journals. The first are those journals focusing on research in the humanities and social sciences in general (*Shehui kexue yanjiu*, *Shijie jingjiyu zhengzhi*). Second are those journals dealing with problems of socialism or communism in the world (*Dangdai shijie shehui zhuyi wenti*, *Shehui zhuyi yanjiu*). The third group forms the core of this study; they concentrate on questions and issues relating to the former Soviet Union (later the Russian Federation and other Commonwealth Independent States after 1991) (*Sulian dongou wenti*, *Eluosi yanjiu*). Lastly, the research scope also includes relevant articles in various university journals (*Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan yanjiu shengyuan xuebao*, *Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao*).

Moreover, the paper examines the thinking of Chinese Sovietologists against the backdrop of political developments in the PRC from the mid-1980s to the 1990s. Therefore, in order for this research to be successfully located in the rich fabric of the intellectual activities of contemporary China and in the changing environment, the investigator also consulted China's Party newspapers and journals, such as the *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), *Guangming ribao* (Guangming Daily) and *Beijing Review* (English edition), and the writings and speeches of PRC officials, such as those of Deng Xiaoping and other contemporary Chinese leaders.

The use of the term "Sovietologists" (or Soviet-watchers) in this paper for those who study and research the state of the USSR is based on Christopher Xenakis' definition. Xenakis defines Sovietologists broadly, to include "political

scientists, economists, sociologists, historians, diplomats and policy makers, working in academia, government, private think tanks, and the media.” He uses the terms “Sovietologists”, “Soviet experts”, “foreign policy analysts”, “Cold War theorists”, and “political scientists” interchangeably, citing the examples of George Kennan, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Richard Pipes and Strobe Talbott (Xenakis, 2002: 4).

In terms of this elastic definition of the field and the diversity of scholars’ backgrounds, the situation in China is generally similar to the situation in the US as described by Xenakis. For example, as we shall see, although some Chinese scholars specialise in either Soviet or world communism, most of those mentioned and quoted in this paper are generalists rather than specialists in Soviet studies. Their articles often express more political zeal than scholarly expertise or analytical insight. Generally speaking, the descriptions by Xenakis of US Sovietologists could also be applied to the Chinese situation. Chinese Soviet-watchers are a diverse group, rather than representatives of a single school of thought or central theory. Their publications never imply a complete homogeneity of views. However, although their academic training is in different disciplines and by no means confined to Soviet studies, their research and publications are relevant to Sovietology in one way or another.

### **Chinese Perceptions of Gorbachev across the 1990 Divide**

One thing that should be noted is that Chinese perceptions of Gorbachev from the mid-1980s onwards were quite evolutionary. Views changed not only in response to the ups-and-downs of Sino-Soviet (and later Sino-Russian) relations and China’s domestic political climate, but also in response to the political developments in Moscow. The existing secondary literature on Chinese Sovietology indicates that Chinese scholars began making positive comments about Gorbachev immediately after he assumed power in 1985 (Bernstein, 2010: 2; Rozman, 1987: 130-135; 2010: 455), but that soon after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 they had become completely hostile to the last Soviet leader and their criticisms did not stop until after the collapse of the

USSR in 1991 (Rozman, 2010: 460; Shambaugh, 2008: 57; Marsh, 2005: 105-106; Wilson, 2007: 271).

My reading shows, however, that most Chinese academic commentators on the USSR did not have positive views of Gorbachev either in 1985 or afterwards. Many scholars remained suspicious of Gorbachev and felt uncertain about his future manoeuvres and agendas. The main reason for China's lukewarm reaction to the Soviet leader during the early days of his administration was the tense Sino-Soviet relations at that time, notably the unresolved question of the three obstacles (the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, its large troop deployment along the border with China, and Moscow's support of the Vietnamese military intervention in Cambodia) plaguing the two countries. In 1985, the CCP regime expressed its concern regarding Gorbachev's reluctance to resolve these unsettled problems after he assumed power (*Beijing Review*, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1985: 13). In 1986, the Chinese Premier, Hu Yaobang, complained to journalists that: "Sino-Soviet relations have not made any headway since Gorbachev assumed power." (*Renmin ribao*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1986: 1) At the same time, some Chinese Soviet-watchers also expressed their resentment of Moscow's insincere approach towards removing the three obstacles. They pointed out that this behaviour ran counter to the principle of New Thinking (Ma Baohua, 1986: 52; Xing Shugang, 1986: 36; Zhu Ruizhen, 1987: 29). Only around one year after Gorbachev took the helm did Chinese scholars start to review his policies more positively, when the problem of the three obstacles had started to be resolved and bilateral relations were gradually improving.

My findings also demonstrate that during and after the 1989 Tiananmen uprising, no major criticisms of Gorbachev appeared in Chinese academic writings. Instead, Chinese scholars still seemed to admire, and produce positive evaluations of, his programmes during this anti-liberal period in contemporary China. There are several reasons why Gorbachev was decidedly not a subject of ridicule in the eyes of Chinese scholars in the wake of the Tiananmen demonstrations. First, the Chinese leadership had by then taken stock of the Sino-Soviet frictions under Mao Zedong, and did not want to be at odds with a large and powerful country that had the longest land border with the PRC. When the Sino-Soviet summit meeting took place in May 1989, both

sides placed great emphasis on the principle of mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs and normalised relations between the two countries. Having learned from the lessons of history, they were committed to not letting ideological disagreements disrupt cordial bilateral relations (*Guangming ribao*, 19<sup>th</sup> May 1989: 1). All this is reflected in the main import of Deng's summit conversation with Gorbachev—putting the past behind us, opening up a new era, doing more practical things and indulging in less empty talk (Deng Xiaoping, 1994: 3.287). Harmony and rapport between the two nations would be the primary considerations, despite the fact that some officials and scholars might feel suspicious of Gorbachev's reform programmes.

Secondly, it was Gorbachev who mended Sino-Soviet fences after a protracted period of mutual distrust, repairing the relationship almost entirely on Chinese terms. Gorbachev may not have agreed in his heart with China's strategy of violence in handling the Tiananmen Incident (Ikeda & Gorbachev, 2005: 2), but even when he was pushed by Western reporters during his visit to Beijing in 1989, the Soviet leader refused to comment on the student movement (*Guangming ribao*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1989: 3), and he did not encourage the Soviet media to criticise the Chinese government after he returned to Moscow (Marsh, 2005: 136-137). It may therefore have seemed ungrateful for the Chinese state to start criticising someone who had made a significant contribution to the Sino-Soviet rapprochement and who had adopted a neutral position when China was experiencing domestic problems.

Finally, in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident, China did not consider that Gorbachev and his liberalisation policies posed an immediate threat to its socialist system. In fact, the West was perceived as a much greater danger to the survival of the regime than the USSR (Xu Dashen, 1989: 5-6; *Guangming ribao*, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1989: 3), and the CCP saw the Soviet state as a much-needed partner with which China could confront Western power politics (*Beijing Review*, 3<sup>rd</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> September 1990: 11). After the Tiananmen Incident, many Chinese Party leaders were keen to maintain relations with Moscow, expressing their hopes that the USSR would still uphold the ideals of socialism (*Renmin ribao*, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1990: 4; *Renmin ribao*, 31<sup>st</sup> May 1990: 3). This was because international sanctions were already being imposed on China and the West was exerting pressure on the PRC to change course after Tiananmen. In

addition, by the 1990s the US had achieved “superhegemonist” status, forcing other countries to follow the Western model of development, and China suspected the Americans of having the intention of relegating China and various other nations to subordinate roles on the world stage (Kagan, 2008: 33).

Most importantly, this investigator has found that strong criticism of Gorbachev by China did not appear until early 1990, and not immediately after Tiananmen as existing secondary scholarship claims. After Gorbachev was elected President of the USSR, and after he initiated the process of terminating the power monopoly of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on March 15 1990, both the CCP and Chinese scholars became aware of the possible negative ramifications of such a move on the PRC, which has remained committed to one-party communist rule, and in a speech made immediately afterwards on March 18, the CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin issued the following warning:

Our Party is the ruling party, which means that the Party has an absolute leadership over the state organs. If we renounce this leadership, then the Party will no longer enjoy ruling party status. Therefore, all the state organs, including the People’s Congress, the government, the Supreme People’s Court and the Supreme People’s Procuratorate, should be under the leadership of the Party. Any thoughts on or practices involving weakening or undermining the authority of the Party are wrong. (Jiang Zemin, 2006: 1.112)

In reaction to the alarming announcement after the 28<sup>th</sup> CPSU Congress in July 1990 that the monopoly of communist power in the Soviet state had been officially abolished, in September of that year Jiang made the following more severe criticism:

After Soviet-American detente and the turmoil in Eastern Europe, there are indeed many communists in the world who have doubts about the future of socialism, and are even losing faith in it. But the reality has proved that this kind of thinking is terribly naïve. (ibid: 1.134)

One week after the August 1991 coup in Moscow, *Guangming ribao* published an article implicitly attacking Gorbachev and his liberal programmes:

Some thoughts against Marxism and Leninism are rampant in today's international society. They have crept into the communist parties of some countries and become the guiding principles of those parties. Those thoughts are the fundamental origin of the crisis of some socialist states. The opportunists inside the international communist movement flaunt the banners of 'diversity', 'universal human values' and 'democracy is the highest principle of socialism' to confuse the masses. They are in fact writing off the class struggle, socialism and proletarian dictatorship. They stand for using the Western model to replace the communist leadership and its theoretical premise of Marxism. (*Guangming ribao*, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1991: 3)

This behaviour of Gorbachev's in overturning the dictatorship of the communist party was absolutely unacceptable to the CCP. Chinese scholars began to sense the potential implications for China, which were far more ominous than the effect of the New Thinking and *glasnost* that had allegedly fuelled the student unrest in 1989 (Lukin, 1991: 123). At that time Beijing was confronting the perceived threat from the West of "peaceful evolution" (Shambaugh, 2008: 55), and the Chinese leadership similarly feared that the abandoning of socialism by the Soviet Union would reignite pro-democracy sentiments at home and challenge its legitimacy. Following this, the last Soviet leader was doomed to become the focal point of attack by the Chinese.

Some of the secondary literature authors argue that after 1991 most Chinese scholars focused on criticising Gorbachev and his liberalisation policies as the fundamental catalysts in triggering the collapse of the Soviet state (Guan Guihai, 2010: 509-514; Marsh, 2005: 111; Shambaugh, 2008: 81). In reality, Chinese Sovietology writings never excoriated Gorbachev in the 1990s, and the torrent of attacks had gradually subsided by the middle of the decade. One major reason for this may be the improvement in Sino-Russian relations

after the tragic collapse of the USSR. Once in power, Russian President Boris Yeltsin told Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen that China and Russia should not put the clock back to when both sides were at each other's throats, and the ideological differences should not become a barrier to normal bilateral relations (*Renmin ribao*, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1992: 1). With this overture from Russia, China decided to consolidate relations. During Jiang Zemin's visit to Moscow in September 1994, both sides confirmed the nature of their future new type of cooperation — "constructive partnership" (*jianshexing huoban guanxi*) (*Renmin ribao*, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1994: 1).

Moreover, after the collapse of the USSR, China wanted the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on its borders to remain stable, otherwise grave problems would be created for the PRC. After the Cold War the CCP leadership not only needed good relations with Russia in diplomatic terms, but also expected to retain Russia and other CIS states as a counterbalance in resisting the Western notion of peaceful evolution, which they saw as an existential threat. Therefore, it was a rational decision for Chinese scholars after 1991 not to indulge in negative criticisms of the defunct Soviet socialism founded by the Russians in 1917, since this would arouse suspicions on the Russian side and ultimately harm the relationship. In a 1999 speech delivered to a conference commemorating the 50-year anniversary of the establishment of Sino-Russian relations, at which the Vice-Director of the International Liaison Department of the CCP, Cai Wu, and the Russian Ambassador, Igor Rogachev, were present, Li Jingjie, Director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), cited the main import of Deng Xiaoping's conversation with Gorbachev in 1989— "putting the past behind and embracing the future"—and made it clear to Chinese scholars that they should "no longer cling to the old scores of history" when they were conducting research into Sino-Russian relations in the future (Li Jingjie, 1999: 4). In another article published at the same time, Pan Zhengxiang, a scholar at the Chinese University of Science and Technology, retraced the sorry history of Sino-Soviet relations and asked Chinese scholars to take the lessons of the past into account in their future research. He instructed them to "uphold the notion of seeking common ground while preserving differences", and warned them "not to engage in open polemics and in criticising Party or state leaders on the other side by name" in order to "prevent a repetition in the 21st century of the historical tragedy" (Pan Zhengxiang, 1999: 46).

Lastly, Gorbachev and his liberal programmes were by no means the only, or even the most significant, factor in the USSR's dissolution, as Chinese analysts claimed after 1991. Since the mid-1990s, some Chinese scholars have traced the roots of the tragedy back to the administrations of Leonid Brezhnev and Joseph Stalin, arguing that conservative forces and the rigid communist system were the decisive factors in bringing it about, rather than the figure of Gorbachev alone (Huang Zongliang, 1993: 39-46; Zheng Yifan, 1995: 7-12; Zuo Fengrong, 1996: 57-63).

### **The Popularity of Gorbachev in 1980s China**

As noted, Gorbachev's *glasnost* was a popular topic in 1980s China. Zhao Ziyang once said that Soviet *glasnost* had more impact than "Western values, concepts and political systems" in encouraging "China's intellectuals, youth and young workers to demand more democracy" in the 1980s (Bao Pu, Chiang & Ignatius, 2009: 261). When Zhao was in power in the mid-1980s, with Deng Xiaoping's approval, he organised and supervised the first political reform group since the founding of the PRC to design a proposal for the institutional restructuring of the CCP (*Renmin ribao*, 28<sup>th</sup> February 1988: 1). Wu Guoguang, former advisor to Zhao and the chief editor of the *Renmin ribao* in the late 1980s, has revealed that during this period of formulating political reforms, Zhao's aim was to learn from Gorbachev and implement economic and political reforms in China concurrently. The General Secretary always asked the staff to obtain the minutes of the CPSU Congress, at which Gorbachev had delivered his speeches, to give him inspiration for China's political reform (Wu Guoguang, 1997: 306). In addition, Zhao occasionally invited over the PRC ambassador to Moscow together with some well-known Chinese Soviet specialists to provide him with seminar talks on Soviet *glasnost* (ibid: 181). After he was removed from the leadership owing to his unwillingness to endorse the Tiananmen crackdown ordered by Deng Xiaoping, Zhao admitted that his thinking on political reform had been changed in 1985/1986, "aroused somewhat by events in the broader international environment and problems that had emerged in the Eastern Bloc" (Bao Pu, Chiang & Ignatius, 2009: 256-257).



After the mid-1980s, not only Zhao Ziyang, but also other CCP leaders, such as Tian Jiyun and Bo Yibo, expressed their admiration for Gorbachev's programme and their willingness to learn from the Soviet experience (*Renmin ribao*, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1988: 4; *Renmin ribao*, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1988: 1). This official recognition obviously stimulated intellectual interest. In a speech given to the National Social Sciences Congress in April 1988, CASS President Hu Sheng complained that China had not previously carried out much research on Soviet politics owing to the Sino-Soviet conflict, with the result that Chinese scholars lacked knowledge of recent developments, such as *glasnost*, in the Soviet Union. Hu urged Chinese people to conduct research into "Soviet political and economic structural reforms immediately", as "those reforms are analogous to what China has undertaken", stating that such comparative studies were "necessary and beneficial" (Hu Sheng, 1988: 6-7). At the same time, some Chinese scholars expressed their great appreciation for, and excitement about, Gorbachev and his political reforms. On hearing the Soviet announcement at the 27th CPSU Congress concerning the termination of the concentration of power in the hands of the Communist Party and the life-long tenure of the General Secretary, Gao Fang, professor of the history of communism at Renmin University, predicted that Gorbachev might become "a proletarian George Washington" and bring "a blessed message to socialism" (Gao Fang, 1988: 8). Zhao Yuliang, professor of economics at Beijing Jiaotong University, foresaw that Gorbachev's reforms would be "another epoch-making revolution comparable to the one under Peter the Great in Russian history" (Zhao Yuliang, 1988: 27).

The reasons for China's positive response to the Soviet *glasnost* and the positive impression of Gorbachev himself after 1986 were manifold. The most important of these was the extraordinary openness and budding democracy of the Chinese political environment after the mid-1980s. At a national symposium in 1986, Vice-Premier Wan Li had already called for the introduction of a "more democratic and scientific policy decision-making process" in the CCP (*Beijing Review*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1986: 5). In 1988, one author publicly demanded the end of censorship in China (*Renmin ribao*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1988: 8). In the realm of academia, in 1986 the Editorial Board of *Shehui kexue yanjiu* (*Social Science Research*), funded by the Sichuan Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, published an article in which, after a re-examination of the

disastrous decade of the Cultural Revolution, it was suggested that China learn from the West in “instituting political democratization and allowing intellectuals to be critical of those in power” (The Editorial Board, 1986: 129). At CASS, a new policy issued in early 1989 encouraged scholars to “apply research methodologies that are not concerned with Marxist theory, as long as they abide by the Chinese Constitution” (*Renmin ribao*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1989: 3).

Secondly, since the mid-1980s China had placed political reform high on the agenda. In 1986, Deng Xiaoping acknowledged that, “without political reform, economic reform cannot succeed” (Deng Xiaoping, 1994: 3.167). Back then, even the Party conservatives, such as Peng Zhen and Bo Yibo, also voiced their support for initiating political reform in China (*Renmin ribao*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1986: 1; *Renmin ribao*, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1988: 1). In response to the official mandate, several articles suddenly appeared in various journals. The authors proposed that China should closely scrutinise the process of political reform in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and argued strongly that economic modernisation could not be realised without socialist democracy (Cai Yimin, 1986: 23-24; Ling Yunong, 1986: 12-13; Wu Qing’an, 1988: 26). Seen from the perspective of such scholars’ profound esteem for *glasnost*, those Chinese observers of the Soviet Union might either have been genuinely impressed by Gorbachev’s programme, or have wanted to speed up China’s own *glasnost* and seek to highlight the achievements of Soviet political reform in order to give the Chinese regime the extra push that was needed for the adoption of similar measures.

### **Chinese Understanding of Gorbachev’s *Glasnost***

Many Chinese scholars in their writings of the 1980s did not in fact conceptually equate Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and political reform programme with political democracy in the Western sense. After 1986, many articles attempted to demonstrate that Gorbachev’s reforms were a return to Lenin’s orthodox socialism. Some writers argued that the concept of *glasnost* originated from Lenin (Cui Shumei, 1988: 44; Li Liangrong, 1988: 96). Others appreciated Gorbachev’s efforts in either re-establishing the people’s right to participate in state affairs (Wu Raohui, 1987: 15; Gu Xuewu, 1988: 28), or in

reinstating democratic and humanistic socialism (Shi Shudong, 1987: 3; Zheng Jianxin, 1988: 26). They argued that both had been developed by Lenin, but later sabotaged by Stalin, and had not been fully revived by the Soviet leaders after Stalin. It might be correct, based on the opening speech of the 27th CPSU Congress in February 1986, to say that Gorbachev's reforms were a return to true Leninism (Gorbachev, 1987: 1.10); however, Chinese scholars had a tactical consideration in placing Gorbachev and Lenin in the same category. Since Gorbachev's programme of *glasnost* had spread to China, Chinese intellectuals were keen to learn from it and portray it as a lesson for China, in the hope that Gorbachev's thinking might stimulate further political change in the PRC after the initial economic reforms that were begun in 1978. It should be noted that a short-lived campaign against bourgeois liberalisation had emerged in the first half of 1987, after the 1986 student demonstrations and the forced resignation of General Secretary Hu Yaobang, who was accused of being sympathetic to bourgeois thinking (*Renmin ribao*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1987: 1). Although the event was not large in scale and was nothing like the type of political persecutions that had taken place under Mao, however, Deng Xiaoping had made it clear in late 1986 that slogans against socialism and soft approaches towards bourgeois liberalisation would not be tolerated (Deng Xiaoping, 1994: 3.194). It is therefore understandable that Chinese scholars chose to use the less risky figure of Lenin to channel their arguments during this sensitive period, making their interpretations less vulnerable to attack. Quoting Lenin to boost Gorbachev's positive image might generate less political trouble and be more acceptable to the Party's old guard, who were not very familiar with Gorbachev's ideas.

Having said this, the fact that Chinese scholars cloaked Gorbachev in the mantle of Leninism suggests that their understanding of his ideas was still orthodox in nature. As already noted, the former CCP General Secretary Zhao Ziyang was a lover of *glasnost*. He was favoured and supported by many Chinese intellectuals in the 1980s as a patron of political reform (Goldman, 1994: 238-239). Although on the surface Zhao's ideas looked more liberal than those of the Party's old guard, however, in the eyes of Richard Baum, Zhao's thoughts on political reform still "stressed the need for strong, centralized technocratic leadership", and he was not an advocate of "Western-style liberalism, but of Chinese-style 'neo-authoritarianism'" (Baum, 2008: 113).

Indeed, after having been purged in the wake of Tiananmen, Zhao revealed that he would never have countenanced a multi-party system but had advocated a reformed one-party dictatorship. He said that “neo-authoritarianism is good for a developing country” (Zong Fengming, 2007: 153-154). The concept of “neo-authoritarianism” did not escape the attention of Chinese scholars in the 1980s. A 1989 article in *Jingjixue zhoubao* (*Economics Weekly*) stated that, “China needs a new kind of Gorbachev-like strongman.” (*Jingjixue zhoubao*, 12<sup>th</sup> March 1989: 22) Zhao Liqing, associate researcher at the Central Party School, openly remarked that “present-day China needs democratic authoritarianism”. In his opinion, for the sake of economic modernisation, “circumscription of personal freedom is essential”, and “a powerful government with sufficient authority” would be the best type of government to ensure the social and political stability necessary for reform. According to the author, China should consult Gorbachev’s political reform model (Zhao Liqing, 1989: 36-38). It is interesting to note that some 1980s Chinese scholars tended to regard Gorbachev’s *glasnost* as a kind of government-led protection of citizens’ rights and supervision of bureaucratic conduct. They expressed the hope that some such guided democracy, whereby the people would gradually be given more say, would be introduced, while popular participation would be within limits fixed by the Party. According to their definition, this was “democracy under socialism”, which, in their understanding, was equivalent to Zhao’s concept of neo-authoritarianism that champions pluralism, diversity and efficiency under a strong government (Xiao Gu, 1988: 8; Zhao Longgeng, 1988: 14; Zhang Wei, 1989: 68).

Similarly, many Western scholars made it clear that Gorbachev’s *glasnost* was not the same as Western democracy (Sallnow, 1989: 42; Walker, 1993: 97; Gooding, 2001: 216). His goal was either “a democratized one-party system” (Lewin, 1991: 151) or “a more enlightened dictatorship” (Laqueur, 1989: 43). With regard to the Chinese understanding of *glasnost*, we need to compare the Chinese concept of *gongkaixing* (transparency) and the English idea of *openness*. The meaning of *gongkaixing* is a little different from that of *openness*. *Gongkaixing* conveys the impression that political transparency will be circumscribed by the top echelons of government to a certain extent. It is an authorised openness, not a complete openness; in other words, *gongkaixing* is openness licensed by the central government, rather than a

fundamental political right of the citizens of a country. This difference is equivalent to the difference between rule by law and the rule of law. Lowell Dittmer profoundly captures the subtle difference between the Chinese and Western concepts:

The concept of “publicity” (*gongkai*) in contemporary China is derived from the age-old concept of the “public” (*gong*). In the Confucian classics a prominent polarity exists between the terms of “self” (*zi*) and “public” (*gong*), which is linked to an opposition between selfishness (*zisi*) and selflessness (*wusi*). The juxtaposition corresponds to the Western “public-private” distinction, though it is more invidious. Selflessness is lauded for having the interests of all the people in mind, as selfishness is condemned for a cognitive or even a moral failure to perceive the self in terms of a more comprehensive social organism to which the person’s fate is inextricably connected. The Western concept of the “private” is less pejoratively defined than the Chinese, with a strong strain going back at least to Adam Smith construing the private sector as making an almost necessarily positive contribution to public welfare. Private interests per se are sanctioned by the free market model in economic thought, by social contract theory in politics, and by the adversary tradition in jurisprudence. The public is, to be sure, also positively evaluated in the West (e.g., “public interest”, “public weal”), but even though it is favourably evaluated it has subtly different connotations from the Chinese concept. (Dittmer, 1994: 110-111)

Seen from these perspectives, *glasnost* seems to be akin to Chinese traditional thinking on political philosophy and statecraft. Chinese scholars’ interpretation of *glasnost* appeared to converge with the substance of Zhao Ziyang’s neo-authoritarianism.

### The Use of Gorbachev

While Soviet political reform had been making headway since 1985, Zhao Ziyang's political reforms had remained a work-in-progress since the mid-1980s, and were stillborn on the eve of the Tiananmen Incident. Zhao's reform proposals included the separation of the Party and the state, the introduction of the rule of law, and permission given to other parties to compete with the CCP in rank-and-file elections (Wu Guoguang, 1997: 94-107). The CCP General Secretary once revealed that the slow progress of his political reforms and the difficulty of putting them into practice were mainly the result of Deng Xiaoping's orthodox thinking and his interference preventing any bold experimentation (Zong Fengming, 2007: 33). After the 13th Party Congress in 1987, Zhao's plans for political reform were warmly welcomed by Chinese scholars (*Renmin ribao*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1988: 5; Gao Fang, 1988: 10). However, after seeing that Zhao had not translated many of his promises into practice, from 1988 onwards the attitude of Chinese scholars became more demanding. Xiao Gu and Yang Xinyu (both professors of Russian language at Fudan University) insisted that the Chinese government should learn from Gorbachev and implement political and economic reforms simultaneously (Xiao Gu, 1988: 10; Yang Xinyu, 1988: 41). After criticising the absence of democracy from post-Mao politics, Xu Hongwu, professor of Marxism-Leninism at Beijing Normal University, requested that China take notice of Gorbachev, and argued that "apart from *glasnost*, there is no way for China to introduce democratic politics" (Xu Hongwu, 1988: 23). Zhou Yuansheng, a PhD law student at Renmin University, remarked that it was essential for the PRC to establish "*glasnost* with Chinese characteristics" (Zhou Yuansheng, 1988: 26).

The reason why Chinese scholars zealously supported Zhao's proposals and consistently pressed for further political reform activity might have been as a result of the intensification of the power struggle between Zhao and the conservative forces in the CCP leading up to the Tiananmen Incident. Firstly, if one compares Zhao's report to the 13th Party Congress and Deng's conservative approach to political reform, one finds they are similar in substance (Zhao Ziyang, 1987: 3-77; Deng Xiaoping, 1994: 2.319-341). However, Zhao's speech to the Congress was largely for public consumption. The report needed Deng's prior approval before it was delivered, and thus it

may not reflect Zhao's real intentions in political reform. In his publications, Wu Guoguang reveals that Zhao's agenda was more radical than the 13th Party Congress speech suggested (Wu Guoguang, 2008: 38), and the CCP General Secretary even said that China's future political reform should go one step further than Gorbachev's *glasnost* (Wu Guoguang, 1997: 314). Zhao also recalled that the political reform report presented at the Congress would have been more open and liberal if Deng had not interfered so much during the writing process (Bao Pu, Chiang & Ignatius, 2009: 208).

Moreover, unlike Zhao and his followers, some key CCP leaders did not favour the direct adoption of Gorbachev's programme for China even before Tiananmen. Both Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and Premier Li Peng were cautious about any radical approach towards reform, claiming that Gorbachev's political reform model was unsuitable for China, on the grounds that the two countries had very different social, political, economic and geographical conditions (*Beijing Review*, 10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> April 1989: 14; *Beijing Review*, 17<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> April 1989: 12). As the power struggle in the higher echelons of the Party escalated in the period before the student demonstrations, some Chinese scholars seemed to position themselves on the side of the reformers in an effort to weed out the conservatives. David Shambaugh reveals that the time when Chinese scholars were commending Gorbachev's *glasnost* "was precisely the time that Zhao Ziyang and his advisers were pushing political reform", and that it also coincided with "a fierce intraparty debate within the CCP, and considerable swelling opposition to Zhao and his reforms" (Shambaugh, 2008: 56). Prior to the Tiananmen Incident, CASS researcher Wang Yizhou stated unequivocally that China should learn from Gorbachev's political reforms how to "overcome the inertia, conservatism and dogmatism among the bureaucracy", and "get rid of the politics of septuagenarians" (Wang Yizhou, 1989: 24). Shen Yiming (a researcher at Qinghua University) argued that through Gorbachev's *glasnost* socialist pluralism had spread all over the world (Shen Yiming, 1989: 21). He boldly commented:

We should not exclude the possibility that there could be several Marxist parties existing side by side in a socialist state. Although the struggle to achieve political pluralism is extremely fierce, however, political pluralism will be an

irresistible trend nonetheless, as long as the ruling party starts to admit its weakness and gives way to a more correct reform line; therefore, a healthy pluralist political mechanism will finally emerge. (Shen Yiming: 22)

### **The Abuse of Gorbachev**

Some of the secondary literature suggests that after 1991 Chinese scholars tended to blame Gorbachev's programmes, such as *glasnost* and liberalisation, as the fundamental cause of the downfall of the USSR because those scholars felt extremely nervous about the negative implications of these policies for China (Guan Guihai, 2010: 509-514; Rozman, 2010: 464; Wilson, 2007: 272). Firstly, a perusal of the primary documents in which Chinese scholars expressed their criticisms after March 1990, when Gorbachev was launching his process for ending the CPSU monopoly, reveals that most scholars did *not* oppose Gorbachev's political reform of socialism. Some disputed Gorbachev's notion that political reform should precede economic reform, and remarked that the former should serve the needs of the latter (Xu Zhixin, 1991: 14; Zhang Jindou, 1992: 17; Tong Baochang, 1993: 12). Others criticised Gorbachev's programme for being too Western-oriented, and in particular criticised his termination of the CPSU power monopoly as an incorrect method of political reform (Yan Shuhan, 1990: 5; Wei Cizu, 1991: 17; Jiang Changbin, 1993: 53).

Secondly, this paper further posits the view that Chinese scholars' scorn for Gorbachev after 1990 was not primarily as a result of his role in promoting democratisation and changing the nature of socialism; rather, it was because of Gorbachev's soft line approach towards dissent when communism in Europe was on the verge of collapse. In fact, what Zhao Ziyang and Gorbachev shared was that both the CCP and Chinese scholars would have had difficulty in claiming that their ideas on reform were in contravention of socialism. Firstly, according to their own words, neither of the communist leaders had ever thought of recommending the overthrow of the socialist systems operating in their respective countries. After being purged, Zhao revealed that



what he had wanted was democracy under the CCP and rule of law in a socialist China (Bao Pu, Chiang & Ignatius, 2009: 257). In his official speeches Gorbachev always emphasised that his goal was “socialist democracy”, which involved “self-control” and “the unity of rights and duties” (Gorbachev, 1987: 2.169-170). Secondly, at the 1987 13th Party Congress, Zhao expressed a firm resolve to shatter the “current political structure, which took shape during the revolutionary war years”. According to him, the system was “no longer suited to our drive for modernisation in economic, political, cultural and other fields under conditions of peace, or to the development of a socialist commodity economy” (Zhao Ziyang, 1987: 59). The revolutionary “political structure” Zhao was referring to was none other than the institutions created by Mao after 1949, of which unpleasant vestiges remained even after 1976. As noted, many Chinese scholars approved of Gorbachev’s endeavours in re-assessing past errors and returning the Soviet state to the fundamental ethos of Leninism. These efforts by Gorbachev corresponded to Zhao’s proposal to transform the socialist state that had been created through war and revolution into a state designed to achieve construction and modernisation. This notion was a shared consensus among the CCP leadership even after Zhao’s purge, and was consistently implemented both in and after the 1990s (Deng Xiaoping, 1994: 3.314; Jiang Zemin, 2006: 1.217). In actuality, although in the eyes of Chinese communists writing after the 1990s both Zhao’s political reforms and Gorbachev’s *glasnost* had some negative impacts, however, the CCP indictment of Zhao, as State Council spokesman Yuan Mu intimated, was not because Zhao had suggested dismantling Party rule as part of his political reforms, but because of the mistake Zhao made in “supporting the turmoil and splitting the Communist Party Central Committee”. Zhao’s removal was thus “only a measure of Party discipline” (*Beijing Review*, 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> July 1989: 5). The statement points to the cause of Zhao’s purge as being his refusal to endorse the CCP’s decision to use force to put down the Tiananmen demonstrators, which, in Deng Xiaoping’s eyes, was not only injurious to state interests but also a betrayal of socialist principles.

Zhao’s biggest failing, manifested in his disagreement with the method of suppressing the Tiananmen protests, was his toleration of dissent and his respect for human rights, which were similar to Gorbachev’s “humanistic socialism”, a characteristic that was attacked by some Chinese scholars after

1991 as being too soft and compromising towards the anti-communist upheavals in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Lu Houming, 1992: 51-56; Zhang Zesen, 1993: 66-67; Chen Kairen, 1994: 40). Zhao's liberal attitude towards dissent was well known even before the Tiananmen Incident. He once remarked that the campaign against bourgeois liberalisation should not be too excessive, and that the people who had committed mistakes in the eyes of the Party should be allowed to "keep their posts and give full play to their professional knowledge" (Zhao Ziyang, 1987). Similarly, one of the aspects for which Gorbachev was heavily criticised by Chinese scholars was his neglect of Marxist class struggle and his sympathy for the enemies of socialism. Many scholars explicitly questioned why the Soviet leader did not send troops into Eastern Europe when the communist powers there were being overthrown, and crush domestic anti-socialist forces when the Soviet state was under threat (Zhou Xincheng, 1991: 17-20; Tong Baochang, 1993: 12; Ma Yan, 1997: 12-13; Wu Wei, 1999: 5).

Therefore, to some extent, the all-out post-1990 Chinese criticism of Gorbachev had more to do with the Soviet leader's renunciation of the use of force in suppressing the anti-socialist movement than with his political reforms. These criticisms could be considered as a surreptitious way of justifying the CCP's brutal suppression of the Tiananmen demonstrations, which was seen as an effective and prompt method of defeating anti-party forces. Judging from the publication dates of the writings, in the wake of Tiananmen, Chinese scholars had few criticisms to make of Gorbachev. However, after the Soviet economy deteriorated and domestic turbulence began to unfold in 1990, coinciding with Gorbachev's announcement of his decision to terminate the power monopoly of the CPSU, many Chinese scholars stopped praising Gorbachev, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 their criticisms intensified. The contrasting pictures of post-1989 China and the post-1990 USSR (or Russia after 1991) led some to conclude that Gorbachev's failure was not caused by socialism, but because he had not taken a firm and clear stance on socialism. They argued that the chaotic situation in many post-socialist states demonstrated the disastrous outcome for a country of renouncing socialism (Shao Huaze, 1990: 2; Li Dezong, 1992: 42; Cai Song, 1995: 65), while the fact that China had survived demonstrated the positive outcome of taking a firm stance to support the continuation of socialism in the country. Their

criticisms of Gorbachev in hindsight might have given the public the impression that soft approaches and lax ideologies brought about nothing but tension and mayhem in a socialist country, whereas tough measures ensured order and stability. Through their attacks on Gorbachev's relaxed attitude, the criticisms served to justify not only the CCP's violent crackdown on the Tiananmen protesters, but also Deng's post-Tiananmen announcement of his intention to maintain stability in China (which was synonymous with retaining the CCP's monopoly of power) at any cost (Deng Xiaoping, 1994: 3.315).

### **Conclusion**

The existing secondary literature seems to have exaggerated the impact of Gorbachev on 1980s China. Previous scholarship suggests that after the mid-1980s Chinese Soviet-watchers identified Gorbachev's concept of *glasnost* and his political reforms with Western democracy, and used Gorbachev and his ideas to push the Chinese regime towards political democratisation on the eve of the Tiananmen Incident. This paper, however, has shown that 1980s Chinese scholars interpreted *glasnost* in a way designed to serve their own purposes, and that this interpretation was quite different from democracy in the Western sense. The Chinese definition of *glasnost* remains circumscribed by China's own mentality and history, reflecting the traditional Chinese understanding of human values and political culture. Moreover, few Chinese scholars used Gorbachev and his programmes to put pressure on the CCP to introduce some form of political Westernisation. Instead, most scholars manipulated the symbol of Gorbachev to support the reformist wing led by Zhao Ziyang in their factional warfare against the Party conservatives leading up to Tiananmen. In short, Chinese scholars did not regard Gorbachev and his programmes as having the potential to transform the political landscape of the PRC; rather, they perceived Gorbachev and his agenda as a tool that could be used to define, create and legitimise a reformed communist system on their own terms. The attractiveness of Gorbachev's *glasnost* to Chinese intellectuals in the 1980s, as claimed by the secondary literature, is thus more of a myth than a reality.

Moreover, in contrast to the secondary literature, which suggests that Chinese criticisms of Gorbachev after Tiananmen were to do with his role in embracing democratisation and the disruptive repercussions this brought to China, this paper has shown that the negative attitude of Chinese intellectuals towards the last Soviet leader after 1989 was more the result of Gorbachev's failure to use tough measures to prevent socialism in Europe from collapsing than anything else. Their criticisms of Gorbachev served to justify the Chinese government's brutal crackdown on civilian protests and to glorify the party's role as a bastion of state unity and stability. Many Chinese scholars were seemingly mounting efforts in defence of Deng's iron-fist policies, which had successfully preserved socialist rule and propelled China down the road to prosperity since the 1990s. They compared this with the faltering Soviet state that would eventually lurch into disorder and break down under Gorbachev's liberalisation and hands-off approach. The conclusion was that strong authoritarian rule that ensured political stability was far preferable.

Nevertheless, in and after the mid-1990s, as a strategic partnership was created between the PRC and Russia after the end of the Cold War, and with the increasing amount of bilateral economic and security cooperation, Chinese scholars reduced their criticisms of Gorbachev. Moreover, Chinese Soviet-watchers took account of the bitter lessons learned from the Sino-Soviet hostilities that had taken place under Mao Zedong, in which name-calling and exchanges of verbal attacks had severely damaged relations between the two countries. They made it clear that this tragedy should not be repeated, and this understanding also restrained them from excessively criticising the last Soviet leader.

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## **Taiwanese Media Reform**

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### **Introduction**

Alongside a consolidated liberal democracy and dynamic civil society, Taiwan boasts one of Asia's most liberal and competitive media environments. With cable TV and internet penetration rates among the highest in the world, and twelve 24/7 local TV news channels serving a population of 23 million, media liberalisation in Taiwan is, like democratisation, a success story. However, the pressures of intense commercial competition have created issues around professional ethics and the effects of sensationalism. Longstanding regulatory and ownership issues remain unresolved, including political partisanship across the media-sphere. Like their counterparts in other democracies, Taiwanese media companies are grappling with the transition to digital and the challenge it represents to traditional business models in a heavily media-saturated society. Mediatised political spectacles, hypermedia political campaigns and communicative abundance are inescapable features of Taiwanese life. The surface vibrancy of Taiwan's democracy owes much to the trace data produced by the tools of this abundance: the all-news-all-the-time TV channels, politicians' constant presence on connected devices, student activists mobilising via social media. Taiwanese citizens are by many standards engaged and politically active: they turn out to vote in large numbers, pay attention to the news and are knowledgeable about politics. Yet for all the openness that goes with trailing TV cameras and politicians' status updates on social media, the media and political communications environments in Taiwan

are a cause for concern in terms of the “quality” of their contribution to Taiwanese democracy. In this note, we outline the evolution of the media system as it has experienced two waves of reform, and comment on the prospects for further necessary reforms within a context where digital media is challenging traditional media operations and China casts a shadow over media freedoms.

### **First wave of media reform**

Taiwan’s media-sphere was transformed during the democratisation processes in the 1980s, with further significant developments accompanying the change of ruling parties in 2000 and 2008. Prior to the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwanese media operated as a part of a bureaucratic-commercial complex, with a small number of clientelist media companies enjoying profit-seeking opportunities under the authoritarian control of the Kuomintang (KMT). Press freedoms were highly circumscribed and closely reflected the KMT’s political agenda, to the extent that during the one-party era the media were a tightly controlled ideological apparatus confining the public sphere (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2004). Until deregulation and liberalisation the three terrestrial TV channels were owned by the government (Taiwan Television; TTV, 台視), the KMT (China Television; CTV, 中視) and the military (Chinese Television Service; CTS, 華視). These outlets prevented the spread of alternative, non-KMT viewpoints, and effectively locked the political opposition out of mainstream media. Government authorities granted a mere 31 newspaper licences between 1960 and 1988, and the majority of these outlets were directly owned and managed by the party-state (Chen and Chu, 1987: 53–55, 91). The government also sought to co-opt private media owners, subsuming them into clientelist KMT networks. The two dominant newspapers during the authoritarian era, *United Daily News* (UDN; 聯合報) and *China Times* (中國時報), both had intimate ties to the KMT via cross-representation on editorial boards and the party’s Central Committee (Batto, 2004). The market dominance of KMT-affiliated media was first challenged by the establishment of the *Liberty Times* (自由時報) in 1989, and by the addition of a fourth terrestrial channel (Formosa Television; FTV, 民視) in 1997, both with links to the then-opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Serving broad social

constituencies ignored by the KMT media, these later entrants quickly established major market shares. The *Liberty Times* enjoyed the third highest circulation by 1997, and surpassed *UDN* and the *China Times* in 2005 in terms of market share and advertising revenues (Lin, 2008: 198–200). The *China Times* was unable to sustain the financial losses and was sold in 2008 to Want Want Holdings Limited (旺旺集團), one of Taiwan's major food labels with dozens of processing plants across China. CEO Tsai Eng-meng, one of Taiwan's richest entrepreneurs with strong business ties to China, renamed the paper *Want Want China Times*. Meanwhile in the television market, FTV quickly established audience share and financial security, mainly through the advertising-led business model that underpins all Taiwanese media. With the rise of FTV and increasing cable TV penetration, the three traditionally pro-KMT terrestrial commercial television stations—TTV, CTV and CTS—lost their market dominance and began to experience financial losses for the first time in 2002 (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2012: 397).

As part of the ruling KMT's response to bottom-up pressures to reform from Taiwanese society, the press ban was lifted in 1988, a year after Martial Law was rescinded. Newspapers were deregulated and many new radio stations and cable TV channels received licences in 1992 and 1993. The legalisation of cable TV in 1993 precipitated the expansion of local, national, regional and international TV programming. Operating illegally since the 1970s, unregulated cable TV was already widespread, albeit "essentially run by the mafia" (Chin, 2003: 68). The Cable TV Act (有線電視法) legalised and brought a degree of regulation to the market and, as a result, penetration rates increased further and the number of channels increased dramatically (Chan-Olmstead and Chiu, 1999). As the media system moved rapidly from strong control to a high degree of liberalisation, Taiwan became one of the most heavily saturated pay-TV markets in the world. Press freedom measures improved and Taiwan quickly moved up the Freedom House press index, although questions remained about public access to quality information (Hung 2006).

The increasing number of media outlets expanded public space for political competition, including the local all-news channels providing novel round-the-clock political coverage and critical commentary. The first political call-in show, *2100: All People Talk* (2100: *Quanmin Kaijiang*, 2100: 全民開講) was aired on



TVBS in 1994 (Chu, 2003). This infotainment format, reminiscent of pirate radio programming during the one-party era, quickly became a staple of prime-time and late-night cable news schedules with performative “political theatre” (Fell, 2007) and “saliva wars” (口水戰) becoming a distinct feature of Taiwanese TV political coverage. However, over time the heated and often controversial call-in element of political talk shows became increasingly difficult for producers to handle. While a few shows have maintained public interactions, most have changed to a studio format with discussion restricted to invited pundits from different political and professional backgrounds, moderated by one or two presenters who are mainly senior journalists.

**Table 1: Taiwanese news channels<sup>1</sup>**

Channel	Ownership	Political orientation
TTV News 台視新聞台	Feifan (Unique Satellite TV) Group	Neutral, pro-business
CTV News 中視新聞台	Want Want Holdings	Pro-China
CTS News Info 華視新聞資訊台	Taiwan Broadcasting System	Neutral
FTV News 民視新聞台	DPP	Pro-DPP
SET News 三立新聞	SET TV Group	Pro-DPP
ETTV News 東森新聞	US consortium (pending approval)	Pan-blue, Pro-China
ETTV Financial 東森財經新聞台	US consortium (pending approval)	Pan-blue, Pro-China
ERA News 年代新聞台	Mr Lian Tai-sheng (練台生)	Connection to local mafia
Next TV 壹電視新聞台	Mr Lian Tai-sheng (練台生)	Connection to local mafia
CTi News 中天新聞台	Want Want Holdings Ltd	Pro-China
TVBS News TVBS 新聞	HTC Corporation	Pan-blue, pro-business

<sup>1</sup> The authors gratefully acknowledge the insights of Professor Chien-San Feng of National Chengchi University.

Feifan News 非凡新聞台	Feifan (Unique Satellite TV) Group	Pro-business
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**Table 2: Major Taiwanese newspapers**

Paper	Ownership	Political Orientation
Liberty Times 自由時報	Liberty Times Group	Pan-Green, Pro-DPP
Apple Daily 蘋果日報	Next Media	Pan-Green, Anti-Establishment
United Daily News 聯合報	United Daily News Group	Pan-Blue, Pro-KMT
China Times 中國時報	China Times Group	Pan-Blue, Pro-China
Commercial Times 工商時報	China Times Group	Pan-Blue, Pro-Business
Economic Daily News 經濟日報	United Daily News Group	Pan-Blue, Pro-Business
Taipei Times 台北時報	Liberty Times Group	Pan-Green, Pro-DPP, English lang.
China Post 英文中國郵報	China Post Group	Pan-Blue, Pro-KMT, English lang.

### Second wave of media reform

Following the DPP's victory in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections several media reform initiatives were undertaken by the Chen Shui-bian administrations. First, legislation was passed in 2003 to formalise the withdrawal of political parties, the state and military from direct media ownership stakes. By the end of 2005, the KMT had relinquished one third of its shares in CTV, 97 percent in the Broadcasting Corporation of China (BCC, 中廣), and half of its stake in the Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC, 中影). DPP legislator and party Standing Committee member Chai Trong-rong was forced to resign from his position as chair of FTV (Rawnsley and Rawnsley 2012: 409). While direct political ownership has declined, political influence by proxy remains an issue. Second, the National Communications Commission

(NCC) was created in 2005, modelled on the American Federal Communications Commission (FCC), as an ostensibly neutral regulatory body to manage and supervise the commercial media sector. Third, a public service-oriented network, Taiwan Broadcasting System (TBS, 公廣集團), was expanded in 2006 by consolidating several existing TV channels including the Public Television System (PTS, 公視, launched in 1997), CTS (established in 1971), Hakka TV (客家電視台, founded in 2003 to serve Hakka communities) and Taiwan Macroview TV (宏觀電視, founded in 2000 to serve overseas Chinese). Sharing a remit with PBS in the US to provide inclusive and educational programming, TBS has struggled to make significant inroads against commercial competitors, and investment remains limited.

The progressive commercialisation of the Taiwanese media market took a major step with the entry of the Hong Kong tabloid *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報) in May 2003. *Apple* brought colour images, cut-throat price wars and tabloid journalism. Paradoxically, it has also become known for relatively nuanced political coverage, highlighting the persistence of partisanship in other outlets. As newspaper readership dropped from 76 percent of the population in 1992 to under half in 2004, the pursuit of advertising revenue streams became increasingly important for media proprietors. Journalists are often pressured by their employers effectively to act as salespeople by promoting sensational and outlandish views. Career progression through sales performance (instead of journalistic ethics or professional conduct) and product placements in news and other TV programming have become commonplace in the commercial media sector (Chen, 2005). The blurring of editorial and business considerations prevented further advancements in press professionalism and independence, even as Taiwan's press freedom index ranking continued to improve during the Chen Shui-bian era (Chuang, 2005). Under Chen, the DPP proposed extensive reviews of media policy frameworks in the early 2000s. The Radio and Television Act (廣播電視法), the Cable Radio and Television Act (有線廣播電視法), and the Satellite Broadcasting Act (衛星廣播電視法)—known as the “Three Broadcasting Acts” (廣電三法)—were established during the analogue era and proved inadequate for regulating contemporary media industries with an increasingly prominent digital component. However, media policy reform was highly politicised and discussions within the Legislature

failed to make much progress, leaving Taiwan's media industries in a state of under-regulation.

### **The China factor in Taiwan's media**

Commercial competition within Taiwan's media sector has gradually led to the concentration of private ownership, with incomplete legal frameworks unable to provide proper regulation for dealing with mergers and acquisitions. Taiwan's complicated and increasingly intensive relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) has sharpened the perception of inadequacies in regulation and potential vulnerabilities in the media sector. As the PRC became Taiwan's largest export market in 2004 and largest trading partner in 2005, increasing economic interdependence has spilled over into the media sector. One of the most notable examples was Want Want China Times Group's (旺旺中時集團) aggressive attempt to acquire capacity in Taiwan's print and cable sectors and to expand operations as a content producer and service provider. The Want Want Group CEO Tsai Eng-meng has allegedly exercised political influence over media under his control (Rawnsley and Feng, 2014: 107–108). Taiwan's Control Yuan revealed that the Want Want China Times Group received subsidies from several Chinese provincial and municipal governments and repeatedly embedded messages representing Chinese interests in their news coverage and advertisements throughout 2010 (ROC Control Yuan, 2010). Moreover, many television stations, including traditionally pro-DPP companies like FTV and Sanlih E-Television Station (SET, 三立) have sought to increase revenue streams by selling programming to the PRC, exercising self-censorship to avoid offending potential customers among Chinese buyers. For example, the news department of SET has deliberately reduced its reports on sensitive issues such as Tiananmen, Tibet and the Falun Gong since 2010. The station even shut down a popular anti-China, pro-Taiwan independence political talk show, *Big Talk News* (*Da hua xinwen*, 大話新聞) in 2012, allegedly bowing to pressure from the Chinese government (Zhong, 2012).

The negative side-effects of ever closer cross-strait economic interactions have worried media watchdogs inside and outside Taiwan. According to

Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders, Taiwan's press freedom has declined since 2008. Trends include increasing sensationalism and declining quality of media output, embedded marketing and censorship imposed by advertisers and the alleged influence of the Chinese government channelled through important Taiwanese investors. As the Ma Ying-jeou government hastened the pace of cross-strait economic integration, public concerns over the concentration of media ownership and the "China factor" triggered a student-led Anti-Media Monopoly Movement in mid-2012. The widespread protest movement eventually led to the drafting of an Anti-Media Monopoly Act (反媒體壟斷法) in 2013 (Rawnsley and Feng, 2014). Nevertheless, like the amendments for the Three Broadcasting Acts, it has been stalled in the legislature since 2013. Media reform is a major issue for progressive politicians like newly elected legislator Huang Kuo-chang, a member of the anti-monopoly movement representing the New Power Party.

### **The challenge of digital media**

In addition to protesting against the further concentration of media ownership, social activists have pioneered the circumvention of traditional media gatekeepers via social media. Most obviously the Sunflower Movement largely relied on social media for both internal and external communications and coordination. The Sunflower students who occupied the Legislature for three weeks in spring 2014 operated a 24-hour live stream of the scene inside parliament, and an in-house team posted real-time updates online, including translations into foreign languages and an English-language Reddit "Ask Me Anything" page where people from all over the world could ask about the occupation (Chao, 2014; Lin, 2014; Rowen, 2014). Some activists commented that social media gave them the freedom to express their views directly, free from the partisan filter they believed Taiwan's traditional media were using to distort their words and actions. Ordinary citizens, often anonymously, have used social media to break big stories that were eventually picked up by traditional media. One popular platform is the Professional Technology Temple (PTT) Bulletin Board System founded by National Taiwan University students in 1995. Its recent scoops include a series of photographs of a purported Sinocentric new history textbook written after the Ma

administration's controversial second round of curriculum revisions (Juo, 2014); the release of government documents indicating the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation had acquired land within an environmentally sensitive area and then had its legal status changed to allow future development (Hsu and Chiang, 2015); and an accusation of sexual harassment against the legislative candidate and Sunflower Movement and anti-monopoly leader Chen Wei-ting, which drove him to drop out of the race the day it went viral (*Apple Daily*, 2014).

For Taiwan's media and political actors, the past decade has been a time of "disruptive" digital technologies and platforms as the political communications environment has been transformed, prompting evolving responses to new challenges, affordances and expectations. In the beginning, the responses of political actors were hesitant, partial and ad hoc. Although the DPP in particular was an early adopter, in terms of its digital election communications, notably Chen Shui-bian's presidential campaign in 2000, it did not represent a systematic attempt to adopt digital communications strategies. Other actors, notably the KMT with its greater reliance on ground-based factional mobilisation, were left scrambling to respond. The hesitant responses of political parties and traditional media presented openings to bloggers and citizen journalists. However, over time, older power dynamics have been reasserted, with traditional power holders in the mainstream media and political parties re-grouping and adapting to the prevailing conditions of communicative abundance and media hybridity (Sullivan, 2014). Major media companies have adapted to the transition from offline to online media (Department of Information Services, 2015), running popular web platforms that generate a high level of social media sharing of their own reports (Rickards, 2016). New online-only news organisations such as *Storm Media* and *The News Lens* have enriched Taiwan's news media environment but are still undergoing growing pains. Taiwan's elected officials have found utility in social media, particularly during election periods (Sullivan, 2010). Major political figures such as President Ma, President-elect Tsai Ing-wen, KMT Chair Hung Hsiu-chu, and Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je update their social media profiles several times a day for the benefit of millions of followers.

### **A third wave of reform?**

The prospect of a third wave of media reforms has increased with the transfer of presidential and legislative power to the DPP following the January 16, 2016 elections. Just two months after entering the Legislature as the third-largest caucus, the New Power Party (NPP), ostensibly a DPP ally on the progressive side of the political spectrum, has proposed ambitious draft legislation aimed at preventing media monopolisation (Chen, 2016; Liu, 2016). Companies would be forbidden from owning more than three of the following seven kinds of media businesses: Cable TV, terrestrial TV, Internet protocol broadcasts, national radio stations, news and business channels, national daily newspapers, and channel distribution agencies. Holding companies, banks, and insurance companies, and their owners, would not be allowed to launch, operate, or control media companies. If more than 30 percent of a TV or radio station's programming were produced outside Taiwan, the station would have to send 1 percent of its annual revenue to a "media pluralism fund." Media company employees would have the right to choose an independent board member, and media owners and employees would be obliged to negotiate a legally binding agreement on editorial autonomy. On behalf of audiences, civic groups could file lawsuits against media mergers that would concentrate media ownership, and against government agencies that fail to protect free speech or media pluralism. Any relevant legislation would require the cooperation of the DPP caucus, which is likely to make its own proposals or moderate the NPP's. However, the NPP's history and membership lends it significant political capital on this issue. Legislator and NPP Chairman Huang Kuo-chang was a prominent member of the anti-media monopoly movement; at the time, the *China Times* falsely reported he had paid students to participate in the protests (Harrison, 2012). Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting, two other leaders of the anti-media monopoly movement, are also vocal NPP supporters. More broadly, the NPP has implicitly identified itself as a successor to the 2014 Sunflower Movement, which was itself a successor to the anti-media monopoly movement in aspects such as the leadership of Huang, Lin, and Chen and the grassroots mobilisation of students to protest at government facilities out of concern for Taiwan's autonomy (Wang and Cole, 2012).

Two recent high-profile proposed media acquisitions may lead to action by the new administration to head off further Chinese influence over Taiwan's media. One is DMG Entertainment's 2015 agreement to acquire 61% of the Taiwan-based Eastern Broadcasting Co. The proposed acquisition is controversial because DMG Entertainment cofounder Peter Xiao, the chairman of the Beijing-based affiliate DMG Yinji, allegedly has family ties to the People's Liberation Army. DMG Entertainment's chief executive Dan Mintz has argued since he, not Xiao, signed the agreement, these questions are moot, but the Taiwanese government and public may decide otherwise. The other case is North Haven Private Equity Asia's (NHPEA) proposed acquisition of China Network Systems Co., which has been conditionally approved by the NCC but put on hold by the Ministry of Economic Affairs' Investment Commission following protests by DPP and NPP legislators. These lawmakers have argued NHPEA is a Trojan horse for Far Eastone Telecommunications Co. (FET), which in 2015 paid NT\$17.12 billion for NHPEA corporate bonds. Since FET counts the government's four major investment funds among its shareholders, NHPEA's acquisition could be construed as direct government investment in a media company, say DPP legislators, who have also argued the deal would give FET's corporate parent the Far Eastern Group inappropriate power over the media (Loa, 2016; Shan, 2015). NPP representatives have advised the Investment Commission to put off review of the case until Tsai Ing-wen assumes the presidency in May 2016 and can move to reverse the NCC's decision.

## Conclusion

State power and market forces can both interfere with the quality and independence of the media sector. As discussed in this note, despite the successes of media liberalisation, Taiwan's media system has struggled to find a balance between the fluid interplay of these two forces. During the martial law era, state power was dominant and, as a result, Taiwan's press freedom was highly circumscribed. However, elements of market competition provided private media companies with a degree of editorial independence and enabled media outlets such as the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* to attract much larger readerships than the newspapers directly controlled by the party-



state. Under authoritarian one-party rule prior to 1987, Taiwan's media industries were regulated by inadequate policies which were often expedient afterthoughts serving the interests of the KMT. For example, the three TV stations were established in 1962, 1967 and 1971, but the Television Act was passed only in 1976 to legitimise their existence retrospectively. Moreover, media related regulations, such as the Publication Act, were very vague and allowed the authorities tremendous arbitrary power to interpret the guidelines in ways that best served them (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2001).

After the lifting of martial law in 1987 and a series of constitutional reforms in the 1990s that institutionalised societal pressure for democratic reforms, the first wave of media liberalisation helped to shape the processes of democratisation. The DPP administrations between 2000 and 2008 initiated a much needed second wave of media reforms by passing a number of long-awaited broadcasting and television acts, creating an independent media regulatory body, and expanding the public television sector. Nevertheless, these reforms were insufficient to catch up with the global development of information technology and convergence of communication platforms. Democratic consolidation has witnessed the erosion of state power accompanied by an aggressive expansion of national and international market forces in Taiwan's post-democratic media environment. While the island's press freedom index continued to rise in ranking under the Chen Shui-bian government, commercial pressures on the media eroded some of these gains. Far from promoting pluralism and diversity of programming, market pressures have led to low state investment in the media, repetitive and low-quality programming, sensationalist tabloid journalism and a concentration of ownership in the hands of a few powerful private individuals and consortia that are accountable to shareholders rather than the public. One way to reduce the threat of these problems is through appropriate media legislation to boost investment in quality local programming and to curtail media monopolies. Unfortunately, the media sector, governments and audiences have demonstrated insufficient enthusiasm or political will for any serious form of media regulation, exacerbating the negative effects of market competition and increasing the power of private media owners, whose interests may not be consistent with those of Taiwanese society. A third wave of reforms is crucial to ensure that Taiwan's media sector does not backtrack.

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## **Taiwan's 2016 Presidential and Legislative Elections**

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### **Introduction**

The January 16, 2016 ROC elections, represent the sixth time the ROC president has been elected by popular vote and the eighth general election of all representatives to the Legislative Yuan.<sup>1</sup> They also represent the third turnover of party-in-power, and the first time that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has won simultaneous control of the presidency and the legislature. In this election note, we assess the Ma Ying-jeou presidency, the conditions that led up to the 2016 elections, including the “mid-terms” in November 2014, describe the campaigns and analyse the results with an eye to the implications for domestic political competition and cross-Strait relations of the DPP winning control of the executive and legislative branches of government.

### **The Ma Ying-jeou presidency**

President Ma of the KMT is constitutionally obliged to stand down in May 2016 after two terms in office. The January 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 elections to choose his successor and determine the composition of the 113-seat Legislature were conducted against a backdrop of widespread discontent with Ma's policies and performance, and can be characterised as a “change election”. On entering office in 2008, with 58% of the vote and a substantial legislative majority for his party (Muyard, 2008), Ma's aims were: to stabilise cross-Strait relations

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1 “Taiwan” is used throughout as shorthand for “Taiwan, Republic of China (ROC)”

after a period of instability and deadlock during his predecessor Chen Shui-bian's tenure from 2000-2008; to revive Taiwan's economic fortunes through closer integration with the Chinese economy; to balance the imperative of economic incentives with the maintenance of "national dignity"; and to roll back the "de-Sinicisation" elements of Chen's "Taiwanisation" programme by emphasising Taiwan's Chinese cultural heritage and situating Taiwan within the framework of the greater Chinese nation. The underlying device Ma used to pursue these aims was the "1992 Consensus", a rhetorical position regarding Taiwan's status vis-à-vis China characterised by "One China, respective interpretations". The "1992 Consensus" is controversial in Taiwan (not least because the PRC does not recognise the "respective interpretations" qualifier), but its ambiguities created space for the two sides to develop a workable platform and a generated an unprecedented level of momentum, yielding a number of practical agreements across several socio-economic sectors, including a limited free trade agreement (FTA), the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). On the surface, Ma leaves cross-Strait relations in significantly better shape than when he began his presidency in 2008, but his policies have had mixed results for Taiwan's economy, society, foreign relations and many other policy sectors.

Under President Ma the tenor of cross-Strait relations reached an all-time high. The reinvigoration of semi-official frameworks and the institutionalisation of party-to-party talks culminated in the first-ever meeting of sitting PRC and ROC presidents in Singapore in November 2015 (Hu & Langfitt, 2015; Office of the President, 2016a; Perlez, 2015). The stability of cross-Strait relations during a period of increasing friction between China and Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and other territorial claimants in the South and East China Seas, has been warmly welcomed by global leaders (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014; Thornton, 2015). As a claimant to disputed territories itself, Taiwan has generally been conciliatory and responsible in its foreign policy, with gains made in resolving points of contention with Tokyo and Manila. Moreover, the Ma administration demonstrated that it is possible for Taiwan to cooperate with China, reversing the trajectory of his predecessors. However, while superficially the temperature of cross-Strait relations has never been better, the underlying militarisation of the Strait, manifested in the approximately 1800 Chinese missiles stationed across the Strait in Fujian

Province, remains unchanged. Despite Ma's China-friendly orientation, China's military posture represents an undiminished threat to Taiwan's national security (Cabestan, 2010). Passage of the PRC's Anti-Secession Law (albeit three years before Ma assumed the presidency), China's growing military capacity and rapid modernisation, the changing military balance in the Taiwan Strait, broad popular nationalism and the undiminished pressures of "hawks" within the CCP leadership (including the People's Liberation Army), mean that Taiwan's security environment has not significantly changed despite Ma's détente policies. Ma's domestic opponents have pointed to China's military posture as a reason for caution in embracing an explicit national security threat, and called for the maintenance of Taiwan's military preparedness via an appropriate level of defence spending, the pro-active procurement of weapons from the US and the professionalisation of the Taiwanese armed services: pressing tasks which stalled during Ma's tenure (Chao & Shih, 2011; Thim, 2013).

Ma's policy of opening up parts of the Taiwanese economy to Chinese investment and expanding and deepening cross-Strait economic integration has had positive results, particularly for large corporations and individuals with the capital and skills to exploit new opportunities (Muyard, 2010). The promised results were hampered by the global financial crisis and subsequent recession that negatively affected Taiwan's export markets, especially in the US and Eurozone. Although most economic indicators rebounded impressively in 2010, the effects of this recovery were less felt in the population at large than in specific sectors of the economy. Taiwan's exports grew robustly during President Ma's first term despite the global financial crisis. Total annual exports grew 20% from 2008 to 2011, with one third of that rise coming from exports to China, which totalled US\$557 billion in the first seven and a half years of Ma's tenure (more than double the US\$257 billion of China-bound exports in the equivalent period of the Chen Shui-bian administration) (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2016). But while numerous economic agreements have been signed, there have been significant difficulties in implementation and the intended keystone policy of Ma's second term, a follow-up agreement to ECFA, the Cross-Strait Service and Trade Agreement (CSSTA), remains in a state of limbo having failed to achieve ratification in the legislature. Furthermore, in attempting to push through the CSSTA, Ma overplayed his hand, causing rifts

between different branches of government, and within his own party, and an outpouring of popular discontent dramatically manifested in the Sunflower Movement and the student-led occupation of the Legislature in the spring of 2014 (Rowen, 2015). Though he comfortably secured re-election in 2012 (Sullivan, 2013; Tsang, 2012), the Sunflower protests, primarily aroused by Ma's apparently authoritarian and opaque decision-making, marked a watershed halfway through his second term (Rowen, 2015). Ma argued, with some justification, that the CSSTA would increase Taiwan's international competitiveness, and framed it as a response to the FTAs signed by Taiwan's regional competitors, rather than in terms of economic integration with China per se, but his neglect of democratic procedures repelled many Taiwanese who increasingly expect transparency and accountability in government.

One of the major points of discontent during Ma's second term was that the benefits of his economic policies have not been evenly distributed across Taiwanese society. Average disposable income rose just 1.6% for Taiwanese from 2008 to 2014, while the cost of living rose 7.9% in the same period, producing widespread feelings of relative deprivation exacerbated by property prices inflated by Chinese investment in Taiwan's real estate sector (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, 2016). The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) estimated in the first quarter of 2015 that the price of a home was 16 times the average annual income for Taipei residents and 8.5 times average annual income in Taiwan as a whole. The MOI's national housing price index estimates prices nationwide rose 45% from March 31, 2008, to March 31, 2015 (Ministry of the Interior, 2016). These livelihood issues are not solely due to Ma's China policy, but there is little doubt that it exacerbated them, whilst increasing Taiwan's dependence on China's economy: trade with China, Hong Kong, and Macau accounts for around one third of Taiwan's total trade volume, while Taiwanese investments continue to head to China in record amounts (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2016; Chen Yung-chi, 2015).

While the extent of Taiwan's participation in international society remains incommensurate with an economy of Taiwan's size, or a consolidated liberal democracy and global trading power (Winkler, 2008), it did expand during Ma's tenure. Taiwan's small group of diplomatic allies remained stable; Taiwan



was able to join several international organisations (increasing to 37 under Ma, including the World Health Organization's health alert system); and ROC citizens now enjoy visa-free entry, landing-visa privileges, and other entry facilitation programmes in 153 countries, including the US and EU (Department of Information Services, 2015). President Ma's administration is keen to emphasise these successes as indicators that it has acted with great resolve to uphold Taiwan's "dignity" and "respect" (Office of the President, 2016b). Within Taiwan there is longstanding controversy over what constitutes "dignity" and the means to achieve it, but a broad consensus appears to have emerged that national dignity lies in upholding Taiwan's status as a discrete, functionally autonomous, liberal democracy that is not China. This notion is apparent in longitudinal public opinion surveys, but does not translate into a widespread preference for formal independence, at least not in the face of Beijing's steadfast equation of "Taiwan independence equals war" (Sullivan and Lowe, 2010).

Notwithstanding developments in public opinion, Ma's presidential discourse has emphasised Chinese identity (Sullivan and Sapir 2013). Through his tenure, the proportion of Taiwanese people identifying as "Taiwanese only" increased notably from 45% to 60% (Election Study Center, 2016). President Ma's references to his own and Taiwan's Chinese origins illustrate a personal commitment to the idea of the centrality of Chinese nation to Taiwan that is incompatible with the lived reality and national identity preferences of a majority of Taiwanese, particularly younger people for whom Ma's pet notion of being descended from the Yellow Emperor is incongruous. Despite instrumentally appealing to a sense of Taiwanese identity during his election campaigns (Sullivan and Sapir, 2012), Ma increasingly identified with the Chinese nation and disregarded the specificities of Taiwan's contemporary experience. As a result of Ma's discursive behaviour and the deliberate marginalisation of the "Taiwanese wing" of the KMT, embodied by Ma's battles with his personal *bête noire* Wang Jin-pyng, the KMT became a party aligned with "Chinese-ness" at a time when the appeal of "Chinese-ness" has become marginal. By returning the KMT to its roots as the party of Chinese nationalism, and moving it away from a centrist position with broad instrumental appeal, the KMT under Ma damaged its electoral chances.

## 2014 'mid-term' elections

Despite advances in cross-Strait relations, Taiwanese society under Ma Ying-jeou became more unequal with a greater sense of widespread relative deprivation than ever before. Ma's approval ratings sunk below those of Chen Shui-bian (whose corrupt activities as president landed him in jail when he stepped down), at one point reaching single digits. The writing was on the wall for the KMT's chances in 2016, with a catastrophic performance in the "9-in-1" local elections held in November 2014. However, the KMT's woes ran deeper than the unpopular president. With its "old guard" and "princelings", the party appeared to have lost touch with the electorate, neglecting its changing demographics and preoccupations. The extent of this estrangement should have been clear in the spring of 2014, when two years of large-scale popular protests over various issues culminated in students occupying the Legislature for three weeks (Rowen, 2015). Inexplicably, the KMT, which had long proved so skilful in adapting from authoritarian rule to the conditions of democratic competition, failed to heed the warnings. Instead, the mid-term campaign strategy relied on using vastly superior financial resources to attack opponents through negative campaigning and by leveraging long-nurtured factional networks. In the post-Sunflower era, these tactics failed to connect with voters, particularly the younger generation and their lived reality of stagnant wages, poor job prospects and little hope of getting on the property ladder. The KMT's tone-deafness was exemplified by Jason Hu, a veteran KMT figure who lost his position as Taichung Mayor after 13 years. Hu rightly identified that the KMT had lost because it did not understand young people. But he then proceeded to dismiss them as materialistic and ungrateful, saying "if you give them an iPhone 5 they are still mad at you because you did not give them an iPhone 6" (Shih, 2014), despite abundant evidence of the seriousness, dedication and sacrifice of many young Taiwanese activists during the previous three years.

The extent of voters' alienation from the KMT was highlighted in the highest-profile contest of all the 11,000 public offices up for grabs in 2014: the race for Mayor of Taipei City, a long-time KMT stronghold. Sean Lien, scion of the fabulously wealthy political family that had given us an earlier benchmark in electoral futility (KMT Honorary Chairman Lien Chan's feeble 23% third

place in the 2000 presidential election) ran against DPP-backed independent candidate Ko Wen-je, a surgeon with no political experience. Ko's "anti-politics-as-usual" candidacy perfectly captured the post-Sunflower zeitgeist, while Lien's campaign was peppered with tone-deaf faux pas that contributed to the prevailing image of an arrogant young princeling flailing out of his depth. Ironically, Ko's political inexperience, manifest in a number of gaffes of his own, became a badge of honour, the difference being Ko's unpractised sincerity and indifference to politicking. In the post-Sunflower ecology these characteristics resonated strongly with many of the city's voters, especially the young, and Ko's campaign created the kind of "we want change" buzz later associated with the campaigns of UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Democratic presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders in the US.

The KMT's landslide losses handed the initiative to the DPP. To stand a chance of winning the national elections in 2016, the DPP would have to appeal to broader interests than simply Taiwanese nationalism as it had in previous elections, and having been bypassed by the civic movements that eventually coalesced under the Sunflower banner, the party succeeded in communicating its message of economic and social justice. Following the local elections, the DPP could no longer be dismissed as a "party of the south" (the hotbed of Taiwanese nationalism). It did indeed sweep the south, but the DPP and its ally Ko also won the KMT's northern strongholds of Taipei, Taoyuan, Keelung and Hsinchu City. The KMT's ultimate presidential candidate, Eric Chu, held on to the Mayorship of New Taipei City (also known as Xinbei City) by just over 1% against the veteran Yu Shyi-kun, widely considered a no-hoper. Meanwhile, the KMT's high profile "princelings" (Sean Lien; Hau Lung-bin, son of former Premier Hau Pei-tsun; and John Wu, son of former KMT Chairman, Taipei mayor, and Taoyuan magistrate Wu Po-hsiung) were embarrassingly defeated. In all, the KMT won just six of the 22 mayoral and commissioner contests, its worst showing since 1997. To "accept responsibility" for the catastrophe, Premier Jiang Yi-huah and his Cabinet resigned, and top KMT figures stepped down from their party positions, including a number of vice chairs, the secretary-general, and Chairman Ma himself.

In equivalent local elections in 2010 (with a slightly different slate of posts), the DPP won two of the then-five special municipalities, which signalled a

rebound from the nadir of landslide national election losses in 2008. The 2010 mid-term performance encouraged the party to think that Tsai Ing-wen, competitive in losing the New Taipei City race, could compete for the presidency in 2012. Tsai had emerged as leader of the DPP from the wreckage of Chen's second term, and is acknowledged to have done a sterling job in resuscitating the party. Unlike many DPP politicians, Tsai had little factional or ideological baggage and proved capable in balancing competing factions within the party. While Tsai lost to Ma in the presidential election in 2012, she again performed creditably, and overseeing the huge local election gains in 2014 as party chairwoman, she consolidated her status as the DPP's obvious candidate for the presidential election in 2016.

### **2016 Campaigns**

The run-up to the national elections held concurrently in January 2016 was dominated by dissatisfaction with the outcomes and trajectory of President Ma's policies, embodied in a raft of livelihood issues. Under Ma, Taiwan's famously even distribution of wealth became a thing of the past and social mobility was no longer something that Taiwanese could take for granted. Education in particular no longer appeared to be the passport to mobility it once was, with an increasing proportion of graduates earning a derisory NT\$22,000 monthly starting salary (US\$650). While widespread feelings of economic dissatisfaction have taken hold, corporations and individuals with political connections have profited from opening up Taiwan's economy to China. Squandering a long-held reputation as stewards of the "Economic Miracle" in the 1960s and 70s, the KMT came to represent the privileged and well connected. Taiwanese companies have swapped investment in Taiwan for China (61% of Taiwanese investments since 1991 have been in China), moving out R&D operations and depressing the domestic jobs market. Chinese investment in real estate has caused bubbles and made housing unaffordable for ordinary Taiwanese. As in Hong Kong, an influx of Chinese tourists has exacerbated the sense of difference and antipathy towards Chinese people. Ma's espousal of Taiwan's commitment to being part of the imagined Chinese nation created resentment at perceived attempts to lock Taiwan into a

narrowing range of future options. It was against this backdrop of discontentment that the campaigns were conducted.

Tsai Ing-wen officially announced her presidential campaign on February 15, 2015 (Tsai Ing-wen, 2015). Since she was the only DPP member to apply for the party's nomination (Blanchard and Gold, 2015),<sup>2</sup> she had nearly an entire year to prepare for the general election and could take her pick of staffers and volunteers from the pan-green camp's recently concluded 2014 campaigns. The DPP also began preparing its legislative campaigns, holding primary polls for "competitive" seats (where it earned at least 42.5% of the vote in the 2012 elections) and either drafting candidates for the other districts or endorsing independent or third-party contenders for them, including social activists Huang Kuo-chang, Freddy Lim, and Hung Tzu-yung of the newly established, Sunflower-inspired New Power Party (NPP) (Gerber, 2016), which endorsed Tsai Ing-wen's presidential campaign, burnishing her credibility with a veneer of youth and progressive leftism.

From the outset, Tsai sought to address a major weakness in her losing 2012 campaign by cleverly sidelining her China policy through constantly pledging adherence to the "status quo". The fact that the "status quo" is a nebulous concept (for example it could equally refer to "one China" or Taiwan's functional autonomy) was to the DPP's advantage. The DPP has traditionally been vulnerable on China policy, but since the vast majority of Taiwanese citizens over many years have evinced favour for some version of the "status quo" (with the qualifiers "leading to independence/unification" or "indefinitely"), Tsai's policy position became a non-issue, inoculating the DPP from attacks on its China position and helping livelihood-minded voters set China policy to one side. Tsai also sensibly sought to expand DPP support beyond its traditional *Minnan*-speaking and Taiwan-nationalist base. With Hakka heritage herself, Tsai admitted in one televised debate that the DPP had not done enough for the Hakka, mainlander, and indigenous citizens but she would do her utmost for them as president (Hung, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016). Her campaign was very active on social media, releasing new videos several times a week and Facebook posts several times a day. She campaigned hard for the

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<sup>2</sup> The party officially nominated her on April 15, 2015.

DPP and its allies' legislative candidates, emphasizing to voters that without a legislative majority her hands would be tied even if she won the presidency (Wang Po-jen, 2016).

In stark contrast to the unusually serene DPP, the KMT endured a tortuous presidential campaign, with intraparty intrigue consuming media attention from the beginning of the cycle to the end. Controversies embroiling KMT elites revealed divisions within the party and a deficit of effective leadership. The incumbent president's unpopularity ensured that any KMT candidate would face an uphill struggle, and this seemed to discourage most aspirants from running. Vice President Wu Den-yih considered running (Tsai Hui-chen, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015) but ultimately decided against it. Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng prepared a campaign (Luo, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015) but announced near the end of the party's registration period that he would stand aside (Chen Chih-ping, 2015) as party sources whispered to the press that President Ma strongly opposed Wang becoming the KMT's candidate (*Apple Daily*, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Eric Chu, the only KMT candidate to win a special municipality election in 2014, was widely considered "next in line" for the KMT, but from June 2014 through September 2015 he steadfastly and repeatedly refused to run for president, promising his New Taipei City constituents that he would faithfully serve out his second term as Mayor, and even ignoring a petition signed by dozens of KMT legislators facing re-election (*Apple Daily*, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2015; *Formosa News*, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015; Hsu, 18<sup>th</sup> October 2015). Other potential candidates, like former Taipei mayor Hau Lung-bin and former Chiayi City mayor Huang Min-hui, chose not to step into the vacuum.

When the KMT's registration period for aspiring presidential candidates ended, the only two registrants were former health minister Yaung Chih-liang, who had no electoral experience, and Deputy Legislative Speaker Hung Hsiu-chu, a Chinese nationalist who had never run in a first-past-the-post general election and whose electoral base was in the most KMT-friendly areas (Alison Hsiao, 2015). Talk of the party drafting a more electorally viable candidate was repeatedly dismissed by Hung, who demanded the party stick to its rules. When Yaung was disqualified after failing to gather the requisite number of signatures (Luo, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2015), the KMT ran a public poll to decide whether to nominate Hung, who had to clear a certain threshold to win the nomination.

Once word got out they could help the KMT saddle itself with a relatively unelectable (though intrepid) candidate through open polling, pan-green supporters apparently began mendaciously telling pollsters they supported Hung (*Apple Daily*, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015)<sup>3</sup>. Regardless of how this happened, Hung performed outstandingly in the KMT's poll (Tsai Pei-fang, 2015), paving the way for her nomination on July 19, despite negative reactions among some KMT legislators and the media (*Apple Daily*, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2015; Chen and Chen, 2015).

With Hung staking out pro-China positions on the far-right (campaign "highlights" included her comparison of Taiwan's student activists to the Cultural Revolution's Red Guards and comparing Taiwanese to Nazis) (Hu, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015; Lai, 2015) a vacuum opened in the centre-right, which the opportunistic James Soong stepped into by declaring his own presidential campaign August 6 (Hsu, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015). Soong, formerly a powerful KMT apparatchik who had suppressed press, speech, and language freedom as Government Information Office director during the authoritarian era but also enjoyed a popular reputation as a politician who "gets things done", apologised for the suffering of Taiwanese under martial law (Hsu, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2015). He also courted local factions that had been turned off by Hung's Chinese nationalism (PTS, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2015) and lambasted the performance of President Ma (Formosa News, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015) whom Hung likened to a father figure (Chou Yi-tzu, 2015).

With the candidates announced, the campaign settled into an equilibrium with Tsai running far ahead of Hung and Soong, who were splitting a minority of the votes. With Hung's support never exceeding 20%, and concern growing about the spill-over effects of her extreme positions on the prospects of its legislative candidates (who had been chosen by a central committee led by Hau Lung-bin rather than by the local party chapters as had been customary) (Wang and Chen, 2015), the KMT's Central Standing Committee turned the race on its head by calling an extraordinary party congress to rescind Hung Hsiu-chu's nomination and nominate Chairman Eric Chu in her place (Hsu, 8<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Apple Daily's* media poll results shifted from Tsai 54%, Hung 28% in a May 15-18 survey, to Hung 50%, Tsai 28% in a May 30 survey.

October 2015). Chu went along with the plan, breaking his countless promises not to run. The party congress was held October 17, violating the KMT charter, which stipulates that two months' notice must be given for any KMT party congress (Chen Chang-wen, 2015). Moreover, because the KMT charter did not vest a party congress with the authority to rescind a rule (and a law-abiding presidential candidate's nomination), the party congress had first to pass a resolution to amend the party charter in order to give itself the power to replace Hung with Chu the very same day.

The KMT and Chu were, not surprisingly, pilloried for hanging Hung out to dry. According to a Cross-Strait Policy Association poll, 60% of voters thought the KMT's method of replacing Hung was unreasonable while only 15% found it reasonable, and 76% thought the KMT, not Hung, was to blame for the poor performance of her campaign (just 6% blamed Hung) (Cross-Strait Policy Association, 2015). Hung and Chu sniped at each other in the press (PTS, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015) and some observers accused the KMT of sexism against Hung, noting it had never fully financially supported her campaign in the first place (*Apple Daily*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015; Ku, 2015). During the December vice presidential debate, DPP vice presidential candidate Chen Chien-jen himself questioned whether the KMT had been sexist against Hung, and KMT vice presidential candidate Jennifer Wang declined to respond (Hsiao Ting-fang, 2015). The CSPA poll also found 64% thought Chu should resign from his mayoral position if he were running for president (as had been the custom for Taiwan's public officials cum presidential candidates); Chu refused, instead taking a three-month sabbatical (Chang, 2015). Now considered faithless by many citizens, Eric Chu's popularity declined, and his own presidential poll numbers turned out to be almost as low as Hung's had been (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 2015).

The November vice presidential nominations followed a similar pattern to the presidential nominations. Tsai selected the well-liked and well-known epidemiology researcher Chen Chien-jen, who as health minister in 2003 had helped Taiwan respond to the SARS epidemic. Soong nominated Legislator Hsu Hsin-ying, a local faction politician and Hakka from Hsinchu County who was chairwoman of the Minkuotang (MKT) (Republican Party), a nascent party that splintered from the KMT and ran against it in numerous districts. And Chu



selected former labour minister Jennifer Wang, a lawyer who helped pioneer women's rights legislation. While Chen and Hsu both performed competently, Wang became mired in scandal nearly as soon as her campaign began. Labour activists derided her performance as minister, drawing particular attention to her ministry's lawsuits against laid-off workers designed to recover compensation they had received from the government (*The Liberty Times*, 2015). An even bigger story was the revelation she had handsomely profited from buying and selling over a dozen military housing units, using complicated legal structures to avoid running afoul of the law, and was living in publicly subsidised civil servant housing (Chou Chih-hao, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015; Chou Chih-hao, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015). The scandal seemed particularly to damage the KMT's support among some of its most loyal members, military veterans, who had already been turned off by the replacement of ideological fellow-traveller Hung Hsiu-chu (*Wealth Magazine*, 2015). A December CSPA poll found that Wang's disapproval rating was 63%, and 68% of respondents thought her housing speculation was inappropriate (Hsu, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

Eric Chu failed sufficiently to distance himself or his campaign from President Ma's record and policies, and while he was closer to the centre and more palatable to local factions than Hung had been, Soong was now able to argue he was the more honest candidate (Lin, Chung, and Kuo, 2015). Opposition legislative candidates seized the opportunity to damage KMT candidates and incumbents by associating them in voters' minds with the party's unpopular headliners. Citizens slapped stickers on KMT legislative candidate posters proclaiming they were recommended or supported by Ma or Wang (Wytze, 2016), and a large Taoyuan billboard argued supporting the KMT legislative candidate equalled supporting Jennifer Wang (*China Review News*, 2015).

A record number of parties, 18, ran for the party-list legislative election (*Apple Daily*, 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015). The party lists of the DPP, NPP, TSU, and Social Democratic Party-Green Party (SDP-Green) alliance included numerous NGO members, social activists, and professors (Chen Hui-ping, 2015; Chiu, 2015; Yeh, 2015; Yen, 2015). The PFP's list was headlined by KMT defector Lee Hung-chun and included representatives of various social sectors (Hu, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015). The New Party originally declined to nominate a party list

because it fully supported Hung Hsiu-chu's presidential candidacy, but once Eric Chu replaced her it reversed its decision and put forward a slate of Chinese nationalists to draw protest votes from dissatisfied deep blues (Yang, 2015). The MKT's party list made news for the inclusion of former spy Chen Hu-men, who had served a prison term for his involvement in the 1984 murder of journalist Henry Liu in California (Gerber, 2015). Chen's nomination drew attention to Buddhist monk and former intelligence officer Miao Tian's influence over the MKT. The KMT's party list (*Apple Daily* 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015) attracted the most attention and controversy: several members of the party itself ridiculed it (Hsu, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2015), and rumours swirled that Eric Chu had personally made the list, breaking with the past custom of KMT leaders of assembling the list by committee (Lee, 2015). The "safe seats" at the top of the list were largely occupied by local faction politicians, while representatives of traditional party constituencies, like the military and labour unions, were relegated to the lower ranks where they were unlikely to be elected (and ultimately were not). The list did have one bright spot: the high ranking of Lin Li-chan, an immigrant from Cambodia who had worked in civil society for the rights and interests of other women who had immigrated to Taiwan through marriage (Amber Wang, 2016).

The final month of the campaign featured three presidential debates: a vice presidential debate, three presidential forums and one vice presidential forum. Chu was strongly negative during these events, constantly criticizing Tsai Ing-wen, such as by calling her policies unclear, equivocal, or dangerous and linking her to the Chen Shui-bian administration. His own policies were similar to Ma's. Tsai fended off Chu's attacks while promising a clean break from the KMT and laying down an outline for her future plans. Soong rose above the fray by promising to be a nonpartisan uniter. In the vice presidential events, Chen Chien-jen laid out DPP policies, Hsu Hsin-ying called for non-partisan solutions while advocating for the MKT, and Jennifer Wang defended her integrity and her past actions as labour minister. Chu, Alex Tsai, and Chiu Yi made headlines with near-daily accusations against Tsai, including a claim by Chu that she planned to open up Taiwan to the import of US pork with ractopamine residue (Yang, 2015) (Tsai denied having made any such promises) and a claim by Alex Tsai that most of Taiwan's diplomatic allies would switch recognition to the People's Republic of China if Tsai Ing-wen were elected (the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied this) (Chen Yao-tsung, 2015), but they failed to alter the basic dynamics of the race. Over the campaign's final two weeks, with Tsai maintaining a support base greater than the combined support of the other two candidates, media attention finally turned to the tight legislative battles around the island. With Chu having promised to step down as chairman if he lost the election, and the KMT widely expected to lose, reports even surfaced about KMT leaders like Hung Hsiu-chu and Hau Lung-bin considering campaigns to replace Chu after the general election (Stacy Hsu, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016; Tsai Hui-chen, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

### **The Results**

Tsai Ing-wen won the presidential election with 56% of the vote. Eric Chu finished second with 31% and James Soong third with 13% (Central Election Commission, 2016a). Tsai's 25-point margin of victory was the largest since Lee Teng-hui's 31-point win over three opponents in 1996, and her vote total of 6.894 million was second only to Ma Ying-jeou's 7.658 million in 2008. Tsai won every region except the sparsely populated counties of Hualien, Taitung, Kinmen, and Lienchiang, where Chu placed first, and she earned over 50% of the vote in each of the six major cities.<sup>4</sup> Her performance was the best ever by a DPP presidential candidate, while Chu's was the worst by a KMT candidate since Lien Chan's third-place, 23% result in 2000. At 66%, voter turnout dropped to a historical low for an ROC presidential election, 8 points lower than the 74% turnout of 2012. The total number of voters decreased by a little over 1 million. It is unclear how many people stayed at home because they expected the race to be a whitewash and how many were protesting against the poor performance of the KMT. Regardless, Tsai entered office with a much stronger mandate than her predecessor Chen Shui-bian did in either 2000 or 2004.

In the 113-seat legislative election, 68 seats went to the DPP, 35 to the KMT, 5 to the NPP, 3 to the PFP, 1 to the Non-Partisan Solidarity Union (NPSU), and 1 to an independent (Central Election Commission, 2016b). The independent

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<sup>4</sup> The special municipalities of New Taipei (55%), Taipei (52%), Taoyuan (51%), Taichung (55%), Tainan (68%), and Kaohsiung (63%).

afterwards joined the DPP caucus, swelling it to 69 (Liu, 2016), while the NPSU legislator joined the PFP caucus (Hsu Yi-chen, 2016). The NPP formed its own caucus, led by Soochow political science professor Hsu Yung-ming; this is expected sometimes to assist the DPP caucus led by Ker Chien-ming and at other times to put pressure on it from the left. With the PFP caucus working independently from the KMT's, the KMT caucus is without coalition partners. The DPP has a legislative majority and the KMT is in the legislative minority, both historic firsts.<sup>5</sup> Tsai Ing-wen will thus be free of the divided government that frustrated many of Chen Shui-bian's efforts during his 8-year presidency. Moreover, the new legislative speaker, elected with all 74 DPP and NPP caucus votes, is none other than Tsai Ing-wen's 2012 running mate Su Jia-chyuan; the DPP's Tsai Chi-chang will be deputy speaker (Tsai, 2016). Thus the next four years could bring myriad long-awaited legislative amendments, with particular priorities including food safety, social housing, and the nationalisation of controversial KMT assets (*Apple Daily*, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015; Hung, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016; Wu, 2016).

**Table 1: Presidential voting by city/county**

District	Voters	Tsai (%)	Chu (%)	Song (%)
New Taipei City	3,204,367	54.8	33.3	11.9
Kaohsiung	2,254,324	63.4	26.0	10.6
Taipei City	2,175,986	52.0	37.5	10.6
Taichung	2,138,519	55.0	29.8	15.2
Taoyuan	1,627,598	51.0	34.4	14.6
Tainan	1,528,246	67.5	22.1	10.4
Changhua County	1,022,962	56.5	28.8	14.7
Pingtung County	689,170	63.5	27.0	9.5
Yunlin County	566,207	63.4	24.9	11.7
Miaoli County	448,520	45.5	37.6	17.0
Chiayi County	430,885	65.4	23.4	11.2
Nantou County	415,122	52.2	32.1	15.7
Hsinchu County	412,731	42.5	35.3	22.2

<sup>5</sup> The DPP was the largest caucus from 2001-2004, but the KMT formed a majority coalition with the PFP.

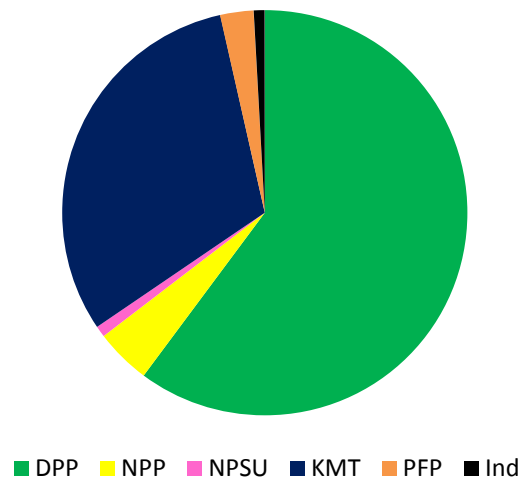
Yilan County	369,211	62.1	25.4	12.6
Hsinchu	328,580	51.2	32.4	16.4
Keelung	306,548	48.2	35.3	16.5
Hualien County	267,862	36.9	47.7	15.3
Chiayi	210,758	59.9	28.0	12.2
Taitung County	179,547	38.4	44.6	17.0
Kinmen County	111,386	18.0	66.1	15.9
Penghu County	84,222	50.8	29.5	19.7
Lienchiang County	10,240	16.5	68.6	14.9

The DPP's biggest gains in the historic 2016 legislative election came in the Taipei suburbs of New Taipei and Taoyuan. In the 2012 election, the KMT had won 10 of 12 New Taipei seats and all 6 Taoyuan seats; this time it won just 2 New Taipei seats and 2 Taoyuan seats, with the other 14 going to the DPP and its coalition partners Huang Kuo-chang (NPP) and Chao Cheng-yu (independent). Chen Ying won the DPP's first-ever seat in an indigenous district. The DPP candidates took the former blue strongholds of Hualien and Taitung. In the south the KMT was not remotely competitive, with the DPP sweeping every seat in Yunlin, Chiayi, Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung. The KMT's best performance (on a relative scale) came in central Taiwan, where local faction-supported candidates such as Yen Kuan-heng (son of Yen Ching-piao) and Hsu Shu-hua ran far ahead of the pan-blue presidential candidates. The KMT also held on to 6 of 8 Taipei seats, as 5 of the 6 non-DPP candidates the DPP endorsed in the city fell short with other opposition candidates splitting the non-KMT vote. The KMT also held on to four of the six indigenous district seats, though one of its winners, Uliw Qaljupayare, may ultimately have his victory invalidated due to suspected vote-buying (*Apple Daily*, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2016).

In several districts numerous voters split their tickets, with many supporting the KMT's district legislative candidate but not its party list or its presidential candidate. On the other hand, Tsai's total was about equal to the combined party list votes for the DPP, NPP, SDP-Greens, TSU, and third-tier pan-green parties, and Tsai typically ran ahead of the DPP's district legislative candidates.

In the party list election where seats were allotted by proportional representation, the DPP won 44% of the vote and 18 seats, the KMT 27% and 11 seats, the PFP 6.5% and 3 seats, and the NPP 6.1% and 2 seats. The New Party earned 4.2%, just short of the 5% threshold for representation but strong enough to qualify for annual government subsidies for the next four years. The SDP-Green alliance and TSU each won 2.5%. With the TSU bereft of legislative seats, the week after the election the outgoing party chairman raised the possibility of the party disbanding (United Daily News, 2016). The other two parties to exceed 1% were the Faith and Hope League—a new party with informal ties to conservative Christian churches—and the MKT, which received 1.7% and 1.6% of the vote, respectively.

**Chart 1: Legislative seats**



Overall, the results of the 2016 elections showed a similar pattern to the 2014 ‘mid-term’ elections (Sung, 2016) and were consistent with opinion polls through the campaign. The election eve scandal involving the teenage pop singer Chou Tzu-yu, forced by her Korean record company to apologise for holding an ROC flag, had a minimal effect on the results (Lin, 2016). With a public appetite for change expressed through a number of channels during the

past four years, the outcome of the 2016 national elections reflects a new balance of power where the DPP has the upper hand over the KMT.

### **Implications of a “change election”**

While there are divisions in Taiwanese politics, and a lot of noise, there is a high degree of consensus in society and convergence between the major parties. Fundamentally, both major parties have limited room for manoeuvre when it comes to China policy: public opinion does not support extreme moves in either direction and the range of policy options is limited by Beijing’s position and the reality of cross-Strait economic interdependence driven by market forces. Thus the fact that the DPP controls both branches of government is unlikely to lead to radical changes in China policy. President Tsai is more pragmatic than former President Chen Shui-bian and she inherits a complex set of foreign policy and socio-economic dynamics that will require careful judgement. On the domestic front, the DPP has promised to recalibrate the Taiwanese economy, with a greater focus on distribution and addressing ongoing livelihood issues such as increasing the provision of affordable social housing and raising graduate salaries. While this reorientation is welcomed by many Taiwanese, Tsai will face obstacles outside her control that come with being closely tied to the turbulent global economy. The DPP has aspirations to internationalise Taiwan’s economy, reducing reliance on China and integrating Taiwan into regional and pan-regional projects such as the TPP. These are reasonable ambitions, but Taiwan’s participation in international agreements will depend on unlikely PRC goodwill, or at a minimum, Beijing’s acquiescence. Beijing views Tsai with deep suspicion, including her ability to rein in the more independence-minded factions of a party they view as “secessionist”. Officially, Beijing will adopt a wait and see attitude, while preparing to put the squeeze on Taiwan in the absence of demonstrations of “sincerity” from Tsai. A major stumbling block will be the “1992 Consensus” that Ma has enthusiastically promoted as the “status quo”. Tsai, along with many Taiwanese, rejects the notion that an ad hoc agreement between the CCP and a then-unelected KMT should dictate democratic Taiwan’s options. As Xi Jinping has taken personal leadership of the PRC’s Taiwan policy decision-making, marginalizing the Taiwan Affairs Office, Beijing’s position on acceptance of “one China”, even in

the guise of “one China, respective interpretations”, has hardened. In the absence of significant conciliatory noises from Tsai, Beijing will seek to woo Taiwan’s handful of diplomatic allies, increase pressure on the large community of Taiwanese businesspeople living in China and work to support the KMT and marginalise the DPP. Given the momentum of market forces, there is not a lot that Tsai can do to stem the flow of investment to China, and the hollowing out of Taiwanese industry is a serious vulnerability.

Perhaps the biggest implication of the 2016 elections is the emergence of a generational shift in Taiwanese society. The notion that wise elders should take care of decision making, in the family and in politics, has long been deeply embedded in Taiwan’s political culture, underpinning, and propagated by, four decades of KMT one-party rule. Taiwan’s transition to flourishing democracy is a constant rebuttal to the self-serving narratives of conservative, change-resistant elites: Taiwanese have proven that there is nothing inherent in the Chinese or Confucian cultural heritage that disqualifies them from having a fully functioning democracy. Yet, the legacy of one party rule and instrumental quasi-Confucian notions did not disappear with the coming of elections. Political elites retained their sense, and their carefully framed narrative, of knowing what was best for the people. And many citizens, conditioned by decades of priming through the media and the education system, continued to have a narrow understanding of what democracy means, sometimes complaining to pollsters that democracy was too messy and divisive. There is no democratic tradition in Chinese culture, and the late political scientist Tianjian Shi argued that many Taiwanese came to understand democracy via the idea of *minben* (民本), a restricted form of government by benevolent elites that he called “guardianship democracy” (Shi, 2015). More recent research shows that the attitudes towards authority that underpin support for this form of government are not widespread among young Taiwanese. The age 19-35 cohort is more supportive of democracy as a political system, and acceptant of the noise and contention that accompanies it. And while they are more likely to call themselves Taiwanese, it is identification with democracy that is a crucial part of this trend. The cohort that has grown up under a democratic system takes for granted liberal democratic norms like freedom of speech, accountability and transparency to a much greater extent than their elders, who had to “learn” them. This attitudinal change represents a



significant challenge to the foundations of “guardian democracy”, which is magnified by the popularisation of digital and social media. Unlike their parents, the younger cohorts have grown up with the norms associated with internet culture, where there is little deference to authority and obvious scepticism and mistrust of government. Befitting the generation that has rejected the notion of “guardian democracy”, Taiwanese young people are politically active on a greater scale than their forbears, and their demand for accountability and transparency is something that will affect the contours of political competition for years to come.

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**Williams, Ifan, translated and edited by Ching May Bo (2014), *Created in Canton: Chinese Export Watercolours on Pith*. Guangzhou: Lingnan Art Publishing House, 376 pp., ISBN: 978-7-5362-5549-4, £75.**

This new bilingual work (with Chinese translation by Ching May Bo) explores in depth the phenomenon of pith painting (*tongzhi hua*) in 19<sup>th</sup> century China, drawing extensively upon major international collections to shine a light upon a Guangzhou-based art form that has until recently been little appreciated either within or outside China.

The spongy pith of *Tetrapanax Papyrifer*, a small tree, has long been valued in China as a medicine, coffin-liner and as a material for stuffing cushions. As early as the Jin Dynasty it was being used to make decorative artificial flowers, but it was not until the nineteenth century that enterprising artists in Canton began to use wafer-thin sheets of pith as a medium for painting, producing a wide range of images, for sale primarily to visiting westerners.

Pith was ideally suited for this purpose, as its cellular structure was impermeable to the gouache watercolours favoured by the Cantonese artists. In consequence, pith painters could produce works of great delicacy and vibrancy which - when mounted in albums and protected from light - have often retained their brilliant colours to the present day.

This monumental work is the culmination of international research undertaken by Ifan Williams which has led him to explore collections in Austria, Britain, China, Egypt, Estonia, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden and the USA. This global project has resulted in the production of a massive volume which, ably supported by an extensive biography that will doubtless prove of immense value to future students, at last provides a focus for the appreciation of this hitherto underrated art-form.

The work commences with an extended introductory chapter, which not only sets pith painting within its historical and cultural context, but also provides an overview of the production process. This is followed by a chapter which examines the lives and works of four named nineteenth century painters: Lamqua; Tingqua; Sunqua; and Youqua. The following chapters address specific recurrent themes, including: "Ships, ports and rivers"; "Agriculture fish and manufactures"; "Flora and fauna"; "Dress"; "Street trades"; "Religion, old tales, Processions and performances"; and "Crime and punishment". These richly illustrated chapters provide insights not only into the work of the Chinese creators of the works, but also into the preoccupations and interests of the western buyers who sought to bring home a small remembrance of their time in Canton.

Whilst the book is generously illustrated in colour throughout, the 183 full-colour plates that comprise the latter part of the volume are revelatory. Drawing on the finest works in the medium, these not only celebrate the creative virtuosity of their painters but also - through a startling series of works by Sunqua reproducing images of Spanish American and Peruvian costumes - provide a potent reminder that they were not operating in isolation but were rather fully aware of other artistic traditions. Nor was their work unappreciated in the West. As the author reminds us, Lamqua's 'Head of an Old Man' was displayed at the Royal Academy in 1835.

Ifan Williams is to be heartily congratulated for his tenacity and thoroughness of his research. In his preface to this volume, Chen Yuhan observes that "Before the pictures collected by Mr Ifan Williams and his study of them were made known to us, few people in China recognised that Guangzhou used to produce a huge number of watercolours on pith for export and even fewer paid any attention to them." In no small part as a result of his efforts, this art form is enjoying a revival in its city of its origin. This work well deserves a place on the bookshelves not only of students of Chinese art, but also of historians with an interest in relations between China and the West in the nineteenth century.

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**Yang Chia-Ling and Roderick Whitfield. *Lost Generation: Luo Zhenyu, Qing Loyalists and the Formation of Modern Chinese Culture*. London: Saffron Books, 2012, 312pp. ISBN-10: 1872843379, £35.**

This intriguing collection of essays takes as its inspiration Luo Zhenyu's enduring reputation as a founding scholar of modern Chinese art scholarship, and is therefore of clear interest to scholars with interests in the history of art, art scholarship and art commerce as it locates that intellectual reputation and contribution in the wider context of his life (should we say lives?) as a Qing loyalist, Manzhouguo official, connoisseur and art dealer. It is also of much wider interest for the questions that it raises (even though it does not answer or even directly address all of these) about lives such as Luo's that were lived between the competing visions and communities of China's twentieth century.

Yang Chia-ling's thoughtful introduction points both to Luo's scholarly reputation and to his status as an ambiguous, border-crossing figure: an imperial loyalist whose work, Yang proposes, was nonetheless constitutive of an East Asian modernity; an anxious commentator on China's problems who, in later life, sought solutions in the difficult external collaborations of Manzhouguo and for many years lived, one way or another, between China and Japan; an antiquarian who sought to preserve written and material heritage, and produced studies of lasting influence on that heritage while authenticating forgeries and dispersing documents, paintings and artefacts overseas and using the proceeds of those sales to fund further scholarly work. Yang wrestles with the challenges that Luo's career presents to the later reader as it unfolded across China, Japan and Manzhouguo from the meanings of post-May-Fourth cultural preservation to understandings of loyalty, and points to some intriguing contradictions in Luo's approach to these: if loyalty to some concept of China is enacted through appreciation and preservation of art and artefacts, what are the meanings of trade, especially overseas trade, in those artefacts? How do we read "Qing loyalism", and how did the "loyalists" themselves understand it? Was this simply a comforting trope, another conceptual artefact to be traded? Yang offers no easy answers to these questions; and if Luo had his own answers he would not be the only former Qing official who declined to reveal them.

While these are the questions that may first draw our attention to Luo, however, one of the great strengths of the collection is that the individual chapters reveal a wider complex of cultural and social practices, emphasising that the Qing loyalists—who can so easily appear as yesterday's men in the grand narratives of post May Fourth China—found footholds in that uncertain world and worked in diverse ways to reinvent and repurpose the traditional. Wang Cheng-hua emphasises Luo's central role in the formation of studies of material culture (*qiwuxue*) and in the development of studies of antiquity in the period before the emergence of a Chinese archaeology. Shana Brown's treatment of Luo as collector charts the complex motives—scholarly, sentimental, anxious and frivolous—that drove collecting and thereby shaped the market in antiquities, and the shifting status of the private collector at a time when new museums were laying claim to documents and artefacts as the stuff of public, national scholarship on their terms and recasting the connoisseurship of Luo's generation as essentially selfish as well as archaic. Pai Shih-ming maps Luo's thinking on tradition and national essence and his efforts to translate historical scholarship into an intellectual case against the spirit of May Fourth. Luo's failure in this is saddening, not simply because he could not make an unfashionable argument stick but because his achievements in 'transmitting antiquity' seemed in themselves to offer so little of substance to modern challenges.

The following chapters, though, warn us not to assume that Luo was simply shipwrecked by history. Tamaki Maeda's meticulous study of Luo in Japan reveals how very prolific he was as a dealer, and how well connected, and offers intriguing insights into debates over the authenticity of works verified by Luo and processes and consequences of authentication and de-authentication. Robert Culp explores the role that literati such as Luo had in shaping the new publishing sector in Shanghai, using commercial publishing to secure an income and access to texts, re-embedding native-place and kinship networks and promoting classical works in modern publishing houses and preserving those works for Chinese readerships as Jiangnan libraries were shipped one by one to Japan. Hong Zaixin's intriguing analysis of Luo's place in scholarship and the art business in Kyoto points to the contradictions that marked his career and his reputation even before his wartime engagement with the Japanese in Manzhouguo. As well as influencing Japanese tastes in



Chinese art by trading in both authentic and forged works, Luo survived in the complex and unstable art markets (indeed at times appears to have made those markets), continued to declare his loyalty to the Qing and inspire biographies that portrayed him as a dedicated, impractical and impoverished scholar, despite having arranged the transfer of 200,000 works of epigraphy to Kyoto University and amassed a personal collection of over 1,200 *guhua* artworks.

Yang Chia-ling and Shao Dan examine Luo's Manzhouguo years. Having moved to Tianjin (which he found unprofitable, compared to Kyoto) Luo landed in Lushun in 1928, where he was active in discussions on Qing restoration and continued to deal in art and antiques and—most lucratively—national archives. Yang notes the challenges of tracking Luo's dealings, though these remained central to his interests and status. Luo seems to have found political relations with the Japanese stressful and unrewarding (as did others in similar positions), and an important message of Yang's analysis is that while cultural capital might easily be monetised, it translated less effectively into political influence. Shao Dan compares Luo Zhenyu and his choices to other Qing loyalists, valuable context that appears to underline the hollowness of their post-Xinhai lives and thereby points us back to the animating puzzle of Luo's life in the intermediate zone between scholarship and practical economic and political interests.

This is a beautifully-produced volume with copious illustrations that include reproductions of the works that Luo dealt in and archive photographs of Luo and his world. The main text, unusually and very helpfully, includes characters for personal and institutional names and titles of important works and is supplemented with an extensive list of Luo's associates (I found myself wondering how that list might be turned into a map of networks and connections), details of exhibitions and events that he organised in his later years in the north-east, a full bibliography of his publications and a detailed chronological biography. The scholarship of the collection merits intensive study, while the stories of Luo's life offer compelling and enjoyable reading.

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**Kitson Peter and Robert Markley (eds) (2016), *Writing China Essays on the Amherst Embassy (1816) and Sino-British Cultural Relations*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, ix+193 pp, ISBN: 978-1-84384-445-7, £30.**

*Writing China*, consists of eight excellent essays on the Amherst embassy (1816) and Sino-British cultural relations. Thematically speaking, these can be roughly divided into three categories: comparative studies on Sino-British interactions in scholarly works, discourse analysis on accounts of the Amherst embassy and opium trade and spotlights on characteristic Chinese issues.

This final section is made up of two essays, namely, *Binding and Unbinding Chinese Feet in the Mid-Century Victorian Press* (Elizabeth Chang) and *'Lost Horizon': Orientalism and the Question of Tibet* (Q.S. Tong). In discussing the foot-binding issue in China, Chang adopts a fresh angle. Regarded as a mental as well as a physical disability, binding feet, she claims, also offers a platform for 'a confrontation with imported and assimilated ideas of movement, freedom and the power of narrative invention' (p.133). Chang uses several Victorian periodicals, along with some old travel narratives as her data, including *Westminster Review*, *The Penny Magazine*, *The Chinese Repository* etc.

First, Chang argues binding women's feet is more distressing and memorable than other Chinese customs, and it also stood as a troubling imposition of immobility on helpless and dependent Chinese women (p.137). Chang further adds that 'heads of Indians' or the corseted waists of European ladies' also 'occupied some similar space of overlapping conceptual and physical constraint' (p.138). She finally concludes that opposing footbinding for Chinese women is a declaration that 'disability can be denied and mobility can be reinstated through the tenets of reform' (p.150). This 'reform' alludes to both domestic reform possibilities and ideas about Chinese subjectivity and sovereignty. Thus, British activists 'allowed the dual process of unbinding Chinese women's feet and unfettering Chinese international development to be inextricably linked throughout reformist rhetoric, and helped to make claims of free and easy movement' (p.150).

Tong offers a panorama for Tibet's history and its cultural connotations. He mainly focuses on three groups of historic figures or works: George Bogle and Warren Hastings; Thomas Manning and idealisation and the mythologisation of Tibet; James Hilton and his well-known work, *Lost Horizon*. Tong says that between 1774 and 1775, Bogle led the first official mission to Tibet, i.e. earlier than Macartney's embassy. The Bogle mission was a 'fact-finding' mission for 'gathering geographical and ethnographical information about Tibet and the neighbouring nations' (p.171). The success of the Bogle mission encouraged Hastings, the first Governor-General of British India, to contemplate a second diplomatic mission—Samuel Turner led this mission to Tibet in 1783 (p.174). The nineteenth century witnessed an increase in British interest in Tibet, with Younghusband entering the city of Lhasa in 1904. Tong argues that it was in that period 'the question of Tibet as an independent and sovereign state emerged, and its relation with the central government in Peking has remained a controversial issue' (p.176). Tong then turns to Manning, the first and only Englishman who visited Lhasa and met with the ninth Dalai Lama. Manning's trip to Lhasa and description of the Dalai Lama lend 'support to the idealization and mythologization of Tibet' (p.178). Interestingly, Tong also links the spiritualisation of Tibet with the German National Socialist or Nazi Movement (p.181). In the third part of the essay, Tong introduces Hilton and his work *Lost Horizon*, which is a 'crystallization of a utopian Tibet in the creation of Shangri-la' (p.182). Hilton's utopian version of Tibet sees a land of purity, and it is related to his fictional statements on capitalism, modernity and the modern West (p.184). In his concluding part, Tong argues two issues. Firstly, the Dalai Lama in exile has turned Tibet into an international issue, but, an orientalist idiom adopted and promulgated by those Tibetans in exile cannot represent the Tibetans inside Tibet. Secondly, he notes internal racism among Han Chinese towards the Tibetans, which many Han Chinese would not recognise or acknowledge. He sees these two issues as two forms of orientalism.

The comparative studies section consists of three essays: *Elective Affinities? Two Moments of Encounter with Oscar Wilde's Writings* (Longxi Zhang), *Master Zhuang's Wife: Translating the Ephesian Matron in Thomas Percy's The Matrons* (1762) (Eun Kyung Min) and *Urbanisation, Generic Forms, and Early*

*Modernity: A Correlative Comparison of Wu Cheng'en and Spenser's Rural-Pastoral Poem* (Mingjun Lu).

Zhang bases his essay on his own reading experience and extends it to his readers in a brisk story-telling style. He raises two encounters with Zhuangzi's philosophy in Wilde's writing. One appears in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and the other in a review Wilde wrote on a translation of Zhuangzi. He states that 'in fact, reading Wilde's review and his presentation of Zhuangzi, one may feel confused whether Wilde is quoting Zhuangzi or he is speaking on his own' (p.161), and he finally reveals that 'there are obviously Wilde's own ideas disguised as the Chinese philosopher's, but surprisingly they show a remarkably accurate grasp of the core ideas of the Daoist philosophy, its argument against the kind of human intervention, as much represented by modern social institutions as by Confucian teachings, in the natural course of things' (p.163). It can be seen that Wilde's protest against British materialism and utilitarianism in the nineteenth century finds echoes in Zhuangzi's rejection of Confucian ethics. As Zhang argues at the end of his essay, 'when we put the different readings and interpretations in perspective, we may realize that the intellectual connections of western modernism with the East are serious and deep' (p.166).

Min's essay also sheds light on Zhuangzi. The focus of her research is Thomas Percy, the first European 'translator' of a full-length Chinese novel, *Hau Kiou Choaan* (好逑传). Min draws on Percy's book *The Matrons* (1762), a collection of six short tales about widows drawn from various historical periods and civilisations around the world. Min compares the piece 'Zhuang Zhou Drums on a Bowl and Attains the Great Dao' (庄子休鼓盆成大道), comparatively with a Roman tale on the Ephesian matron. Min argues that Percy made the resemblance between 'The Chinese Matron' and 'The Ephesian Matron' obvious and accessible in print for a popular readership (p.55).

The final essay of this section is Mingjun Lu's *Urbanisation, Generic Forms, and Early Modernity: A Correlative Comparison of Wu Cheng'en and Spenser's Rural-Pastoral Poem*. At the beginning of the essay, Lu demonstrates her originality by conceptualising early modern Sino-English relations in a

'correlative comparative model' where historically unrelated texts bypass the limitations of comparisons premised upon 'influence, coincidence and causality' (p.11). In comparing Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* and Wu Cheng'en's pastoral writing, Lu argues the literary register of urbanisation in both Elizabethan England and late Ming China 'correlates' rather than is casually connected. For Lu, the lack of direct contact between the poets of Ming China and Elizabethan England does not mean that the two works are not comparable. Using the work of David Porter, Lu argues that a 'basic commensurability' in these 'two seemingly disparate contexts' (p.16) rests on the alignment of their political histories and on parallels in the realms of social and economic history.

"The Dark Gift: Opium, John Francis Davis, Thomas De Quincey, and the Amherst Embassy to China of 1816" (Peter J. Kitson), along with *The Amherst Embassy in the Shadow of Tambora: Climate and Culture, 1816* (Robert Markley) make up the third part and argue for the importance of the Amherst embassy as well as its crucial significance for British understanding of China and the accounts to which it gave rise. Kitson argues that the narratives of the embassy, in their concerns about the 'kowitz' ritual and the rituals involved in the exchange of gifts, 'mask the material realities of the then vastly expanding and illegal trade in East Indian Opium' (p.8). In analysing the accounts written in 1840 by Thomas De Quincey and John Francis Davis, Kitson shows how the opium trade was crucial that time and how the embassy failed.

Markley's essay discusses the narratives of the embassy in the context of 'eco-criticism' (p.8). Mount Tambora erupted in 1815, and its climatological consequences led to the following year being known as 'the year without a summer'. Few people on the embassy was aware of the eruption and misread the signs of its impact on China as evidence of China's economic and political stagnation. He correlates the interpretation of these signs' with Christian 'typology', for the typology of Noah's flood is usually interpreted as a catastrophic event which marks the displeasure of God with sinful populations and corrupt regimes (p.86). Markley suggests it was the eruption that was responsible for 'colouring in often subtle ways those influential British understandings of China that came to view the Qing polity as corrupt, backward, and insufferably proud' (pp.8-9).

Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins, in her essay “Tea and the Limits of Orientalism in De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*” discusses the opium trade in the aftermath of the Amherst embassy. Jenkins first traces how tea became a crucial commodity in the formulation of the British national self, and argues that De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* deploys tea as a frequent topos designed to represent a form of domestic normality, which is similar to opium in China. Jenkins argues these two commodities mirror their ‘convolution in the vexed political economy between Britain and China in the era of the Opium Wars’ (p. 108), and ‘De Quincey’s writing about opium refers us, compulsively, to the figure of tea, which refuses to uphold the abstract opposition of England and China, instead revealing their involved intimacy in the everyday practice of English selfhood’ (p.131).

Colin Mackerras, in his book *Western Images of China*, interpreted Foucault’s ‘Power and Knowledge’ as being in a ‘circular relation’ (p.9). It can be seen that ‘power’ influences ‘opinions’ and ‘opinions’ heavily rely on the goal which ‘power’ wants to achieve. That foot-binding was chosen as a rallying cry to promote reforms for women the UK, that environmental conditions following a natural disaster were used to characterise Chinese stagnation, that Wilde took advantage of Zhuangzi’s ideas to criticise contemporary British society and that the Amherst embassy presented a negative China to cover up its diplomatic failure and justify the trade in opium can all be seen as ‘discourse means’ paving the road for the ‘ends’. These accounts strongly reflect the policies to be adopted towards China at that time. The ‘chemical reactions’ these articles could undergo when ‘mixed’ together seem to be unnoticed. If there were an overall theoretical framework, serving as a catalyst, such as the ‘Power and Knowledge’ concept, these eight articles could be more cohesively presented. The cohesion between essays could also be increased by linking them more thematically: as both Min’s and Zhang’s connect Zhuangzi with a British scholar, they could be put under one theme. However, all in all, this book extends our existing understanding of late Qing studies in new and exciting directions, and repays reading.

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