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## **From *Haijin* to *Kaihai*: The Jiajing Court's Search for a *Modus Operandi* along the South-eastern Coast (1522-1567)<sup>1</sup>**

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the 1567 change in Ming dynasty prohibition on maritime trade against the backdrop of increasing wokou or Japanese piracy along the coast at that time. While the current interpretation argues that the 1567 policy change was a capitulation to littoral demands by the state, I argue that the adoption of a kaihai (open seas) policy was the outcome of the Jiajing court's incremental approach towards resolution of the wokou crisis and the permitting, albeit limited, of private trade along the coast. In this search for a modus operandi, littoral demands featured less prominently than the court's final acceptance of reality on the coast on its own terms.*

Keywords: Ming dynasty, maritime policy, *haijin*, *wokou*

### Introduction

Mid-sixteenth century Ming China experienced what might be described as an all-out anti-*wokou* (Japanese pirate) campaign along the south-eastern coast.<sup>2</sup> Not only did this campaign necessitate the commitment of manpower and resources against the *wokou* in the provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian and Guangdong, it also forced a recalibration of long-standing policies culminating in the relaxation of the *haijin* (maritime prohibition) in 1567.

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank the editors and the two anonymous reviewers for their critiques and suggestions of this paper. All errors remain my own.

<sup>2</sup> The term *wokou* literally means 'dwarf bandits' and it was first noted in the stele of Gwanggaeto the Great of Goguryeo (ca. 414) located in present-day Jilin Province. The term made its first appearance in Ming documents in a 1369 record in the *Ming Taizu shilu* (*Veritable Records of Ming Taizu*). See Ren and He (2008) and Tanaka (1987).

One current interpretation posits that, instead of a Sino-Japanese conflict, the *wokou* crisis was in fact the result of an internal class struggle between the forces of embryonic capitalism (the *wokou*) and feudalism (the anti-*wokou* campaign) that ended with the Ming court's acquiescence with a policy change in 1567 (Fan, 2000). However, a closer analysis suggests that the relaxation of the *haijin* took place only after certain necessary conditions set by the court were met. Imperial acceptance of flourishing maritime commerce along the coast and growth of international trade in the South China Sea was granted only after the court was satisfied that a workable *modus operandi* could be established to address issues of maritime security and customs revenue along the coast. Hence, this paper contends that throughout the *wokou* crisis in the Jiajing era (1522-1566), the court was in fact searching for acceptable resolutions to the crisis on its own terms, albeit in a somewhat ad hoc fashion. The 1567 policy reversal was thus neither an inevitable outcome (Fan, 2000) nor was it just one among multifarious factors contributing to the subsidence of the *wokou* threat in Fujian (So, 1975). Rather, it represented a pragmatic approach that gained confidence for a policy change from precedents set by local initiative. In such an approach, the centre-periphery relationship is perhaps less confrontational than is currently assumed.

### **Beyond the Centre-Periphery Framework**

Conventionally, maritime China is considered a 'minor tradition' (Fairbank, 1983: 9) or even 'peripheral history' (Wills Jr., 1979: 204) in Chinese historiography. This stance consequently downplays the place and significance of littoral society and actors in grand historical narratives, giving rise to the motif of 'failed efforts and dissipated power' that marked studies of late imperial maritime China (Wills Jr., 1979: 205). However, as John E. Wills Jr. points out, relations with the peripheral areas also helped to shape the dominant core system (and vice versa), and studies of the periphery would contribute to understandings of the core and the whole since researchers are, by necessity, 'drawn away from a capital-centred history into the distinctive histories' of the periphery (Wills Jr., 1979; Wills Jr., 2011: 16).

This move into the periphery can be observed in studies of the Ming dynasty *wokou*. Traditional scholarship in China and Japan, dating from the 1930s to 1960s, tended to situate the *wokou* issue within the framework of Sino-Japanese relations, though with differing interpretations. Chinese



scholars interpreted the *wokou* as Japanese invaders (despite evidence that most of the *wokou* in the Jiajing era were Chinese), emphasizing the nationalist patriotism of the Ming anti-*wokou* campaigns (Chen, 1957; Li, 1933; Fan and Tong, 2004). On the other hand, Japanese scholars focused on the causal relationship between the failure of the Ming tribute trade system and the increased incidence of smuggling and piracy, branching from there into investigations of the true nature of the *wokou*, thus moving the issue during the 1950s and 1960s from the realm of Sino-Japanese diplomacy into studies of Chinese local society (Wu, 1999). This discussion of the true identities of the *wokou* was taken up by So Kwan-wai (1975) in his work on the *wokou*. While So attempted to draw a link between court deliberations, local developments and the subsidence of the *wokou* threat, his somewhat truncated discussion identifying the 1567 policy change as but one reason for the subsiding of the crisis is less satisfactory as an answer that subsumes the significance of adopting the *kaihai* (open seas) policy within the larger picture.

Since the 1980s, scholars such as Dai Yixuan (1982), Fan Shuzhi (2000), Lin Renchuan (1980) and Chen Kangsheng (1980) representing the 'New *wokou* thesis' school in China have, following Japanese scholarship, posited that the Jiajing *wokou* crisis was a reaction by the Chinese along the coast against the state-mandated *haijin* policy. Hence, the subsequent adoption of *kaihai* in 1567 represented a victory for littoral forces. The centre-periphery relationship in this case takes on shades of a conflict between state and littoral. Their predisposition towards the inevitability of *kaihai* as a matter of historical course also tended to overshadow or ignore the dynamics of core-periphery relations (Fan, 2000).

In order to have a clearer picture of the dynamics and considerations that culminated in the *kaihai* policy, effectively a reversal of what constituted a *zuzong zhi fa* (ancestral law) by the Ming court, I would argue that it is crucial not only to scrutinise the policy deliberations that took place at the centre, but also to do so in the context of policy decisions affecting the periphery.<sup>3</sup>

Since the early Ming, the strong presence of the littoral at the centre would have created invisible yet tangible webs of connections that impacted positively or otherwise on policy deliberations at court (Elman, 1991; Chaffee,

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion on the impact of what were deemed ancestral laws and institutions on the changing nature of Ming maritime policies, see Zhao (2008).

1995; Chan, 1998).<sup>4</sup> Any official at the centre, hailing from the peripheral areas, would have felt compelled by his native ties and networks to push for, or at least influence, policies that could benefit provincial, local interests. At the same time, officials appointed to the periphery as the Emperor's proxies could be held 'hostage' to local interests by their very dependency on local actors to achieve administrative competency (Brook, 1985: 48). This was clearly illustrated in the case of Zhu Wan (1494-1550), the *xunfu* (grand coordinator) of Zhejiang and Fujian. Appointed by the court in 1547 to oversee maritime security, Zhu's strident anti-smuggling campaign offended powerful, wealthy families in Fujian and Zhejiang who in turn engineered his fall from office (*Ming shilu: Shizong*, 1962-1966: 347.5a; Higgins, 1980; So, 1975).

Instead of an acrimonious struggle between core and littoral, it is perhaps more instructive to examine the *wokou* issue through the dual lenses of state and society. By the mid-sixteenth century, Southeast China, particularly the Lower Yangzi delta, had been experiencing dynamic development due to 'demographic growth, expanding communication networks, rapid commercialisation, and new critical thinking' since the late fifteenth century (Brook, 2005: 20). Ming society and its economy were moving forward by their own momentum and the court at Beijing, secluded from the growth, was at best a manager attempting to impose some form of order in the wake of these changes.<sup>5</sup> The *wokou* attacks of the 1550s, the security and financial crises that these triggered—the threat to great southern cities such as Hangzhou, Suzhou and Nanjing as well as the loss of much-needed income from the grain tax and tribute trade revenues—and the resultant debates over the best possible solutions to the problems of maritime security and foreign trade in the late Jiajing period are thus illustrative of the gaps and tensions between a state roused to action and a society eager for the perceived benefits of trade liberalisation.

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<sup>4</sup> The dominance of southern literati in the imperial bureaucracy through civil service examination success began during the Song dynasties and continued into the Ming period, growing to the point that a mandatory 40:70 ratio of northern to southern examination candidates had to be instituted by the Hongxi emperor (*r.* 1425).

<sup>5</sup> This became a noticeable trend after the 1449 Tumu incident which provoked a general crisis in Ming government. Thereafter, piecemeal local administrative reforms began to take precedence over established practices such that when administrative changes were noted, they were usually local practices that had become wide-ranging and prominent enough to be noticed by the court.

### Ming Foreign Policy: *Haijin* and Tribute

The *haijin* promulgated by the Ming founder, the Hongwu emperor (r. 1368-98), was not a Ming innovation as precedents had been provided by the Yuan dynasty (Chen, 1997a). What makes the Ming *haijin* unique, however, was Hongwu's intention for it to become a perpetual cornerstone of Ming foreign policy by serving a dual purpose— the achievement of coastal security by limiting private Sino-foreign contact, and the creation of a state monopoly over foreign imports such as spices, aromatics, silver and other exotica under the tribute trade system. That the *haijin* fulfilled the function of a security measure in Hongwu's estimation can be observed from repeated promulgation of the policy, especially after the failed coup of 1380, and the classification of exports of weapons and human trafficking overseas as capital crimes (*Ming shilu: Taizu*, 1962-66: 139.7a; 231.2a-2b; 252.2a).<sup>6</sup>

Implementation of the *haijin* was draconian. The *haijin* first appeared in 1372 when Wu Zhen, the 'Marquis of pacified oceans', forcibly registered 'boat households' and landless people along the Zhejiang coast as military households, moving them into garrisons and stockades built along the coast for defence purposes (*Ming shilu: Taizu*, 1962-66: 70.3b; Chen, 1997a). A second forced migration took place in 1380 when Tang He, the Duke of Xinguo, offered offshore islanders the option of registered civilian status if they moved before noon and registered military status if they moved after (Wang, 1997). Given the heavy taxes imposed on the former and the hereditary nature of the latter, it was hardly a palatable choice. Similarly autocratic measures imposed in Fujian remained in force two centuries later as a local gazetteer records how the unexpected order for offshore communities to move inland within three days caused numerous deaths when door panels and beds were used as rafts (Xie, 1983: 66.30a-31a).

While meant to plug possible avenues of collaboration between the people and foreigners, the forced migrations created an unintended security loophole as offshore islands were left uninhabited, unpatrolled and unfortified. By the mid-sixteenth century, the islands had become deserted isles where wild fowl

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<sup>6</sup> An edict issued in 1381 prohibiting people on the coast from private intercourse with foreigners was repeated in more stringent terms that prohibited the use of foreign aromatics and goods, in 1394 and given the force of law with restrictions enshrined in the 1397 legal code (Liu, 1995: *juan* 8).

and dogs roamed freely among the ruins of stone balustrades and mills (Wang, 1997). Shielded from winds and tides, these islands became immensely strategic shelters and bases for trader/smuggler groups (Chen, 1997a). The strict enforcement of the *haijin* had, ironically, weakened Ming maritime defence and created the conditions for smuggling and piracy to thrive.

The sporadic incidence of *wokou* raids and a long period of peace on the south-eastern coast between 1392 and 1521 also lulled coastal authorities into complacency (Elisonas, 1991). Coastal fortifications fell into disrepair while naval patrols were discontinued due to a shortage of ships (Chen, 1997a). The *weisuo* system of garrisons and forts along the coast was plagued with problems and records of manpower and equipment were badly maintained as Zhu Wan discovered when he inspected coastal defences in 1547.<sup>7</sup> The deterioration of coastal defences was severe: many battalions had less than half of their personnel quotas filled; soldiers had not been paid, in one extreme instance for twenty months; and the number of patrol boats and warships fell well below mandated quotas and were badly maintained (Zhu, 1997: 2.17b-18b). It was perhaps no wonder that the *wokou* crisis developed to the extent it did.

Restrictions placed on traditional maritime activities by the *haijin* had the additional effect of creating a vacuum in the regional trade networks that had existed since the Tang dynasty (618-907) (Chen, 1997a; Leonard, 1984; Huang, 2003; Wills Jr., 1998). In place of his blanket ban on private maritime trade, the Hongwu emperor instituted a system of state-controlled *kanhe* (tally) trade that took place under the auspices of a tribute system based on the traditional rhetoric and worldview of China at the apex of a hierarchy of states.<sup>8</sup> One of his first foreign policy acts in 1369, therefore, was to dispatch envoys to Southeast Asian polities to proclaim the foundation of the Ming dynasty and to obtain recognition of Ming suzerainty (*Ming shilu: Taizu*, 1962-66: 39.2a-3a). In

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<sup>7</sup> Devised as a self-supporting defence system staffed by regular officials and soldiers from military households who were expected to farm in times of peace and fight in times of conflict, the *weisuo* quickly proved unworkable as military households deserted their posts and the *tuntian* (military lands) disappeared into private landholdings of local families.

<sup>8</sup> The *kanhe* was a certificate given by the Ming court to foreign states as a form of identification for the tribute missions. Tribute missions arriving in China had to present their half of the *kanhe* to the *shibosi* (maritime trade supervisorates). Only when the certificate was matched with another half held by the Ming authorities were the missions allowed to present tribute and to trade.

return, the privilege of presenting tribute and carrying on *kanhe* trade with state-appointed agents was granted to receptive polities (Chen, 1987). To gain access to Chinese goods therefore, states had to assume the role of vassal and express their diplomatic exchanges in suitably subservient language (Zhao, 2005). The balance was however tilted in their favour—gifts presented by the Ming emperor to tribute envoys were of such great value that tribute missions were so often sent without regard for the fixed schedule and the Ming court had to remind the ‘vassals’ repeatedly to observe the protocols on frequency, number of ships and personnel of their missions.

The tribute system and *kanhe* trade were not Ming inventions, but the Ming versions were unique in their assertion of monopolistic control over *all* foreign trade (Zhao, 2005). What developed in the Ming, therefore, was a symbiotic relationship between tribute and official trade:

Tribute presentation and tribute trade are the same. All tribute-bearing foreigners would be received by their respective *shibosi* [maritime trade supervisorates] and they would be allowed to bring along other goods that they would then exchange with the people through the *yahang* [agents of sales and procurement]. This form of trade goes hand in hand with the presentation of tribute. If no tribute is presented, then trade is not allowed. Tribute trade and commercial trade are two different matters. Tribute trade that is allowed under the law and managed by the *shibosi* is official trade. The maritime trade that is not allowed by law and not managed by the *shibosi* is private trade (Wang, 1995: *juan*26).<sup>9</sup>

Restrictions placed on tribute missions in terms of personnel, ships and frequency meant that whatever *kanhe* trade that took place proved an inadequate substitute and therefore created fertile grounds for ‘private trade’ to flourish. Traders arriving with the tribute missions were often subjected to discriminatory practices by the officially appointed *yahang* during the period of *hushi* (mutual trade), lasting between three to five days, carried out either in the *shibosi* along the coast or at the *Huitong guan* (Interpreters Institute) in Beijing. Oláh Csaba (2008) has shown that Japanese traders were often

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<sup>9</sup> Three *shibosi* were established in the ports of Ningbo, Quanzhou and Guangzhou to receive foreign tribute missions from Japan, Ryukyu and Southeast Asia respectively, oversee the *kanhe* trade and manage all matters relating to foreign trade.

subjected to artificially low prices imposed on their goods by the Ming court as well as the unscrupulous business practices of the *yahang* traders from whom they had no recourse for their grievances. As abuses by *yahang* merchants became more widespread during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, so illicit 'private trade' and subsequently *wokou* activities correspondingly increased along the coast, especially where intense competition between trading groups and government suppression necessitated the bearing of arms to protect one's turf and resist arrest and incarceration.

The *kanhe* system might have worked if there had been cooperation and compliance from the local officials. However, mindful of the pressing fiscal needs and other demands of their specific administrations, local officials often ignored the rules concerning the reception of tribute missions according to fixed schedules and numbers. The *Mingshi* notes:

During the time of the ancestors, there was a fixed date for tribute presentation and an established system for defence, and accordingly, not many [foreigners] arrived. In recent years [during the Zhengde reign (r.1506-1522)], because of the lack of aromatics for tribute purposes, the Administrative Commissioner Wu Tingju [of Guangdong] has accepted all goods that arrived [from overseas] without questioning the schedule. As a result, foreign ships are moored along the coast and barbarians come and go within the cities of the prefectures (Zhang, 1974: 325/8430).<sup>10</sup>

It would seem that by the early sixteenth century, it was established practice in Guangzhou to receive all ships from Southeast Asia without regard for nationalities, set timetables and stipulated numbers.<sup>11</sup> This taxed, non-tribute trade was so profitable that the *shibosi* in Guangdong even set up extra tax-collection centres along the coast to accommodate the arrivals (Wills, Jr.,

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<sup>10</sup> See also *Ming shilu: Wuzong* (1962-66: 149.9a-9b) which mentions approval of Wu Tingju's proposal to receive all incoming ships based on his argument that trade benefits outweighed the risks.

<sup>11</sup> By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Southeast Asia was experiencing what Reid (1990-93) called a new 'age of commerce' whereby indigenous rulers and elites carried on commercial exchange with traders from the Indian Ocean, and with Europeans, Japanese and Chinese. See also Atwell (1998).

1998). By this point, the supposedly inviolable *haijin* based on Hongwu's ancestral law was all but a dead letter in Guangdong (Zhao, 2008).

The Ming government's attempt at controlling all forms of maritime trade thus created the Ming narrative where illicit commercial activities along the coast were equated with *wokou* activity, regardless of the nationalities involved. This abuse of the *wokou* label led earlier studies to posit Sino-Japanese relations as a framework for understanding the phenomenon, disguising the true nature of the crisis. With the shift towards understanding the true nature of the Jiajing-era *wokou*, the *haijin* came to be reinterpreted as the root and manifestation of the class struggle between commercial elements, wrongly identified as *wokou*, and the ruling class. By this interpretation, the *wokou* crisis becomes the facade that concealed the reality of a brewing feudal-capitalist class struggle along the coast (Dai, 1982).

### **The Mid-Sixteenth Century *Wokou* Crisis**

1555 has the dubious distinction of being the most disastrous year in the entire history of the *wokou* crisis. In this year, bands of supposed *wokou* criss-crossed the entire Jiangnan region at will, plundering all but three prefectures in Zhejiang, harassing neighbouring Fujian and even threatening the security of Nanjing (Lim, 2010).<sup>12</sup> The government response, despite the best efforts of field commanders and local magistrates, was ineffective and the increased mobilisation of troops and resultant spate of fortification building only served to evoke a sense of crisis that had been slowly building up since the late 1540s as the frequency of raids increased dramatically.

Official evaluations pinpointed the abolition of the Ningbo *shibosi* and the suspension of Japanese tribute missions in 1523 following a riot by two competing Japanese tribute missions a year earlier as the root cause of the crisis (Zhang, 1974: 322/8348-49).<sup>13</sup> Reprisals might not have been swift except for the fact that the Ningbo riot came on the heels of an earlier outbreak of hostilities between the Chinese and the Portuguese off the coast of Guangdong in 1521 (Wills Jr., 1998). These episodes only served to bolster the determination of the newly-enthroned Jiajing emperor to address the

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<sup>12</sup> In Zhejiang, only the three prefectures of Jinhua, Chuzhou and Quzhou were spared.

<sup>13</sup> As a result of the riot, the Ningbo and Quanzhou *shibosi* for the missions from Japan and the Ryukyu islands were abolished while the Guangzhou *shibosi* was ordered to shut temporarily. All tribute missions were turned away. See Zhang (1974: 75/1848).

hitherto blatant infringement of the *haijin* on the littoral with more stringent enforcement.

The first two decades of the Jiajing reign therefore saw the promulgation of increasingly strident imperial edicts warning against private maritime trade and prohibiting the construction of double-masted ships on pain of military exile and capital punishment (*Ming shilu: Shizong*, 1962-66: 38.4b-5a; 54.3b; 108.7a; 154.4b-5a). Zhu Wan's appointment in 1547 to address the problems of smuggling and piracy in Fujian and Zhejiang represented greater willingness on the court's part to be proactive and take increasingly harsh pre-emptive measures. These state initiatives, together with the suspension of tribute trade in Fujian, Guangdong and Ningbo, however only resulted in the counter-productive effect of encouraging illicit trade by Chinese traders who now found active collaborators among the Japanese and the Portuguese as their suppliers and middlemen (Atwell, 1982).

For Ming observers, the link between the *wokou* crisis and the enforcement of *haijin*, or lack thereof, was a direct one. Comparison with the early years of the dynasty was frequently drawn, as in the case of Wan Biao (1498-1556), a native of Yin County in Ningbo who offered a picture of the past where 'only fishing boats would venture out ... to fish and obtain firewood' and none dared to 'conduct intercourse with foreigners' (Wan, 1991: 1). As enforcement relaxed, cracks in the *haijin* appeared when 'one or two families in Fujian and Guangdong' traded with foreigners, relying 'on the local [retired] officials to pave the way for them' (Wan, 1991: 1). Despite this, Wan asserts that the 'ancestral law has not been damaged yet' (Wan, 1991: 1). It was only when 'the *haijin* grew lax' that:

covetous rascals enticed foreign ships and intercourse increased. At the same time, piracy on the seas increased as well. Each of the ships would have their acknowledged owners and they would fill their ships with trade goods and return. During this time, they carried out trade individually and had not, as yet, banded together. It was only when the strong and weak [traders] clashed on the seas, preying on each other, that the traders then formed alliances and sought the protection of strong men as their leaders. The groups numbered between fifty to a hundred ships and they would moor at different harbours and rely on



numerous smaller rafts to carry out trade and piracy along the coast. It thus grew chaotic (Wan, 1991: 1).

While Wan was somewhat reticent about the reasons for the clashes erupting, other observers were more forthcoming. One explanation suggests that the *wokou* crisis erupted because Chinese traders, together with their patrons from influential families on the coast, reneged on their debts, thus leaving their Japanese creditors with no option for recouping their losses except by force. Their investments thus threatened, the powerful families—identified as ‘pirates in gowns and caps’ by Zhu Wan (Zhang, 1974: 205/5404-05)—pressured local and central authorities into reprisals against the so-called *wokou*, thus escalating the crisis (Zhang, 1997; Ye, 1987; Shen, 1980). If this explanation is accurate, private maritime interests were thus responsible for evoking the *wokou* label and escalating business quarrels into a security crisis.

The coastal populace further perpetuated the crisis. Due to restrictions on their traditional livelihoods, general economic difficulties and rampant corruption, many joined the bands of *wokou* leading to a situation where ‘of the several tens of thousands of sea-bandits known as *wokou* today, those who were from Japan number only several thousand’ (Zheng, 1983: 11.1b). Large-scale participation of men from Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and Fuzhou (Fujian) and Ningbo and Shaoxing (Zhejiang) in the *wokou* raids was openly acknowledged as well (Chen, 1997b: 282.4a). Led by Chinese merchants from Anhui such as Wang Zhi, Ma Ye and Xu Hai, these rough and ready characters wreaked such havoc on the coast that it would eventually take the Jiajing court a decade of military campaigns to suppress them.

Thus, despite the traditional label of *wokou* attached to the wave of piratical attacks that swept across the south-eastern coast in the 1550s and 1560s, Ming popular opinion and officialdom were in fact unanimous in openly acknowledging that the crisis was caused by the Chinese rather than the Japanese. The causal link between the existing maritime policies of the dynasty and the crisis was perhaps best expressed by Tang Shu (1497-1574), a secretary in the Ministry of Justice hailing from Huzhou prefecture in Zhejiang, who observed that the ‘*kou* and traders are the same people; when trade was allowed, the pirates became traders; when trade was prohibited, the traders turned to piracy’ (Zheng, 1983: 11.4a-4b).

Despite the general unanimity on the cause of the crisis, there was no agreement on the solution. Conservatives favouring stricter enforcement of the *haijin* often used historical precedents to argue that because ‘not a single plank of wood was allowed to put out to sea [at the beginning of the dynasty], there was peace for generations’ (Zhu, 1997: 2.61a). Implicit in this argument is the idea that strict enforcement of the *haijin* would secure the maritime frontiers of China from all forms of foreign disturbance, including *wokou* raids, since it was lax enforcement that stimulated and created the *wokou* crisis. For the conservatives it was a clear-cut case of coastal security, and the tolerance or prohibition of trade was never the issue since that was provided for under the tribute trade system. For instance, Zhang Shiche (1500-77), the Minister of War in Nanjing and a native of Ningbo, accused those favouring a *kaihai* policy of mixing the two distinct issues of tribute trade and foreign trade, contending that it is not clear whether ‘relaxing the law of prohibition and opening the doors to non-scheduled tribute would damp down the flames or become additional firewood’ for the crisis (Zheng, 1983: 12.98b). In addition, he questioned the effectiveness of a *kaihai* policy: ‘even if tribute were allowed, could it really stop the *kou* of the various islands from plundering’, given the contemporaneous political fragmentation of Japan (Zheng, 1983: 12.98b).

Even more impassioned was the plea of another conservative, Feng Zhang, who placed a higher priority on security than profit. Describing foreigners as ‘crafty, cruel and unpredictable’, he argued:

The goods brought by the traders are mostly pepper and sapanwood, items not in high demand among the people. The huge imports would, in two to three years’ time, rob the traders of their profits and they may create problems as a result. Hence I do not see the benefits of relaxing the prohibition and imposing taxes instead. We also cannot guard against crafty merchants who export Chinese goods such as silks, iron and other valuables in exchange for gold and silver and who evade taxes by returning secretly after burning their boats. Where are the taxes going to come from then? The open trade could also result in foreigners buying firearms and gunpowder that they may use against us. ... It is not advisable for us to overthrow established policy for gains of the moment or abolish ancestral laws for minor profits. Once damaged, it may be

impossible to revive the law and this opening [of trade] may lead to endless troubles in the future (Chen, 1997b: 280.17b; 18a-20a).

The conservatives were not opposed to the idea of trade per se. Their opposition to the opening of China's ports to trade, whether licensed private trade or *kanhe* trade, was largely predicated on their reading of the situation and security concerns. To them, the *wokou* crisis was created by the Chinese traders and their Japanese collaborators who had flagrantly flouted the *haijin*. A relaxation of the trade prohibition was therefore interpreted as opening the floodgates to even greater chaos. As such, their preference was to plug the gap and restore the conduct of foreign relations and trade to the tribute system framework. These views apparently found resonance with the Jiajing emperor who rebuked Nie Bao, the Minister of War in 1555, for forwarding a memorial from a retired official by the name of Zhu Longxi asking for *hushi* to be permitted (*Ming shilu: Shizong*, 1962-66: 419.5b-6a).

### **The Search for a Modus Operandi**

The conclusion that the Jiajing court was actively searching for a *modus operandi* along the south-eastern coast is one reached perhaps more with the benefit of hindsight. There is no indication in the sources that such a search was being consciously conducted and that policies and responses to the *wokou* crisis were being formulated with a specific end in mind. If anything, the only clear goal that the Jiajing court had was to restore peace and stability to the coast by dealing with the *wokou* by any means. Hence, deliberations for a time centred upon whether outright extermination or pacification through appeasement was preferable (Hucker, 1971). The fact that debate over enforcement or relaxation of the *haijin* was subsumed as part of the general discussion of anti-*wokou* strategies suggests that the court was primarily interested in restoring peace to the coast so as to secure the Jiangnan region which was the tax and grain basket of the empire. By examining the actions of the officials in the provinces and the policy deliberations proffered at court, the incremental process by which the decision finally to relax the *haijin* was ultimately made becomes clear.

Court attention was not uniformly focussed on the three provinces that formed the centre of the *wokou-haijin* issue. Throughout the 1550s and 1560s, the spotlight was trained on Zhejiang for the simple reason that it bore the

brunt of the *wokou* raids throughout the decade.<sup>14</sup> Zhejiang was the site of major battles fought by Supreme Commander Hu Zongxian (1511-65) against the bands of *wokou* led by Xu Hai, Ma Ye and Chen Dong (Hucker, 1971). Hu was eventually able to play successfully on Wang Zhi's desire for licensed trade to bring about the latter's surrender and incarceration (Lim, 2010). With the extermination of the major *wokou* leaders, the situation in Zhejiang had, at least by 1565, come under control.

Fujian, the acknowledged source of both *wokou* recruits and anti-*wokou* militias, began to feature more prominently in the policy landscape in the late 1560s and the 1570s when smaller, less organised bands of *wokou*—remnants of the large smuggling-trading conglomerates destroyed by Hu Zongxian in Zhejiang—made their appearance in the province. The experience gained in the earlier Zhejiang campaigns by military commanders such as Qi Jiguang (1528-88) and civilian officials such as Tan Lun (1520-77), the former prefect of Taizhou in Zhejiang who was transferred to Fujian in 1561, stood them in good stead as they cooperated steadily to whittle down the menace presented by the *wokou* (*Ming shilu: Shizong*, 1962-66: 538.3b-4a).

In contrast, Guangdong, which also provided recruits for the *wokou*, remained comparatively less harassed than Fujian and Zhejiang. This relative peace, coupled with the local administration's pro-active search for a way to accommodate the Portuguese into the existing trade framework, in fact brought home the possible benefits that could be accrued from the accommodation of non-tribute foreign trade and the relaxation of the *haijin*.

### **The Precedent Set by Guangdong**

Guangzhou was the port where cracks in the *haijin* first appeared. As early as 1509, during the Zhengde reign, permission to conduct non-tribute trade with Southeast Asian traders was granted by the court. Unlike the *kanhe* trade that came under the purview of the *shibosi*, this non-tribute trade was placed under the control of the *sansi* (three provincial offices), thereby effectively negating the official policy of 'trade when there is tribute and no trade when there is no tribute' (Zheng, 1983: 12.110a). However, this 'relaxation' of trade regulations was short-lived as entrepreneurs who had set sail on private

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<sup>14</sup> Throughout the Jiajing reign, it was estimated that Zhejiang was raided 172 times, compared to 128 raids in Fujian and a mere 38 disturbances in Guangdong. See table in Tanaka (1987: 114-115).

trading voyages quickly came under the suspicion of luring foreigners and supposed *wokou* to China (Li, 1990).

Enduring suspicion on the part of the court meant that the maritime trade policy in Guangdong was inconsistent. The authorities appeared to waver between security and fiscal concerns as a 1514 restriction of trade to tribute missions on grounds of security was soon relaxed in 1517 due to a shortage of spices and to precarious provincial finances (Fok, 1978). This attempt at trade liberalisation was, however, jettisoned after conflict with the Portuguese in 1521 and the subsequent suspension of the *shibosi* in 1523 (*Ming shilu: Wuzong*, 1962-66: 149.9a-9b). The pain of trade suspension was quickly felt as closure of the *shibosi* caused the Southeast Asian traders, who had hitherto called with the tribute missions, to utilise centres of smuggling such as Shuangyu Island (off the coast of Zhangzhou in Fujian) to the detriment of Guangdong's revenues and the local economy (Wills, Jr., 1998).

Guangdong's next vacillation took place in 1530 when Lin Fu, the Grand Coordinator of Guangdong and Guangxi, memorialised the throne requesting permission to reinstate the previously permitted taxed non-tribute trade with foreigners. While Wills Jr. (1998) claims that the reopening of trade in 1530 excluded the Portuguese, it is interesting to note that in his memorial, Lin Fu specifically lists four benefits of allowing mutual trade *with* the Portuguese. Noting that 'taxes from trade are the source of many official and private expenses [and that] if the foreign ships do not arrive, many official and private budgets would be hard-pressed', Lin argues that implementation of taxed non-tribute trade and the *choufen* system (which taxed excess goods in kind) would enable them to fulfil imperial quotas, meet defence expenses, alleviate Guangxi's financial dependence on Guangdong, and benefit the locals (Zhang, 1974: 325/8432). Concluding forcefully on the note of mutual benefits, Lin maintains that 'in this way, the state is aided, the people grow rich and there is something for everyone' (Zhang, 1974: 325/8432).

The attractiveness of Lin's forceful 'appeal to the central government not to ignore the realities of the local situation' (Fok, 1978: 52-53) was backed by the widespread acknowledgement that there is a higher propensity for the impoverished to join the *wokou* or dabble in smuggling. Lifting the trade restrictions would enable the Guangdong provincial government to satisfy the court's needs, save its local administration from fiscal crisis, give the people of Guangdong legitimate livelihoods and discourage new recruits for the *wokou*

in one fell swoop. Imperial assent was granted and the Portuguese were allowed to trade in Xiangshan harbour in Guangdong (Zhang, 1974: 325/8432) though many continued with their illicit activities in the harbours of Yuegang and Shuangyu until Zhu Wan's anti-smuggling campaign in the late 1540s.

Despite the setback in Fujian, the Guangdong solution worked. Though Guangdong did not escape the predations of the *wokou* completely, it remained least affected among the three south-eastern provinces. Records indicate that though Guangdong was attacked several times in the mid-sixteenth century (the last *wokou* attack occurred in 1560), most of the raids were easily and swiftly suppressed by local troops and militias (Zheng, 1983: 3.17b-20a). Perhaps even more significant, the bands that pillaged Guangdong had spilled over from neighbouring Fujian, suggesting that within the territory of Guangdong, security had been established, thus giving credence to Lin's argument.

The creativity of the Guangdong officials in circumventing the *haijin* and *kanhe* trade system also bought them peace and an eventual accommodation with the Portuguese. The chaos in Zhejiang and Fujian in the 1550s led the Portuguese back to Guangdong in search of peaceful trade. The realisation that trade at local discretion was viable and profitable, coupled with their lucrative middleman role in the Sino-Japanese silver trade made the Portuguese more willing to accommodate and compromise (Fok, 1978; Atwell, 1982). This eagerness for a win-win solution was matched by the Guangdong *haidao* (vice-commissioner of the maritime defence circuit) who willingly accepted an annual private payment of 500 taels (ground rent payment) in return for the Portuguese to trade in Guangzhou and build a settlement in Macao. The 'Macao formula' concluded in 1554 thus enabled the Portuguese to enter Guangzhou under various guises as Southeast Asian traders, subject to the same twenty percent duty on their goods that was imposed on all Southeast Asian traders. These terms were acceptable to the Portuguese who flocked to Guangzhou in such numbers that by 1562, there were close to a thousand Portuguese residing at Macao (Wills, Jr., 1998).

Even though it was only during the Wanli reign (1573-1620) that the Portuguese finally obtained imperial acquiescence of their occupation of Macao, the Macao formula held out some promise of an effective solution to the questions of maritime security and foreign trade. By instituting the *choufen* system of taxation, the Guangdong government had effectively

circumvented the seemingly ironclad *haijin* and *kanhe* trade policies and provided an alternative for foreign traders without tribute credentials to trade in China. Lin Fu's arguments seemed to have held their ground as well, especially with respect to the *wokou* raids. While extant records do not elucidate whether those who favoured relaxation of the *haijin* used Guangdong as an example of how a *kaihai* policy could benefit China, Guangdong's success in dealing with the issues of *wokou* and trade in a manner deemed acceptable by the court must have, to some degree, resonated with them.

### Arguments for Opening the Seas

Arguments for the relaxation of the *haijin* thus found their way into the *wokou* debate documented in the *Illustrated Compendium of Maritime Strategy* (*Chouhai tubian*). Here it can be seen that many of the proposals focused largely on the strategic and military aspects, such as the recruitment and training of troops and mercenaries, defence construction and organizing the *baojia* neighbourhood watch system (Zheng, 1983: *juan* 12). It is only towards the end of the litany of suggestions that one can find the voices calling for re-instatement of tribute trade and *hushi*.

The backgrounds of the officials calling for the relaxation of the *haijin* are significant: they either hailed from the coastal provinces or they had spent part of their careers in the three provinces and thus could claim a good knowledge of the local situation. The general thrust of their arguments posits that the *haijin* had created the *wokou* crisis by taking away the traditional livelihoods of people for whom the seas were their 'fields' (Chen, 1991: 123). Restrictive trade policies further meant that not only was the court deprived of potential tax income, it had to shoulder the added expense of anti-*wokou* military campaigns. Lifting the *haijin* would therefore, they envisaged, kill two birds with one stone—the littoral people would be denied legitimate reasons to join the *wokou* while the state could gain the benefit of customs revenue, long lost to smuggling, through the *choufen* system. It was a win-win situation for both state and society.

The basis of the arguments put forth for lifting the *haijin*, so similar to Lin Fu's eloquent testimony, was in fact not new. Decades earlier, Qiu Jun (1418-95), a native of Hainan, contended that the lure of goods and profits would simply induce traders to smuggle in disregard of the *haijin*. Rather than

wasting resources to stem an unstoppable tide, a system of licensed trade from which taxes collected could supplement the annual grain tax would be more productive (Qiu, 1983: 25.15b-17a). It was, however, a proposal that went unnoticed, given the relative peace along the south-east littoral during the Hongzhi reign (1488-1505). In the decades that followed, nevertheless, officials began increasingly to repeat Qiu's argument. In June 1517, Wu Tingju, the Right Provincial Administration Commissioner of Guangdong, set the process in motion with his proposal that the *haijin* be relaxed in Guangdong and all incoming ships received. The approval for Wu's proposal set a precedent even though it was revoked shortly after and blame was cast on Wu for causing the rise of 'unceasing troubles' in Guangdong (*Ming shilu: Wuzong*, 1962-66: 149.9a-9b).

As the *wokou* crisis grew in urgency in the 1550s, voices from the pro-*kaihai* camp grew louder. Zhao Wenhua (d.1557), the Minister of Works and a native of Cixi in Zhejiang, fired the next salvo in 1553, with his contention that China's lack of foreign trade was both an economic and security liability. As his solution to the *wokou* crisis, Zhao posits that once trade was allowed, the Chinese *wokou* leaders would lose their supporters who no longer had the motivation for plunder and illicit activities and the court would even benefit from the lucrative profits of trade (So, 1975). It was, unfortunately, at the height of the *wokou* crisis that Zhao made his proposal and little wonder there was no resonance at court.

Tang Shunzhi (1507-60), a native of Changzhou in Jiangsu, took up Zhao's call for *kaihai* in 1560. In his memorial proposing a series of strategies to boost maritime defence, Tang suggests, as one of the strategies, the re-opening of tribute relations with Japan (Chen, 1997b: 260.1a-11a). Basing his suggestion on a proposal submitted to him by Regional Commander Lu Tang, whom he cites as having thirty years of experience on the coast, Tang's solution to the crisis was to give the *wokou* what they craved—trade—and thereby remove their inclination towards piracy (Chen, 1997b: 260.6a). At the same time, Tang further makes an indirect call for reconsideration of the *haijin* by recommending a re-examination of the original intentions behind establishing the *shibosi* in Ningbo, Guangzhou and Fujian, noting that with neither trade nor tribute allowed in Fujian, the original reasons for having the *shibosi* there remain unknown (Chen, 1997b: 260:10a-10b). Using the analogy of coal mining, Tang drives home the point that the most straightforward solution to



prevent private mining (closing the mines) might not be the most feasible option. Instead, the government would do well to adopt the option of allowing private mining activities under government supervision as it could benefit through taxation. The worst situation, in his view, was one where mines are closed, no taxes collected and yet the people continue to benefit from illicit mining. Thus, by extrapolation, legalizing and taxing private maritime trade instead of allowing profits to flow into private coffers was the most viable option available to the court (Chen, 1997b: 260.10b).

The pragmatism displayed by Tang Shunzhi was echoed in the arguments of Tang Shu, a native of Huzhou in Zhejiang. Reiterating Qiu Jun's earlier contention, Tang Shu opined that private maritime trade was next to impossible to restrict since foreign goods would always be in demand (Chen, 1997b: 270.3a-3b). Noting that the *haijin* had originated from a desire for internal security, he criticised the conservatives for their constant reference to the intentions of the Hongwu emperor, suggesting that it was quite possible the founder himself might have found it necessary to amend his own policy over time (Chen, 1997b: 270.4b). Tang Shu echoes Tang Shunzhi in asserting that it was more practical to allow private maritime trade and to gain from taxes levied rather than let illicit profits accrue to wealthy families on the coast. By opening the ports to private maritime trade and hence tax revenue, the court would in turn easily solve the difficulties of paying for mercenary troops and supporting the defence establishment on the coast (Chen, 1997b: 270.4b).

To push his point further, Tang Shu proposed a series of regulations that would govern the workings of a *kaihai* policy contained in an undated letter addressed, presumably, to Hu Zongxian. Tang recommended that while foreigners should be allowed into the ports to trade with the local people, they should leave once their transactions have been concluded, thus keeping Sino-foreign interactions to a minimum. Chinese traders venturing overseas should have their cargoes examined for prohibited goods before a license could be granted, and taxes paid before they were allowed to leave the port. The same process of inspection for contraband and tax payments would take place when these traders returned. To facilitate tax collection and prevent tax evasion, a specific port would be established as the entry and exit point for the traders. All attempts to leave or enter China via other ports would be classified as smuggling (Chen, 1997b: 270.9b-10a). These suggestions were later to be

instituted in Yuegang, which became the only port where the *haijin* was relaxed.

### The Final Act

Ironically, given the amount of attention devoted to debating the *haijin*, the documents provide scant information on the final resolution of the issue.<sup>15</sup> Despite the calls for *kaihai*, the *haijin* remained in place throughout the Jiajing reign, presumably due to the emperor's abhorrence of overturning what he deemed as ancestral law, though the foundations for an eventual relaxation of the *haijin* were laid throughout the 1550s and 1560s.

In 1549, Zhu Wan had identified Yuegang, the prime smuggling port in Fujian, as a port of strategic importance. Since then, incremental administrative changes took place in Yuegang, beginning with the establishment of a customs office in 1551, which was upgraded to a maritime defence office in 1563 (Chen, 1983). Yuegang's potential as a port was highlighted when yet another pro-*kaihai* official, Zheng Xiao (1499-1566) from Haiyan County in Zhejiang, proposed the transfer of the Ningbo and Guangzhou *shibosi* to Yuegang (Chen, 1997b: 218.5a-5b). While the two said *shibosi* were not moved, the 1566 elevation of Yuegang to county status, with a corresponding name change to Haicheng (lit. clear seas), only served to emphasise its potential (Zhang, 1981: 131).

It was in 1567, the inaugural year of the Longqing reign (1567-72), that imperial assent was granted to the petition by Tu Zemin, the *xunfu* of Fujian, to 'open the maritime prohibition and allow trade with the eastern and western oceans' (Zhang, 1981: 131). The trade thus permitted was originally carried out at the port of Meiling in Nanzhao, Fujian, but eventually shifted to Haicheng to avoid harassment of traders by pirates. In 1572, the sixth year of the Longqing reign, merchants and ships were taxed on the suggestion of Luo Qingxiao, the magistrate of Haicheng (Zhang, 1981: 132).

While the decision to relax the *haijin* has been interpreted as a capitulation of the centre to littoral demands, it was, in truth, a very limited response. Under the framework of licensed private trade, although trade with the traditionally non-problematic vassals such as Luzon, Sulu, Champa and Siam were approved, 'trade with the *wo* slaves was expressly and strictly prohibited

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<sup>15</sup> There is no mention of the relaxation of the *haijin* in either the *Mingshi* or the *Ming shilu* to the best of my knowledge.

and punishable according to the laws on illicit intercourse with and extension of aid to foreigners' (Zhang, 1981: 132). This restriction on Japanese trade suggests that though the court apparently acquiesced to the situation on the littoral in granting the freedom to legitimate maritime trade, it was made very much on the state's terms. Seen in this light, the 1567 relaxation was not so much a victory of the littoral over the state as claimed by Dai (1982) and Lin (1980) among others, but rather a pragmatic compromise by the state to make best of the situation on the maritime frontier. It can even be argued that the ultimate beneficiary of the entire crisis was the Ming state. Not only was its coastal defence strengthened as a result of reforms undertaken by officials and military commanders, tax revenue generated by the private maritime trade that flourished at Haicheng under the control of the local government benefited the state. In any case, the fact that any hint of troubles along the coast in the years that followed almost always provoked a reactionary re-imposition of the *haijin* suggests that it was trade carried on at the forbearance of the state (Zhang, 1981: 132-33).

The state, as final arbiter, ultimately retained control over when and where the *haijin* was relaxed. Despite calls made since the early 1550s, the relaxation of the *haijin* in 1567 suggests strongly that it was only after the *wokou* crisis subsided, and after a new emperor ascended the throne, that the option of *kaihai* was considered. Even though calls for *kaihai* were vocal and persuasive, that most of the *kaihai* proposals were expressed as part of possible solutions to the *wokou* crisis also indicates an underlying acknowledgement that maritime security and trade liberalisation went hand-in-hand; one was not possible without the other.

Ultimately, in the calculation of court officials, relaxation of the *haijin* was perhaps motivated in large part by the 1559 success of the Single Whip reform in Guangdong. Originally a means of simplifying tax collection by commuting corvée obligations and other miscellaneous taxes into silver payments, the Single Whip was implemented to ensure a regular supply of funds at the disposal of the local government that could pay for extra services such as the hiring of mercenary troops in times of crisis. The further success of the Single Whip carried out by Pang Shangpeng (1524-81), the regional inspector of Zhejiang, in the mid-1560s only served to impress the court how the monies collected not only provided extra revenue but also prevented corruption and evasion of taxes (Huang, 1974). Yet, the successful implementation of the

Single Whip was predicated on a steady supply of silver which was ironically flowing into the Chinese economy via the untaxed and unstoppable illicit trade. The 1567 relaxation thus suggests that considerations of making the supply of silver legitimate may have eventually played a part in the policy change.

### Conclusion

The 1567 adoption of *kaihai* does not constitute the capitulation of the state to the demands of the periphery. The cautious, incremental approach taken by the court in reaching the decision in 1567 was one that distinguished between the issue of maritime security and that of the people's livelihood. A reading of the proposals put forth by *kaihai* proponents suggests that, despite their belief in the benefits of liberalizing trade, the *wokou* crisis remained the key issue. Only when peace was restored to the south-east and the provincial military establishments had proven their worth, was the court confident of addressing the issue of the people's livelihood. Despite the early conclusion reached by court officials that the *haijin* was the root cause of the *wokou* troubles, decisions about the *haijin* had to be predicated on the restoration of law and order in the south-east. The important first step in highlighting a possible *modus operandi* in the management of foreign trade was made when informal trade liberalisation in Guangdong prior to 1567 validated the argument that open access to trade would reduce the incidence of piratical raids. Ultimately, the fact that one of the most notorious smuggling centres was chosen as the port for licensed trade speaks volumes for the confidence of a state that had won a hard-fought battle and acceded to local demands on its own terms.

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## The Sinification of Soviet Agitational Theatre: 'Living Newspapers' in Mao's China<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*The adoption and development of zhivaya gazeta (lit. 'living newspapers') in China follows a trajectory common to many forms of artistic expression that were introduced into that country by the Soviets in the early decades of the twentieth century. While the Soviet heritage of this theatre was at first celebrated, the Chinese Communist Party sought to tailor it to particular needs and to present it as a specifically Chinese innovation, rechristening it 'huobaoju'. Despite dying out in the Soviet Union by the late 1920s, 'living newspapers' continued to be produced in China from the 1930s through until the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), with the form being employed in tandem with specific campaigns or attempts at mass mobilisation. Indeed, the very nature of Chinese communism under Mao provided the perfect environment in which this form of theatre could thrive.*

Keywords: China, theatre, Soviet, culture, revolutionary, *huobaoju*

### Introduction

Much of the academic literature on performance art in Mao Zedong's China has focused on the eight 'model operas' (*yangbanxi*), which represented the only form of officially sanctioned theatre to be produced in China during much of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) (e.g., Roberts, 2010). Indeed, so many analyses of specific model operas have been written that the *yangbanxi* have become synonymous with Mao-era theatre: the stage and film versions of *The*

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*Red Detachment of Women* (*Hongse niangzi jun*) have inspired so much scholarship, for example, that they now represent something of an academic subfield (e.g., Chi, 2003). In much of this literature, there has been a tendency not only to focus on the *yangbanxi* as the apotheosis of Cultural Revolution art, but also to stress the uniqueness of the form and its links with the ‘ten years of chaos’. In lecture halls and on film screens, the grand yet now vaguely comic sounds and imagery of such socialist realism have become the primary means through which historians have introduced students and lay audiences to the Cultural Revolution.

In recent years, however, scholars have started to locate within the model operas influences from other forms (e.g., Mittler, 2013), as well as connections that place such works firmly on a much broader ‘evolutionary tree’ of Chinese revolutionary theatre, dating back to the early twentieth century (and in some cases earlier). Such work has not only helped to trace artistic connections across the 1966 divide, but has also forced us to revisit less-documented art forms which survived the early years of the Cultural Revolution. In other instances, the ubiquity of the *yangbanxi* has been challenged with references to other forms of Cultural Revolution theatre, most notably the dramatic pursuits of the Red Guards, who drew inspiration for impromptu street performances not merely from officially ordained operas, but from all manner of artistic expression (Clark, 2008: 192-5).

This paper aims to expand on this emerging academic literature by examining one such form: *huobaoju*—a street theatre which took its Chinese name directly from a Russian phrase (and a Soviet form of theatre) known as the *zhivaya gazeta* (lit. ‘living newspaper’). *Huobaoju* are certainly known about in China today: the form merits brief mention in wider reference works on theatre, and the term is still used to refer to theatrical performances undertaken as part of protest movements, not only in China, but elsewhere around the world. More importantly, the influence of *huobaoju* on later styles, including the *yangbanxi*, has been noted in at least one recent study of the latter (Yang and Conceison, 2012: n. 4). *Huobaoju* has hitherto not, however, been studied in any systematic fashion, and despite its brief appearance in a number of historical accounts, the form’s own history has yet to be properly documented. While the intellectual fashion for studying the *yangbanxi* may partly explain this absence, I would also argue that *huobaoju* has—in historiographical terms—been its own ‘worst enemy’. By its very nature,

*huobaoju* was ephemeral and transient, while never seeking to achieve anything beyond propagandistic effect. The form certainly never aspired to artistic greatness or longevity, and its practitioners often moved on to other forms of cultural expression in due course.

At the same time, however, the development of this form is important, for it tells us much about what replaced it in the 1960s. At the same time, it raises questions about a whole range of issues, from the Chinese adaptation of Soviet theatre to the interaction of various media in the early years of the People's Republic. As I show in this paper, this form also fed directly into the dramatised political culture of the early years of the Cultural Revolution, not primarily by influencing the development of the *yangbanxi*, but by shaping the very way in which the Red Guards developed their own versions of street theatre, and their decidedly theatrical approach to iconoclasm, violence and mobilisation.

### Living Newspapers

The roots of the 'living newspaper' in Europe can be traced to Italian futurism in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was in the young Soviet Union (and principally the Moscow Institute of Journalism), however, that it was developed into a recognisable form of agitprop theatre. Performed by small bands of propagandists, the scripts for *zhivaya gazeta* were often pasted together from materials found in newspapers—though a high degree of improvisation was also encouraged—and were designed to provide illiterate audiences (such as workers or Red Army recruits) with details of campaigns, battles or other newsworthy events (Casson, 2000). Plays were performed on street corners or in other public spaces, with the aid of a handful of props and simple yet highly symbolic costumes.<sup>2</sup>

By the late 1920s, however, *zhivaya gazeta* were already being seen as *passé* by many dramatists in the Soviet Union, with all forms of 'revolutionary agitational art' becoming 'increasingly unwelcome', and official attention turning towards the development of more sophisticated forms of theatre in the lead up to the adoption of socialist realism as official state doctrine in 1932 (Frolova-Walker, 2006: 185). Indeed, Stalin disbanded the Blue Blouse Group, the main exponent of *zhivaya gazeta*, in 1928 (Casson, 2000: 109).

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<sup>2</sup> Top hats, for instance, were used with much frequency to mark out a particular character as being bourgeois (Tolstoy, 1998: 24).

Despite the decline of the form in Russia itself, there was nothing particularly unusual about the export of the *zhivaya gazeta* to China. In the 1930s, various forms of Soviet agitprop theatre were being emulated by groups abroad. Indeed, Left-leaning theatre practitioners in the United States had attempted to introduce *zhivaya gazeta* into that country under the New Deal's Federal Arts Project—though with little success (Nadler, 1995).

What *is* significant about the development of this form in China, however, is that, unlike in the Soviet Union, the *zhivaya gazeta* never actually 'declined'. Indeed, it not only outlived the immediate wartime culture of resistance that had provided such a suitable setting for its genesis, but remained an important part of mass propaganda campaigns in the People's Republic into the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, *huobaoju* thrived during the early years of communism under Mao, with the form being continually called upon to encourage participation in demonstrations of support for the regime. This is significant, for it suggests not only that Chinese theatre practitioners were successful in continuing to make what had been, elsewhere, a transitory form of theatre relevant and topical, but also that street theatre of this sort arguably had a far more important role in China under Mao than it had in other revolutionary contexts. How and why, then, did *zhivaya gazeta* become *huobaoju*?

From the time of the Republican Revolution in 1911, the Bolshevik attempt to create a 'propaganda state' (Kenez, 1985) remained the main template for numerous Chinese governments of diverse political proclivity, as well as for movements which sought to undermine the state at various times. During periods such as the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement of 1919, the Northern Expedition of 1926-8 and the Jiangxi Soviet of 1931-4, Chinese artists, writers and dramatists learnt their crafts from the Soviet model, often doing so in combination with regional Chinese art forms (e.g., opera) and vernacular traditions. The sheer number of Soviet terms that have since been 'normalised' in China, and in modern Chinese historiography—'warlord', 'comrade' and many others—reflect not merely the scale of Soviet influence, but also the frequency with which Soviet ideas and styles could be successfully incorporated into Chinese political culture.<sup>3</sup>

The development of Soviet agitprop theatre in China followed this pattern, with *zhivaya gazeta* appearing to have been introduced into the country in

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<sup>3</sup> On the appropriation of Soviet jargon (such as 'warlord') into the early Chinese revolutionary lexicon, see van de Ven (2003: 72).

1931, when the first Chinese 'Soviet' government was established in Jiangxi, and dramatic troupes were specifically created for the purpose of using it to spread propaganda in rural areas (Judd, 1983: 138; Snow, 1998: 29). The form was certainly a regular part of socialist culture by the mid-1930s. Indeed, a young Deng Xiaoping is said to have written an anti-Nationalist play in this mode in early 1937 (Meng, 1994: 44), and Jiang Qing was said to have performed a (presumably translated) Soviet *zhivaya gazeta* during her time in the Communist base of Yan'an in the same period (Yang, 2009).

Given this background, it is perhaps surprising that it took until mid-1937 for the form to be dispersed more widely throughout China. As Chang-tai Hung (1994) notes, it was the Japanese invasion that year that forced the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its allies amongst the intellectual elite to fully appreciate the value of this particular type of theatre and to bring it to the fore of wartime propaganda work. Indeed, Hung notes that, during the war against Japan, the 'living newspaper' emerged as one of the two most popular forms of spoken drama in those areas of China not occupied by the Japanese, often being performed by travelling drama troupes attached loosely to either the communists or the Nationalists. Many such plays were written:

...on the spot, to depict very recent incidents, and members of the traveling troupes would often collect stories on the road, which they quickly turned into new plays. This kind of improvised product, though rarely polished, gave the poorly equipped troupes added flexibility (Hung, 1994: 55-7).

Accounts of such *huobaoju* provided by contemporary observers suggest a theatre which had not changed much since 1920s Moscow. The American journalist Edgar Snow wrote of such plays being 'full of overt propaganda' and 'primitive props'; 'bursts of laughter alternated with oaths of disgust and hatred for the Japanese', with the audience becoming 'quite agitated' as it watched performances in makeshift theatres (Snow, 1998: 27-8).

*Huobaoju* was particularly well suited to the popular mood in areas outside Japanese control during the war, where there existed a public sentiment—as the historian Stephen MacKinnon (2008: 85) has phrased it—of 'moral outrage choreographed as street theater'. The highly simplified nature of *huobaoju* meant that the message of resistance to the Japanese could be disseminated

to large audiences via a small number of actors. Unsurprisingly, many of the early *huobaoju* portrayed individual enemies such as Wang Jingwei, and the Japanese themselves, in highly caricatured fashion (e.g., Wang, 1943). Indeed, it is telling that the development of *huobaoju* in China paralleled the emergence of the satirical wartime cartoon—a topic to which I shall return below.<sup>4</sup>

As the form began to be used with much more frequency in China in the months following the Japanese invasion, however, its promoters recognised that it required elucidation. Writing in the appropriately named *Sino-Soviet Culture Magazine* (*Zhong Su wenhua zazhi*) in early 1938, one theatre practitioner introduced *huobaoju* to fellow Chinese propagandists by describing it as a ‘new type of performance’ which represented the ‘dramatisation of the news’. The potential benefits from such a form in China included the fact that the news usually reported in print could be brought to the attention of those unable to read—i.e., the vast majority of China’s peasants. Indeed, the success of ‘living newspapers’ in 1920s Soviet society was presented as reason enough for its emulation in wartime China (Ge, 1938).

While the Japanese invasion certainly acted as a catalyst for the rapid development of *huobaoju*, the form also benefited from the very deliberate attempts on the part of the Chinese Communist Party in May 1942 to redefine the role of the arts in Chinese society. These ideas were laid out during the ‘Yan’an Talks on Literature and Art’, under which Mao Zedong decreed that all art must be political, as well as subservient to the needs of China’s ‘masses’. As Mark Amitin (1980:12) notes, this new direction heralded, for performance art, ‘the death warrant for operas about good emperors, kind landlords, evil serfs and plotting servants, and heralded the beginning of a hard-core agitprop theatre’; yet it also provided room for greater levels of experimentation, particularly in terms of the incorporation of appropriately peasant forms of cultural expression into what were essentially foreign forms of propaganda. In the communist base areas, such theatre became ‘a functional part of the war machine’, with the Communists’ Eighth Route Army (*Ba lu jun*) devoting a number of troupes specifically to it (Meserve and Meserve, 1972: 317).

The link between mobilisation (as experienced during the war) and ‘living newspapers’ remained an important one after 1945, too. *Huobaoju* were

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<sup>4</sup> For more on this topic, see Lent and Xu (2008).

scripted during the Korean War for performance amongst Chinese troops (e.g., Xue, 1951), and there were cases during that conflict of Chinese and North Korean propagandists jointly producing such plays. Library catalogue listings of published scripts suggest a noticeable rise in *huobaoju* production in the years of the Great Leap Forward, as well as during Chinese moral and logistical involvement in the Vietnam War.<sup>5</sup> And the form was revived at other moments of armed conflict, such as the Second Offshore Islands Crisis of 1958 (during which Chinese forces clashed with Nationalist forces from Taiwan over islands off the south China coast), when *huobaoju* such as *Get Out of Taiwan, American Wolves!* (*Meiguo lang, gunchu Taiwan qu*) and *The Dead End for American Imperialism* (*Mei di de qiongtu molu*) were written.<sup>6</sup>

However, it was during the Chinese Civil War of 1945-9 that the 'living newspaper' reached its apogee. Dozens of *huobaoju* lampooning or denigrating the Nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek were produced in this period, often for performance amongst communist troops, or for peasants in 'Liberated' areas. Local cells of the Communist Party all over the country formed specific propaganda groups for the purpose of performing *huobaoju* and other forms of drama (Sha, 1999: 67). Celebrated leftwing playwrights were also tasked with scripting *huobaoju* in this period and after, amongst them Du Xuan (e.g., 1952). And a handful of intellectuals emerged from the Civil War period as specialists in the genre. By far the most prolific compiler of *huobaoju* in this period, for instance, was Zhou Fang, who was based in the Jin Ji Lu Yu Border Region.<sup>7</sup> Zhou was responsible for editing one of the most popular *huobaoju* of the Civil War era—*Jiang's Army Must be Defeated* (*Jiang jun bi bai*), which had been collectively authored by cultural workers in the communist base at which he was stationed (*Renmin ribao*, 16 January 1947). Zhou went on to be involved in the scripting and editing of a significant number of *huobaoju* through until the 1950s. (Figure 1)

While members of a relatively small band of intellectuals took charge of compiling *huobaoju*, productions were staged by all manner of groups, ranging

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<sup>5</sup> Although one must be cautious in taking published scripts as evidence of actual *huobaoju* performances. As Ellen Judd (1983: 147) suggests in her study of Jiangxi Soviet-era drama, *huobaoju* scripts were often not produced at all (for fear that the plays would lose their topicality by the time they were printed and distributed to potential practitioners).

<sup>6</sup> These are taken from a list of new *huobaoju* advertised in the journal *Juben* in July 1960.

<sup>7</sup> I.e., the region between the four provinces of Shanxi, Hebei, Shandong and Henan.

from university- and school-based drama societies to communes, trade unions and the armed forces. Indeed, the very nature of this genre made it adaptable to troupes of various size and diverse levels of dramatic talent.

It was also in this period that the educational function of *huobaoju* was at its clearest, with compilers inspired by Mao's 1942 calls to make art subject to politics openly extolling the form as a means through which Party policies could be taken directly to 'the masses'. 'This volume', wrote Liu Chuan, the editor a collection of early post-Civil War *huobaoju*

is written for the special use of dramatic troupes within factories, villages, military units and schools. My aims in editing this volume are to introduce works that combine politics and art, and form and content, to my comrades amongst the workers, peasants and soldiers. At the same time, I hope that it can serve some level of educational purpose for the broad masses (Liu, 1951: no page numbers).



Figure 1: Agitprop theatre in the Communist base areas of northern China, January 1948. Note the almost complete absence of props, the minimal use of costume and the proximity of the audience to the actors. (Courtesy of Getty Images)



One of the most important ways in which plays ‘educated’ audiences was to form a highly caricatured yet uniform picture of the Communist Party’s main enemies: Chiang Kai-shek, the United States and those within China deemed ‘counterrevolutionaries’, ‘landlords’ or ‘Rightists’. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the images of such figures borne out of the simple props and wardrobe items of ‘living newspapers’ bore a striking resemblance to the cartoon images of the same figures circulating in printed newspapers on a daily basis. It is thus perhaps more than coincidence that some of China’s most celebrated state cartoonists of the 1950s, such as Hua Junwu—famed for his dozens of derogatory caricatures of Chiang Kai-shek and various American leaders during the early post-1949 years—also took a role in directing *huobaoju* (Zheng, 2010). Cartooning as a revolutionary art form in China had, like *huobaoju*, been perfected during the war years in Yan’an, and represented the graphic and satirical denigration of enemies in much the same way as actors and playwrights did with street theatre (Hung 2011: 155-81).



Figure 2: Hong Huang, *Baowei shijie heping* (Protect World Peace), ca. 1947. This is one of many artistic representations of children acting out *huobaoju* that were created during the Civil War. Note the celebration of theatrical violence, as well as the use of items such as the top hat to denote the United States and the ‘White Star’ badge (official emblem of the Chinese Nationalist Party) and mask to denote Chiang Kai-shek. (Courtesy of the Special Collections Department, University of Sheffield Library)

While cartoons could inspire *huobaoju*, 'living newspapers' could also influence visual art. One of the most enduring images of the Civil War period by the CCP-affiliated artist Feng Zhen, for example, was a *nianhua*- (New Year print) inspired depiction of a group of children involved in a *huobaoju*, with two individual children dressed as Chiang Kai-shek and a stereotypical American being attacked by others dressed as Chinese peasants and workers. The original image, entitled 'Wawa xi' (Child's play), is still held by the National Art Museum of China, and was given pride of place in the 'Cong Yan'an zoulai' (Coming from Yan'an) Exhibition held in 2012 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Mao's talks at the Yan'an Forum.<sup>8</sup> Feng's work was not exceptional, however. Depictions of *huobaoju* performances were regularly produced during the Civil War years (Figure 2), with such renditions often incorporating elements of peasant artistic traditions—like *huobaoju* productions themselves—or being presented in the form of *nianhua*.

Equally, *huobaoju* scripts and textbooks were regularly adorned with images either inspired by or taken directly from the growing canon of Chinese poster art (Figure 3). And *huobaoju* (including many of those cited in this paper) were given titles which echoed, or were precisely the same as, *biaoyu* (slogans) found in the Communist-affiliated press, scrawled on the walls of 'liberated' areas or used as the titles to posters.

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<sup>8</sup> Details can be found in the May 2012 (89) issue of *Zhongguo meishuguan yuekan* (Journal of the Art Museum of China), which was published to coincide with the exhibition.

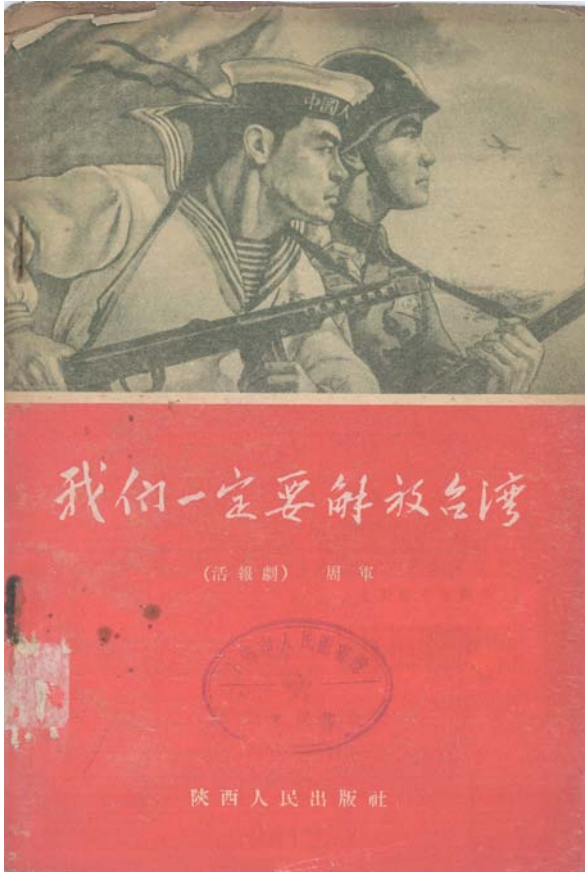


Figure 3: Cover of Zhou Jun (1955), *Women yiding yao jiefang Taiwan* (We must liberate Taiwan). The image used here, depicting mainland military personnel gazing across the Taiwan Strait, was typical of those circulating in official reference publications produced for the benefit of propaganda artists in the 1950s. (Courtesy of the Shanghai Library)

In this way, *huobaoju* were made part of intertextual mobilisational efforts which incorporated and encouraged exchange between all sorts of artistic expression. Just as admiration of a *nianhua* depicting a *huobaoju* might inspire disparate communities to try their hand at staging such a play, access to a centrally published script to be used in such productions might, in turn, assist in the distribution of specific vocabulary, imagery or iconography which went well beyond the bounds of street theatre, and which could help spread the uniform message of any given campaign or policy to a broad audience.

### **Sinifying Zhivaya Gazeta**

Such intertextuality, and the place of *huobaoju* within networks of propagandistic cultural expression, suggests not simply that *huobaoju* were

influenced by developments in the visual arts during the Civil War, but also that their use had developed along lines already quite different from those in the Soviet Union. In being brought into a broader body of revolutionary art developed in Yan'an, *huobaoju* was being given a far more influential role than it had ever been granted in the land of its origins.

During and shortly after the Chinese Civil War, the Soviet connection to *huobaoju* was not denied. On the contrary, the involvement of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Alliance in the scripting of such dramas suggests that this heritage was celebrated (e.g., Dongbei wenhua jiaoyu gongzuodui, n.d.). As with much else drawn from the Soviet canon of propaganda art, however, the Chinese eventually came to claim the form as their own invention, particularly following the Sino-Soviet split of 1960. Writing of *huobaoju* in that very year, for example, an article in one of the leading theatre journals in China noted merely that 'it [i.e., *huobaoju*] already has quite a long history in China, having proven its agitational strength in opposing imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism...' (Li, 1960: 95).

Such claims to innovation and ownership, however, were not without merit. After all, Chinese 'living newspapers' had incorporated aspects of vernacular and regional forms of performance art from at least the Yan'an period. One example was the incorporation of *kuaiban* (rhythmic storytelling)—a form of performance in which a story is recounted in a rhythmic and free-rhyming fashion to the accompaniment of bamboo 'clappers' held by the speaker (Anon, 1949), while *xiangsheng* (cross talk) was also used for some *huobaoju* (Anon, 1958). Like other forms of artistic expression developed in Yan'an, some *huobaoju* (e.g., An, 1950) also showed a tendency to incorporate elements of Shaanxi folk dance and song.

In all of this, the well-documented effort on the part of Leftwing intellectuals in China to incorporate elements of folk culture in an attempt to make propaganda more palatable to peasant audiences during both the war against the Japanese and the Civil War was evident.<sup>9</sup> (Figure 4) This represented a peculiarly Yan'an-inspired vision of the role of theatre forms such as *huobaoju*, which it was believed could be made more attractive to the 'masses' if they articulated revolutionary ideas in vernacular Chinese form, despite their Soviet roots. Just as communist painters worked peasant artistic

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<sup>9</sup> On this topic, see Judd (1990).

traditions (such as *nianhua*) into visual propaganda, *huobaoju* could be made more convincingly ‘of the people’ by incorporating local performance traditions into them. In this regard, *huobaoju* shared much in common with other forms of performance art during the Mao years. Be it small-scale street theatre, stage-managed events such as early post-Liberation national day celebrations (Hung 2011: 75-91) or strictly managed events such as *The East is Red* (*Dongfang hong*) of 1964 (Clark 2008: 158-9), the conscious incorporation of regional peasant musical, dance and performance traditions was a standard method by which theatre could be made to speak ‘to the masses’ in terms they understood.

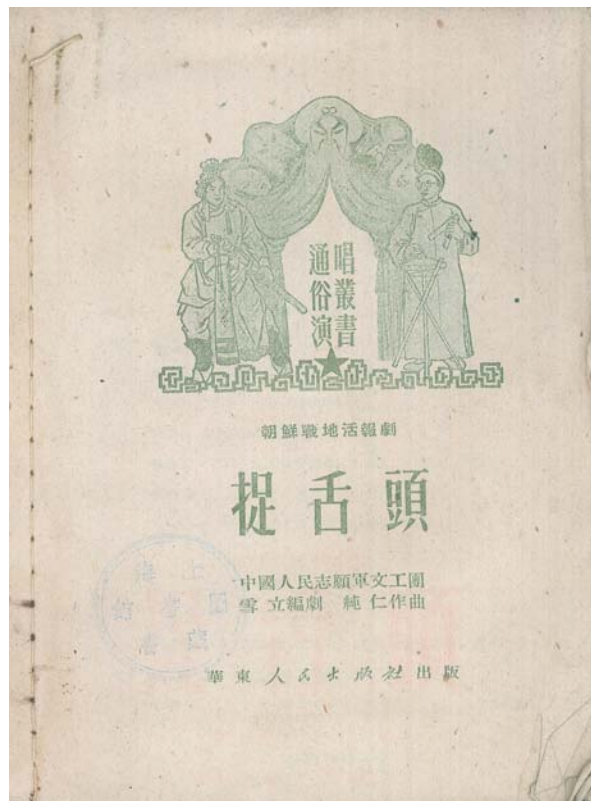


Figure 4: Cover of the script for Xue Li's 'Hold Your Tongue' (*Zhuo shetou*) from 1951. The figure on the right is depicted as holding bamboo 'clappers' as used in the *kuaiiban*-style of story-telling. (Courtesy of the Shanghai Library)

Unlike the Soviets, the Chinese also wrote *huobaoju* specifically for children, such as 'The Little Heroes Outwit the KMT Spies' (*Xiao yingxiong zhiqin feite*) (Zuo, 1951). Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, a number of other variations of the *huobaoju* form were also developed in China ranging from

'*gewu huobaoju*' (lit. *huobaoju* with singing and dancing) to '*guangchang huobaoju*' (plaza *huobaoju*). All of this suggests a highly flexible view of the form and its uses, as well as a talent at adapting *huobaoju* to very specific audiences.

This is not to suggest, however, that *huobaoju* shed everything from its *zhivaya gazeta* origins. In the Chinese context, *huobaoju* lost none of the common criteria it had inherited from early Stalinist Russia: a simple plot set around a specific event or campaign; a limited number of acts, with most being limited to a single act (*dumu*); an equally limited time frame, with most *huobaoju* lasting only a matter of minutes; a small number of characters, with actors dressed in a cartoon-like fashion; lively participation from the audience; and a frequent use of comic violence. As had been the case following the Japanese invasion of 1937, the purpose of *huobaoju* in Mao's China was to continue to agitate against individuals or groups deemed to be enemies of the people.

Moreover, like Soviet practitioners of the 1920s, those in Mao's China who scripted or produced such *huobaoju* never claimed that their art represented the height of dramatic endeavour. Such plays were deemed best if they 'contained dialogue and song, music and dancing, exaggerated actions, loud [vocal] delivery...and bright colours...', and if they '...denigrated counterrevolutionaries while glorifying the people's heroes' (Li, 1960: 96). Indeed, one of the most recurrent words in the instructions that accompanied *huobaoju* scripts was 'ease' (*yi*), for 'living newspapers' were deemed effective only if they were easy to perform and understand. 'These three plays', instructed the anonymous editors of a 1965 anti-American *huobaoju*, for instance, 'are easy to organise and easy to act out: they are suitable for production in villages as well by all kinds of artistic troupes' (Anon, 1965: no page numbers).

Indeed, and in a reflection of the Mao-era rejection of 'intellectualism', *huobaoju*'s simplicity and lack of subtlety were held up as the form's source of virtue by its many proponents. 'As a form of immediate propaganda (*jishi xuanchuan*)', argued the Chinese playwright, novelist and defender of *huobaoju* Lao She in 1966, 'it [i.e., *huobaoju*] is perhaps a little crude... but only by being immediate does it have an effect'. The point of *huobaoju* was not to aspire to dramatic greatness but to get a point across, argued Lao She: these

plays had to be presented in such a way that people ‘understood something as soon as they saw it and as soon as they heard it’ (*Renmin ribao*, 8 April 1992).

This being the case, the messages of almost all *huobaoju* were exceedingly simple, and the emotions they encouraged visceral. Characters representing class and state enemies were habitually shown to suffer physical abuse at the hands of the ‘masses’ (or via their own ineptitude), or were theatrically killed, while members of the audience were encouraged to hurl abuse or objects at actors playing the part of such villains. Scripts contained constant repetition of political slogans. And to make absolutely sure that the message was understood, some *huobaoju* involved actors in roles known as the ‘*jieshuoyuan*’ (lit. ‘explainer’), whose job it was to narrate events as they occurred, ask rhetorical questions of the audience in an attempt to increase agitation, and to speak directly to characters within the play (e.g., by speaking ‘for’ onlookers when berating a villain). Another common practice was to have a villain’s name attached to his or her person throughout the course of the play so that even the most ill-informed of observers would understand which character was worthy of vitriol.<sup>10</sup>

In keeping with the original aims of the form, plays were also written at astounding speed. During the Great Leap Forward, for example, the China-wide rush to harvest grain in excess of wildly ambitious targets was mirrored in attempts by cultural workers to produce *huobaoju* overnight: in 1958, actors, directors and scriptwriters from the Shanghai People’s Arts Theatre (Shanghai *renmin yishu xiyuan*, 1958: 132) wrote eight *huobaoju* in the space of five days based on their experiences of visiting factories around the city. In other instances, *huobaoju* were said to fit the very aims of the Great Leap Forward in that they were ‘quick and economical’ (*duo kuai hao sheng*) (*Renmin ribao*, 12 April 1958).

At the same time, however, and despite the great lengths that were taken to present *huobaoju* as a Chinese innovation, many of these practices suggested little real narrative development beyond the sorts of ‘living newspapers’ that had been produced in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. The

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<sup>10</sup> This practice is even suggested in one script so that ‘it will make it easier for the audience to understand’ (Liu, 1951: 2). This practice bore a striking resemblance to everyday life in China in the early 1950s. During the Land Reform campaigns, and during various purges of the same period, ‘class enemies’ were habitually paraded through the streets with name tags hung around their necks (see Schoenhals, 2007).



photographic record of performances suggests, for instance, that *huobaoju* had changed little between the 1940s and the 1960s. Actors portraying Americans and other ‘capitalists’ in 1965 dressed in much the same way as their predecessors had done in 1949 (or *zhivaya gazeta* actors had done in Moscow in the 1920s)—donning a top hat or MacArthuresque sunglasses (Hong, 2002: 159)—while the ubiquitous figure of Chiang Kai-shek continued to be depicted in Civil War mode (and in much the same way that illustrators such as Hua Junwu continued to draw him for the country’s newspapers), wearing an ‘ill-fitting army uniform and only a single boot’, with ‘hands bandaged and a plaster on his head’ (An, 1950: 1).<sup>11</sup> (Figure 5) While ‘living newspapers’ in China had thus been embellished with numerous vernacular cultural elements, they remained at heart a revolutionary form of agitational theatre, and one which continued to betray an early Soviet provenance.



Figure 5: A *huobaoju* being performed on the streets of Shanghai, 1950. The actor in the centre of the image with sunglasses, pipe and bandages is playing the part of Douglas MacArthur; the actor holding a samurai sword and wearing a kimono is playing a Japanese militarist. (Courtesy of the Shanghai Municipal Archives)

<sup>11</sup> The depiction of Chiang with a plaster on his head originated in early wartime visual propaganda created by the Japanese and their allies in 1937-8; it was adopted by the Chinese communists in almost all post-1945 depictions of the Nationalist leader.



### Controlling the Form

From its inception, the 'living newspaper' was an improvisational and ephemeral art form. In the early years of the war against the Japanese, for instance, plays were indeed scripted, and particular troupes were tasked with the performance of specific *huobaoju*. In just as many cases, however, these plays were performed without recourse to printed scripts or official sanction.

In the Soviet Union, the improvisational quality of 'living newspapers' had served a specific purpose during the 1920s, but had come to be viewed with suspicion as Stalin attempted to consolidate power. In post-1949 China, a similar pattern developed. The Communists recognised the success that this agitational theatre had achieved. In the years following 1949, however, when mobilisation of the entire population in support of the Korean War, Land Reform, and the collectivisation of agriculture was imperative, the need for a scripted, unified and tightly controlled programme of propaganda became paramount.

In China, however, this was achieved *not* by doing away with *huobaoju*, but by tasking state-run bodies at both the national and local level with scripting and producing *huobaoju*, and by maintaining strict control over the rights to publish the scripts for such plays. At the same time, and in an effort not to stifle the improvisational nature of the form that had made it so effective in the war years, they also decreed within these published scripts a significant measure of flexibility in terms of production. 'When acting out this script', instructed the collective authors of a 1965 *huobaoju* concerning the Vietnam War, for instance, 'the actors, clothing, props and so on can be organised according to one's own discretion, based on the actual circumstances' (Li, et al., 1965: n.p.). In other instances, distinctions were made according to *where* a *huobaoju* was to be performed. In a Great Leap Forward-era *huobaoju* written in the southern city of Guangzhou, actors were instructed in great intricacy about the stage setting for a particular *huobaoju*, right down to the inclusion of a papaya tree that was to be made visible at the back of the stage,<sup>12</sup> 'if performed on the street', however, 'a single chair and table will suffice' (Guo, et al., 1958: n.p.).

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<sup>12</sup> Suggesting a very local reference to sub-tropical Guangzhou.

In other cases, however, a far more elaborate list of items that could or could not be altered in the performance of *huobaoju* was included for performers and producers towards the end of a script. In one early play, performers were given the choice to set words to whatever melodies they thought appropriate—suggesting that regional variation in terms of musical accompaniment remained a major factor in Chinese *huobaoju*—yet they were also reminded that certain elements were not to be changed: ‘When you sing the line “It was precisely at this moment of danger that the Soviet Union arrived”, the [person playing the] Soviet Red Army [officer] must come on stage immediately—an early or late entry will ruin the effect entirely’ (Dongbei wenhua jiaoyu gongzuodui, n.d.: 17).

This is not to say that the writing of new *huobaoju* became the exclusive domain of the Party or organs of the central government. Instead, and in a reflection of the concept of the ‘mass line’ (*qunzhong luxian*), there was a very deliberate attempt to encourage non-Party and non-government groups to become involved. Indeed, *huobaoju* was justified precisely because it was so well suited to the fulfilment of the ‘mass line’ insofar as it encouraged audience participation and collective authorship. The *People’s Daily* noted with some pride in August 1958, for instance, that a *huobaoju* written by professional dramatists was being performed and further developed by an amateur dramatics club run by railway workers in Shanghai, with workers themselves refining elements of the original production (Zhang, 1958).

Furthermore, rather than simply monitoring the scripting or production of plays, the authorities also controlled the context in which they could be performed. *Huobaoju* were still performed on street corners and in factories or villages. However, by assimilating such performances into events such as national day celebrations, mass rallies or other staged events, the improvisational quality of the *huobaoju* could be retained, while the content or message of each play strictly monitored. Dramatic troupes could independently produce quite different versions of a particular *huobaoju*, but the fundamental message of each play could be maintained by those organisations which published scripts and associated guides—most prominently municipal or provincial-level publishing houses and theatres.

The result was an ‘institutionalisation’ of *huobaoju*, with the form *appearing* immediate and spontaneous but being just as firmly controlled as other forms of propaganda. Like posters, for example, records were kept of

the number of each *huobaoju* script that were published (with these being marked on the publications themselves), and the independent production of such plays was not condoned.

### Conclusion

The onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 had widespread ramifications for all types of performance art in China. Yet as I suggested at the very start of this paper, the hitherto generally accepted narrative of the model operas replacing all other forms of drama in this period is now beginning to be undermined by new scholarship. While it is clear that *huobaoju* did have an influence on the *yangbanxi*, the form initially lived on after 1966 through the Red Guards, many of whom appear to have incorporated not simply elements of the form into their street performances, but entire sections of extant *huobaoju* where appropriate. Paul Clark (2012: 35-6), for example, provides evidence that *huobaoju* were incorporated into impromptu performances provided by 'sent down youth' to rural audiences in the late 1960s, suggesting that those whose job it was to spread revolution to the countryside saw no contradiction in the continued use of the form in the Cultural Revolution context. In other cases, the 'hybrid form of spoken play' often performed in an improvisational fashion by Red Guards in the cities, and reaching a peak in popularity during the summer of 1967, betrayed clear echoes of *huobaoju* (Clark, 2008: 192-5). It is telling that, in both cases, *huobaoju* appears to have been called upon precisely because of its agitational quality (one that suited the mood of the Cultural Revolution), but also because the improvisational nature of the form represented a potential threat to authority. Just as the state had sought to control *huobaoju* prior to 1966, so could those who sought to criticise state 'bureaucracy' reformulate *huobaoju* for their own purposes.

I would argue, however, that the legacy of *huobaoju* after 1966 was found not in the officially codified forms of theatre which were celebrated in this period, but in the dramatic hysteria of the Cultural Revolution itself. After all, none of the agitational functions of the 'living newspaper' disappeared in 1966. Most were instead channelled into others forms of political expression. There is but a thin line between public denunciation of 'Nationalist spies', the forced donning of dunce hats and other theatrical accoutrements on 'class enemies', the public beating of villains or the shouting of slogans at mass rallies and the basic elements of the *huobaoju*. The public spectacle that so typified the

Cultural Revolution represented the triumph of everything that the *huobaoju* form stood for.

In this regard, *huobaoju* can also be seen not merely as part of a tradition of revolutionary theatre in China that stretches back well beyond the 1960s, but also as part of what Chang-tai Hung (2011: 262) has referred to as a wider ‘Nationalistic propaganda state’ fostered under Mao, one in which the very purpose of all artistic expression was to ‘*fadong qunzhong*’ (stir up the masses). In such a context, *huobaoju* sat alongside, but also interacted with, a whole range of artistic expression that had been developed and Sinicised in Yan’an, from cartoons to poster art. Such a culture may have been forged primarily in the war against Japan, yet it developed most rapidly in the CCP’s war against the Nationalists, and became subsumed into a wider practice of encouraging mass participation with the ultimate aim of ‘understand[ing] and exploit[ing] the mentality of the masses’ (Hung, 2011: 261). In this regard, *huobaoju* was inseparable from the broader practice of mass campaigns in the People’s Republic, in which all sorts of artistic expression—drama, visual art, music—were designed for the purpose of ‘inviting popular participation by stirring up collective hatred’ (Strauss, 2002: 82). Most *huobaoju* were, after all, created to accompany specific campaigns, ranging from the Korean War to the Great Leap Forward, and most involved the direct vilification or even execution of enemies, *in absentia*, against which campaigns were directed.

The importance of *huobaoju* for our understanding of Chinese cultural development under Mao thus lies not purely in the Soviet origins of the form, nor even in its Sinification, but in the extent to which the history of this form in China forces us to question the viability of 1966 as a natural watershed in the development of revolutionary culture. As Barbara Mittler has recently argued, many of the cultural expressions that emerged in the post-1966 period were ‘not without historical precedents’ (2013: 30), just as many of the forms that we have come to associate so closely with the Cultural Revolution—such as the *yangbanxi*, with which I started this paper—developed out of an existing body of Yan’an-derived political culture. *Huobaoju* predated but also presaged the advent of Red Guard theatricality and the more formalised world of the model works. This fact alone has all kinds of ramifications for our understanding of agitational theatre in China, and should perhaps prompt us to revisit the argument that the *yangbanxi*, and the wider Cultural Revolution culture they have come to represent, were in any way unique.

There is, admittedly, much more work that needs to be done to provide a more holistic picture of the *huobaoju* form and its development over the *longue durée*. Future archival research might provide greater insights into the control and development of the form at various levels of the state and party—and in the cities as opposed to the countryside—while wider use might also be made of the photographic and audiovisual record in understanding how Chinese *huobaoju* differed (or otherwise) from their Soviet predecessors in terms of key functions such as audience participation.

In any case, *huobaoju* was both reliant on and reflective of the very nature of political culture in China in the 1950s and 1960s. Stylistically, *huobaoju* looked very similar to their Soviet antecedents—right down to the top hats worn by ‘capitalists’ in both. Contextually, however, they represented something quite different. The comedic violence and constant exhortations to loathe common enemies in *huobaoju* may have seemed unremarkable in times of war. What is telling in China’s case was that such depictions, rather than fading with the Communist victory in 1949, became, like other forms of revolutionary art—from *manhua* to posters, slogans and woodblock prints—a constant feature of socialist political culture under Mao for another two decades.

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## Could or Should? The Changing Modality of Authority in the *China Daily*

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### Abstract

*This paper applies corpus techniques of linguistic discourse analysis to an examination of the Chinese government-owned English-language newspaper the China Daily. The aim is to look for evidence of change over the last decade in the way the deontic modal language of power, obligation and permission—expressions such as ‘you must do such-and-such’ and ‘you should/may do so-and-so’—is associated in the newspaper with Chinese establishment/authority figures. The study compares two corpora of 50 China Daily texts—one selected from 1998, one from 2010—to look for evidence of change in the way such deontic modal language is used, and seeks to interpret this evidence in the context of China’s changing social, political and media culture. The study focuses on modality found in the context of what William Labov (1972) labelled ‘evaluation’—an aspect of the narrative structure of text revealing the relationship between narrator and audience.*

Keywords: China, media, censorship, power, modality, evaluation, discourse analysis

### Introduction

On 22 August, 2012, Xu Huaiqian, editor-in-chief of the *Earth (Dadi)* supplement of China’s principal state-owned newspaper, the *People’s Daily (Renmin ribao)*, committed suicide. In an interview before his death, Xu was quoted as saying: ‘My pain is I dare to think, but I don’t dare to speak out; if I dare to speak out, I don’t dare to write it down, and if I dare to write it down, there is no place to publish,’ (Wu, 2012: 1).

Xu is far from the first Chinese journalist to have struggled with censorship and self-censorship through fear. In a 2008 blog, the journalist Chang Ping wrote about his own inner struggles while working for government-owned

publications. 'I am afraid of other people praising me as a brave newspaperman, because I know I am full of fear,' he wrote. 'What I've practiced most is avoiding risk. Self-censorship has become part of my life' (Chang, 2008: 1). Chang's case is among those cited by Bennett (2010) in her list of the ways in which the Chinese state continues to exercise control over the Chinese media. The struggles of journalists such as Xu and Chang to reconcile their consciences with the reality of state control tell a more subtle story than just the continued existence of censorship within the mainstream Chinese media, however. They point towards a growing sense of professionalism among China's mainstream journalists—a growing desire to push the boundaries of what can be reported while not pushing too far or too fast.

This delicate balance was demonstrated in the way the Chinese media reported the collision of two high-speed trains near Wenzhou in mainland China on 23 July, 2011. Chinese news outlets quickly reported the collision. But within hours, noted media commentator Qian Gang, reporters received directives from the Central Propaganda Department, the Information Office and other government departments on how and what to report. 'Many journalists were called back from the crash scene. Newspapers and television stations were instructed to report positive stories and avoid questioning the Ministry of Railways and government more generally' (Qian, 2011: 1). This was not the end of the story, however. Despite the efforts at control, some state media outlets carried strongly worded criticism of the Chinese government. By 29 July, a dramatic shift in mainland news coverage was under way: 'Media, including the *People's Daily*, did widespread reporting... The front pages of many Chinese newspapers conveyed the sadness and rage felt by ordinary Chinese' (Qian, 2011: 1). There were three main reasons why such a shift was possible, Qian argued: the rapid growth of the internet; the increasing existence of 'media professionals who harbour idealism and see themselves as voices of the people'; and the presence of a force within the Chinese Communist Party itself promoting the advancement of political reform.

The tension between an increasingly diverse, commercialised and globally exposed media in China, and the attempts by the Chinese state to maintain control over it while pressing ahead with economic reform and greater participation in the global economy and community, has been the focus of increasing attention from academic researchers. Some, such as Wang and

Chen (2008), have used data collected from a survey of Chinese news consumers in Shanghai to examine whether the attitude of Chinese citizens towards state-media relations is shifting. Others, such as Stockmann and Gallagher (2011), have used content analysis of Chinese newspapers and TV news programmes, supplemented by interviews with Chinese journalists and a survey of news-consumers, to document how Chinese media coverage of labour disputes sticks closely to the Party line, despite the fact that marketisation has changed the way the news is delivered. Qian (2010a, 2010b, 2011) uses observation of the way news events are reported in China to attempt better to understand the shifting nature of the relationship between state and media in the country. Sun (2008) argues, meanwhile, that the apparent process of reform taking place in China's media articulates mainly middle-class concerns and peripheralises disadvantaged communities.

This paper seeks to contribute to this growing body of work by applying some of the discourse analytical techniques developed for the deconstruction of English-language media to an examination of how a Chinese newspaper—the English-language *China Daily*—has been responding to the changing social, economic and political climate in China over the last decade. There are good reasons for focusing on the *China Daily* which will be looked at later. Not least of these, however, is the fact that, being written in English, the *China Daily* is susceptible to analysis by linguistic tools and methodologies developed for the English language.

There has been a huge amount of academic research aimed at deconstructing the way the English-language media function and this has resulted in the development of a range of sophisticated linguistic tools and approaches for the analysis of media texts written in English. Work has been done, for example, on challenging the idea that news coverage is the unbiased reporting of 'hard facts' (e.g., Fowler, 1991; Hall et al., 1978, 1980); on analysing what Fowler (1991) called the social construction of news through choices of what has 'news value' (e.g., Fowler 1991; Glasgow University Media Group, 1976; Philo 1983); and on the social and economic factors involved in news selection (e.g., Fowler, 1991; Philo, 1983; Cohen and Young 1973). More recently, the concept of framing has been used to analyse 'the way events and issues are organised and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals and their audiences' (Reese, 2001).

This study falls within the research tradition that has been able so effectively to deconstruct the western, English-language media, but seeks to apply some of the same techniques to the Chinese media, specifically the *China Daily*. The study uses corpus techniques to look at the use of the deontic modal language of power, obligation and permission—expressions such as ‘You *must* do such and such’; ‘you *should / ought to / may* do so-and-so’—in the *China Daily*, and specifically at the way in which this language is associated with, or put into the mouths of, Chinese establishment/authority figures whose words or actions are reported in the *China Daily*. The study compares two corpora of 50 *China Daily* texts—one corpus selected from 1998 and one from 2010—and uses a quantitative/qualitative methodology to look for evidence of statistically significant change between 1998 and 2010 in the way modal language is associated in *China Daily* reports with authority figures, and to interpret this evidence in the context of the changing social, political and media culture in China.

The corpus approach is not without problems. Chomsky’s objections are well-known. In a 2004 interview, he said: ‘Corpus linguistics doesn't mean anything. It's like saying... what they're going to do is take videotapes of things happening in the world and they'll collect huge videotapes of everything that's happening and from that maybe they'll come up with some generalizations or insights’ (quoted in Andor, 2004: 97). McEnery and Wilson (2001) accept that in any sample of a language variety there is a danger that it will be skewed, so that rare constructions may occur more frequently than is the norm. The effects of this, however, can be minimalised by being careful about data selection, they say—and a corpus approach has many benefits, not least that it ‘enables results to be quantified and compared to other results in the same way as any other scientific investigation which is based on a data sample’ (McEnery and Wilson, 2001: 75). Importantly for this study, which combines both a quantitative and qualitative approach, they argue that a corpus can be used as a source of both quantitative and qualitative data.

While it would certainly be possible (and interesting) to examine corpora of *China Daily* texts from several different time periods, so as to chart the progress of change and relate this to the prevailing economic/cultural/political conditions in China, for reasons partly of time and space and partly of focus, that has not been done here. The aim of this paper is not to produce a scale on which linguistic change in the *China Daily* can be mapped against economic

and cultural change year-by-year: that would require a different approach. It is to compare the *China Daily* at two discrete points in time: 1998 and 2010. The justification for choosing these two time points is that the economic, cultural and political changes in China that took place between these 12 years (and which are described in more detail elsewhere) are sufficiently significant to justify a study that examines corpora of texts from these two periods.

The study focuses on modality found in the context of what William Labov (1972) labelled 'evaluation'—an aspect of the narrative structure of text that is revealing of the nature of the relationship between narrator (in a study of this nature, the journalist) and audience. It examines the type of modality used, and what this reveals about power relationships in China and the newspaper's attitude towards authority figures; and also the textual context in which it is used (whether it occurs in direct or reported speech, or in the narrative and hence the journalist's own 'voice') and what this reveals about the *China Daily's* relationship with its audience.

This is not, however, a study of genre. It is an examination of the stance of a particular newspaper, the *China Daily*, towards power, as revealed through the use in its pages of the deontic modal language of power, obligation and permission. It is not, therefore, concerned with examining a range of different authors or genres. The term journalist is used throughout the study to refer to the author of newspaper texts: but it should be noted that in a newspaper, a published news text is actually the work of a series of individuals—the reporter, the sub-editor, the editor—who have all worked upon it, generally to constraints imposed upon them by the newspaper itself. The attitudes being examined in this study are those of the newspaper itself, not of any individual authors.

### **The Media and the State in China**

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was a period of extraordinary change and economic growth in the People's Republic of China. The country emerged as a truly global power—a process exemplified by its joining the World Trade Organisation in 2001, by the Beijing Olympics in 2008, and by China's overtaking Japan in 2011 to become the world's second-biggest economy. International news media have tended to represent China as a nation swept along by consumerism, market liberalism, globalisation and technological convergence (Sun, 2008). China's rapid emergence is often represented, in fact,

as a challenge to the existing financial and geopolitical order (e.g., Tkacik, 2012). But to what extent has China's embrace of the market and of globalisation been accompanied by progress in democratisation of its media?

There has been great change in the way the Chinese media function over the last 20 years or so. Before Deng Xiaoping's 'second revolution' in 1978, there were a limited number of media outlets in China—a few central-government published newspapers and journals and a network of 'people's radio stations'. These tended to follow an approved ideological line (Wang and Chen, 2008) and were generally restrained by both ideological controls and by the system of the planned economy, (Qian, 2011).

According to Chu Yingchi (2008), the role of the media in China began to shift after the introduction of the market economy in the 1980s. The Chinese media were encouraged to play a dual role, of serving the Party and the market—even if the Party remained the priority. News outlets were increasingly allowed to become multiple role players, Chu says, including the provision of information, entertainment and news. The student democracy movement of 1989, however, posed a challenge. Conley and Tripoli (1992) describe how, in the absence of regular meetings with Propaganda Department officials at the height of the crisis, the *China Daily's* coverage, like that of other media outlets, fluctuated—at first cautious, then more bold, before the declaration of martial law on 20 May led to the re-establishment of a clear Party line.

Despite the re-establishment of Party control, the process of change that had been underway in the Chinese media before the student democracy movement continued and even accelerated (Chu, 2008). Gradually, the government began permitting the popular press to explore alternative and critical views. Nevertheless, by 1998, Zhao Yuezhi was writing that while there had been significant changes in the news media in China in terms of increasing variety and liveliness and a reduced explicitly propagandist content, the Chinese Communist Party still retained 'overt political control'.

Before the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century began, therefore, most commentators (e.g., Lee, 1990; Conley and Tripoli, 1992; Zhao, 1998; Li, 1999) agreed that Chinese journalists still enjoyed significantly less freedom from state control than their Western counterparts. The mainstream government-controlled and funded media were largely expected to put a positive spin on events that were reported (Zhang 1997; Conley & Tripoli 1992). China,

however, had already increasingly begun to open itself up to participation in global economic competition through exports and foreign direct investment and, in an attempt to establish a socialist market economy, the Chinese government began pushing the nation's media towards a more market-driven model (Wang and Chen, 2008). The result has been an explosion of new media outlets. By 2001, a new class of commercial media outlets was emerging—outlets such as the *Beijing Youth News*, a newspaper which offered lively reports about crime, sports, and economic successes (Smith, 2001). By 2005 there were nearly 2,000 newspapers, close to 9,000 magazines, almost 300 radio stations and more than 300 TV stations (Wang and Chen, 2008). With the introduction of the Internet, almost all these outlets developed an online presence as well.

The commercialisation and diversification of the media changed their relationship with the state. The state continued legally to own most media, but no longer so overtly directed their style and content. Under the dictates of the market, media organisations that could no longer rely on state funding could no longer simply act as dull party mouthpieces—they had to innovate and come up with styles and contents that could help them attract readers and increase circulation (Wang and Chen, 2008).

Marketisation does not necessarily equate with liberalisation, however. He Qinglian argues that, since 2005, the Chinese government has exerted increasingly tight control of the media. She cites the closure of a string of media outlets since 2005, including *Beijing News (Xinjing bao)*, *Freezing Point (Bingdian)* and *Shenzhen Legal Times (Shenzhen fazhi bao)*. Stockmann and Gallagher point out that while commercial liberalisation and diversification of media outlets may have changed the way news content was delivered, media content still stuck close to the Party line by emphasising the positive. The increased sophistication, diversity and even sensationalism of much modern Chinese press coverage actually helped maintain regime stabilisation and authoritarian resilience: 'Official state messages and policy goals are far more effectively conveyed and absorbed when presented as news...rather than as the old-style propaganda of a Leninist state' (Stockmann and Gallagher, 2011: 467). According to Lum and Fischer (2009), China's increasingly commercialised media outlets negotiate a delicate balance between responding to growing public demands for information and remaining within the bounds of what authorities will allow and advertisers will support.

### **Why *China Daily*?**

The *China Daily* is China's leading mainstream English-language newspaper. Its website claims an average daily circulation of more than 200,000, one third of which is abroad. The newspaper describes itself as 'an important source of information on Chinese politics, economy, society and culture. It is often called the "Voice of China"' (*China Daily*, n.d.).

Given its language of publication, and the range and diversity of news outlets that have emerged in China over the last decade or so, the *China Daily* may not be very representative of the Chinese print media generally. It is, however, an example of that section of the Chinese media—the large, mainstream, state-owned news outlets—over which the Chinese government still has most control. By its very nature, the *China Daily* is written for a foreign language-speaking audience, so could be said to be the mouthpiece for the Party in its efforts to communicate with the wider world (Chen, 2004). New US and UK editions of the newspaper have recently gone into circulation following a 45 billion yuan investment in overseas media by the Chinese Communist Party (*Daily Telegraph*, 2012), which is an indication of the newspaper's importance in the eyes of the Party in terms of the way China is perceived overseas.

The *China Daily* is still subject to a degree of state control. The website China Detail claimed that a high degree of self-censorship is practised by its journalists, with subjects such as Taiwan and Tibet usually deemed 'too sensitive' to cover. Foreign editors of the newspaper have also been told that editorial policy is to support the policies of the Communist Party (China Detail, n.d.). The newspaper is not exempt from the commercialisation of China's media industry. The China Detail website reports that, like most other state-owned Chinese industries, the newspaper and the publication group to which it belongs will no longer receive subsidies, and have thus adopted a more commercial approach, with editorial content being pitched increasingly towards a wider range of readers so as to attract more advertising revenues, (China Detail, n.d.).

For all these reasons, the *China Daily* thus offers a unique window through which to study the changing relationship between the Chinese state and media.



### **Modality and Attitude**

Modality, according to Roger Fowler, can be informally regarded as ‘comment’ or ‘attitude’ (Fowler, 1991). He distinguished four types of comment/attitude expressed through modality:

- truth: statements expressing a conviction of certainty or otherwise
- obligation: statements in which the speaker/writer stipulates that his or her audience *ought to/should/must* perform certain actions
- permission: statements in which the speaker/writer grants or withholds permission: ‘You *may* do this...’
- desirability: the speaker/writer indicates approval/disapproval

As many researchers (Perkins, 1983; Halliday, 1994; Martin and White, 2005) have made clear, however, modal language encodes not only comment and attitude but also social relationships. Martin and White noted that ‘deontic’ modals of obligation and permission such as *must*, *should*, and *may* are bound up with relationships of power and control. But they are not simple commands, or imperatives. A modal statement ‘explicitly grounds the demand in the subjectivity of the speaker—as an assessment by the speaker of obligation rather than as a command’ (Martin and White, 2005: 111).

This acknowledgement that the deontic modal captures the speaker’s assessment of obligation, and therefore something of the speaker’s assessment of his/her relationship with those being addressed, is central to the argument of this paper. It is precisely because of this quality that such modals are revealing of a speaker’s perceptions of their relationships of power and control relative to others. In so far as journalists choose to associate such modals with speakers, they also reveal something of the journalist’s own perceptions of a speaker’s relationships of power with others.

This paper examines a particular aspect of modality—that occurring in the context of what Labov (1972) labelled modal ‘evaluation’—as it appears in the *China Daily* in 1998 and 2010. It looks for evidence of change in the use of modal evaluation over this period, and attempts to interpret it in the light of the changing social, political and cultural environment in China.

### **Modal Evaluation and Audience**

This study is part of a larger programme of research aiming to develop a range of critical linguistic tools which can identify in newspaper texts key linguistic indicators that reveal the social, political, cultural and commercial

factors influencing the writing of those texts. My previous research has sought to identify a number of such indicators, and I have used them in the contrastive analysis of corpora of texts from the *China Daily* and the *UK Times* (Chen, 2004, 2005 and 2007) and from the *China Daily* in 1998 and in 2010 (Chen, 2012 and 2013). A number of discourse analytical tools have been chosen to carry out this work, based upon theories and approaches to understanding a text ranging from M.A.K. Halliday's System of Transitivity (Halliday, 1994) to Labov's work on oral narratives (Labov, 1972); from a simple analysis of type of person quoted (labelled the 'sayer', following Halliday) to a study of the use of direct speech. These tools were then applied to analysis of a range of indicators in the corpora of texts studied.

This particular paper is part of a pair of studies looking at what Labov labelled 'evaluation'. This is a system for analysing the narrative structure of a text which is revealing of the relationship between the producer of that text (the speaker in an oral narrative; the writer in a written text) and their audience. The term, as Labov described it, refers to 'the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative' (Labov, 1972: 207). Labov developed this concept while studying speech patterns in New York. He asked subjects to record oral narratives in which they talked about personal experiences. When analysing these, Labov identified six structural elements that make up a narrative:

- the abstract, which sets out what a narrative is about
- the orientation—who, where, when, why, and what
- the complicating action
- the evaluation
- the resolution
- the coda

The evaluative element has to do with the way the speaker embellishes his/her narrative to make it more interesting. Evaluative elements, according to Labov, say to us: 'This was terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy; or amusing, hilarious, wonderful; more generally that it was...worth reporting' (1972: 209). As we will see later, texts rich in evaluation tend to be multi-layered and dramatically and emotionally engaging.

Use of evaluation is an important indicator of the nature of the relationship between narrator and audience because it suggests that the need to attract and hold the attention of the audience is important to the narrator. Although

Labov's system was developed while analysing spoken English, I argued (Chen, 2004) that it could also be adapted for analysis of written texts. I developed an analytical approach (Chen, 2004 and 2012) based on the identification in texts of a particular category of evaluative linguistic device Labov labelled comparators. These provide a means for a narrator to embellish a narrative by placing the events/situations described against a wider background of possible events/situations that *might* or *could* or *should* have happened, but did not.

A variety of linguistic forms can be used by narrators as comparator evaluation. They include negatives, modal verbs, futures, and many more (Labov, 1972). In previous research (Chen, 2004), I focused on just three—negatives, futures and modal verbs—and described three categories of comparator evaluation based on these, as follows:

- negative evaluation (such as *is not* in 'assisted reproduction *is not* a cure-all', from the 2010 corpus of texts analysed). Negative evaluation places the events/situations described against a background of other possible events/situations that have not come about. Thus, it is conceivable that assisted reproduction might have been a cure-all for infertility, but in fact it is not.
- future evaluation (such as *will make* in 'The mainland *will make* greater efforts towards further cross-straits ties' from the 1998 corpus). This tends to be used when reporting on future events or possible developments.
- modal evaluation (such as *should begin* in 'Taiwanese authorities *should begin* political discussions', from the 1998 corpus). These enable narrator/author/speaker to express visions of the world as he/she believes it *could*, *should* or *ought to be*.

The results of my 2004 study revealed the different roles that the *Times* and *China Daily* played in their respective societies in 1998. *The Times*, a commercially-owned newspaper which faced competition from rival newspapers, questioned authority and was concerned with producing interesting, dramatically rich reports in order to attract and keep readers, made ample use of evaluation. The *China Daily*, in 1998 essentially a state-controlled newspaper that acted as a mouthpiece for the Chinese government and, being centrally distributed, did not need to spice up its reports to attract readers, used comparatively little evaluation (Chen 2004).

A subsequent article (Chen, 2012) compared that original corpus of 1998 *China Daily* texts with a later corpus of 50 texts selected from the same newspaper in 2010 to look for evidence of change in negative and future evaluation. I argued that the changes identified (a significant increase in negative evaluation between 1998 and 2010, coupled with a greater diversity of sayers in 2010) suggested that by 2010 the *China Daily* may have been starting to offer a broader diversity of perspective than in 1998; and also that it appeared more concerned to make its reports interesting and readable.

This paper complements that earlier study by focusing on modal evaluation—evaluation incorporating modal verbs that enable the narrator to express visions of the world as they believe it *could* or *should* or *must* be—which is revealing of attitudes (on the part of both sayer and journalist) towards power and authority, among other things. Future modals, having been dealt with in the earlier paper, are not included in this analysis.

### **Methodology**

A total of 100 texts were analysed: 50 from the *China Daily* in 1998, 50 from the *China Daily* in 2010. A number of criteria for selection of texts were decided upon: texts were all between 250 and 700 words in length, about domestic news, and published online. In order to attempt to achieve what McEnery and Wilson (2001) referred to as a ‘maximally representative finite sample’, one which can provide as accurate a picture as possible of the language variety being studied (here, domestic news texts from the *China Daily*), I attempted, when selecting data, to minimise the risk of subjective choice. To this end, the first piece of domestic news for any day that satisfied the above criteria was selected: no other texts from that day were chosen.

The approach adopted to analyse the texts was both quantitative and qualitative. It was quantitative in the use of corpora containing statistically-significant samples of texts, which were analysed for evidence of significant differences in the patterns of use of modal evaluation in the *China Daily* between 1998 and 2010. To this end, instances of modal evaluation found in each of the 100 texts were recorded. They were assigned to one of two categories—deontic modals of obligation or permission such as *should*, *must* or the permissive *can*; and other modals, frequently of permission or speculation—and tabulated. A count was also made of whether the evaluation appeared in direct speech or reported speech (and hence could be attributed

to a person being quoted) or in the narrative itself (and hence was attributed to the journalist).

But the approach was also qualitative. Individual texts from each corpus that were particularly rich in the use of modal evaluation were subjected to a close qualitative textual analysis in order to better understand how the modal evaluation used was revealing of attitudes towards power and control, and also to consider what it revealed about the emphasis placed in texts on readability.

As stressed in the introduction, this is not a study of genre. It could be argued that to some extent, the modal language found in a news text may vary depending upon whether that text is an arts article, a news article and so on. All the texts selected for this study, however, were domestic news texts. They were selected according to the same criteria, and while the subject of texts did vary, Table 9 reveals that the subject range in the two corpora of texts was broadly similar.

### Findings

The analysis revealed some striking quantitative differences between 1998 and 2010. These are summarised below and in Tables 1 and 2. Significance was calculated using the Proportion Test, unless otherwise stated:

- The overall frequency of modal evaluators increased from one every 210 words in 1998, to one every 137 words in 2010. This is significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).
- There was a change in the nature of the modal language used. In 1998, deontic modals of obligation or permission such as *must*, *should* and some forms of *can* made up more than half (56 per cent) of all modal evaluation. By 2010, they made up just 28 per cent. A Chi-square test reveals this change to be significant ( $P < 0.05$ ).
- There was a big increase, between 1998 and 2010, in the proportion of modal evaluation occurring in direct speech, from 12 per cent in 1998 to 42 per cent in 2010. This is significant ( $P < 0.01$ ).

Table 1: Types of modal evaluation in *China Daily* in 1998 and 2010

	<i>China Daily</i> 1998	<i>China Daily</i> 2010
Deontic modals of obligation or permission ( <i>must, should, ought to, some forms of can or may</i> )	44 (56% of modal evaluators)	51 (28%)
Other modals ( <i>could, would, might, some forms of can or may</i> )	34 (44% of modal evaluators)	132 (72%)
<b>Total</b>	78	183

Table 2: Modal evaluation in *China Daily*—direct speech, reported speech or narrative

	<i>China Daily</i> 1998			<i>China Daily</i> 2010		
	Instances of modal evaluation	% of total	Frequency (words of text/comparator)	Instances of modal evaluation	% of total	Frequency (words of text/comparator)
<b>Direct Speech</b>	9	12%	1844	77	42%	325
<b>Reported Speech</b>	40	51%	415	72	39%	348
<b>Narrative</b>	29	37%	572	34	19%	736
<b>Total</b>	78	100	213	183	100	137

Evaluative devices are a way of dramatically enriching a narrative, and therefore of gaining and holding the reader/listener's attention. Since modality expresses 'comment' or 'attitude', we would expect modal evaluation to bring to a text the richness of comment, opinion and attitude. When deontic modals such as *should, must, ought* and some forms of *can* and *may* are involved, modal evaluation also expresses relationships (or perceived relationships) of power, control and obligation. When other modals—for example of possibility or speculation such as *could* or *might* and other forms of

*may* or *can*—are involved, meanwhile, modal evaluation is neutral in terms of power, but makes possible the expression of hopes, or speculation about the future.

We would, therefore, expect that texts generally richer in modal evaluation would be more dramatically rich and interesting in terms of comment and attitude, their depiction of power relationships, the expression of hopes, and their ability to speculate about future states. That being so, the mere fact that there has been such a statistically significant increase in modal evaluation between 1998 and 2010 suggests that by 2010 the *China Daily* is producing texts that are more dramatically rich, interesting and readable. Much more is going on than just this, however.

### **Interpretation**

#### *The modal language of power*

It might be anticipated that a newspaper that serves as the mouthpiece for an authoritarian regime would use a high proportion of deontic modals of obligation/permission—and in the 1998 *China Daily*, as Table 1 shows, that appears to be the case. There were fewer instances overall of modal evaluation in the 1998 *China Daily* compared to 2010: but a far higher proportion were deontic (56 per cent in 1998, compared to 28 per cent in 2010). The 1998 *China Daily* text richest in modal evaluation was text 2, a politically sensitive report on the importance of improved business relations with Taiwan. The modal evaluation found is set out in Table 3, together with its attribution.

Table 3: Modal evaluation in 1998 *China Daily* text 2

Attribution	Modal evaluation
Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen	Taiwanese authorities <i>should begin</i> political discussions... ...any issue or topic <i>can be</i> discussed. ...both sides <i>should make</i> procedural arrangements ...they <i>can reach</i> agreements on the topics they feel <i>should be</i> discussed ...the 'One China' principal <i>must be upheld</i> ... China's sovereignty and territorial integrity <i>cannot be</i> separated
The mainland	...both sides <i>should begin</i> political talks... Under the formula....Taiwan <i>can maintain</i> its capitalist system... ...out of concern that Taiwan <i>may declare</i> independence...

What we have, in Text 2, is the Chinese government defining the terms for political discussions with Taiwan over cross-straits ties. There were only two identified speakers, Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen, and 'the mainland', code for the Chinese government. No alternative perspective appeared. Perhaps most dramatic of all, however, was the fact that all but one of the modals used were deontic modals of obligation or permission. Thus we have Qian saying that the Taiwan authorities *should begin* discussions (obligation); any topic *can be* discussed (permission); but China's sovereignty and territorial integrity *cannot be* separated (permission). The bulk of the modal evaluation occurs in reported speech attributed to Qian. It presumably therefore reflects the language Qian used, as mediated by the journalist. Qian himself, through his choice of language, and the journalist, in the way Qian's language is reported, leave little room for doubt that in their view Qian is in charge of setting the rules for discussion of cross-straits ties. The effect is to present the Chinese government as in a position of power and authority relative to Taiwan, demanding that Taiwan comply with the mainland's position.

This, then, is the *China Daily* as government mouthpiece. This picture becomes clearer when we look at Tables 4 and 5. Table 4 lists every modal clause from the three 1998 *China Daily* texts richest in modal



evaluation—including text 2—and breaks them down into their constituent parts. Table 5 summarises Table 4 and divides the sayers into two categories—government sayer (government spokesmen, and government-owned organisations and their representatives, including the military); and non-government sayer (everybody else).

Table 4: Modal evaluation in the 1998 *China Daily* (top three texts)

	Sayer		Subject	Modal			Object or circumstance
	Govt.	Non-Govt.		obligation	permission	other	
<b>Text 2</b>	Qian Qichen		Taiwan Authorities	should begin			political discussions with the mainland
	Qian		*any topic		can be discussed		
	The mainland		both sides	should begin			political talks
	Qian		both sides	should make			procedural arrangements for cross-straits talks
	He (Qian)		they (both sides)			can reach	agreement
	(Qian)		*they (both sides)	feel should be discussed			
	Qian		*the 'one China' principle	must be upheld			
	Qian		*China's sovereignty and territorial integrity		cannot be separated		

	Tang Shubei <sup>1</sup>		Taiwan		can maintain		it's capitalist system
	Narrator		Taiwan			may declare	independence
<b>Text 46</b>	Beijing Securities Regulatory Commission (BSRC)		net assets invested	should not be			lower than 300 million yuan
	(BSRC)		net profits	should be			higher than 60 million yuan
	(BSRC)		assets liability ration		cannot be		higher than 70 per cent
	(BSRC)		the candidates	must be			in govt.-supported industries
	(BSRC)		(the candidates)	must be			industrial leaders
	(BSRC)		the interval between issue and flotation		can be		shorter than 12 months
	(BSRC)		B-share candidates	must be			in line with state regulations
	(BSRC)		they (B-share candidates)	should also submit			analysis reports
<b>Text 25</b>	Narrator <sup>2</sup>		the total trade volume of art works			would equal	100 million yuan
	Narrator		the increase in auction companies			can only lead to	disorder

<sup>1</sup> Vice-chairman of the PRC's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits.

<sup>2</sup> Reporter for *China Daily*.

	Narrator		management of the market	should be			strengthened
	Narrator		the qualifications of auction companies	should be			strictly examined
	Narrator		training of agents and art dealers	should be			conducted
	Narrator		potential investors and buyers	should keep			their peace of mind
	Narrator		the auction market			may be put in	some kind of order
<b>Total</b>	25	0		15	5	5	

Table 5: Modal evaluation breakdown in *China Daily* 1998

Type of Sayer	Modal of obligation	Modal of permission	Other modal
<b>Government</b>	15	5	5
<b>Non-Government</b>	0	0	0

What Tables 4 and 5 reveal is clear. Every single sayer associated with a modal comparator in the three texts was a government spokesman or representative. And the majority of the modal comparators associated with these government sayers were modals of obligation or permission.

We have already seen, in text 2, Chinese vice-premier Qian Qichen presented, through the use of modals of obligation and permission, as being powerful enough to define the terms of political discussions with Taiwan. The modal language of texts 46 and 25 is equally emphatic. Headlined ‘Prospective listed firms must be profitable’, text 46 reports on a series of requirements imposed by the Beijing Securities Regulation Commission (BSRC), a branch of government, on Chinese companies wishing to issue shares to the public. Since

it essentially lists a series of qualifying requirements, the text consists of little more than a string of modals of obligation and permission, all attributed to the BSRC: qualifying companies *must be* in government-supported industries; they *must be* industry leaders; etc. The text displays little of the dramatic richness often associated with texts high in modal evaluation. But it does demonstrate the connection between modal evaluation of obligation and permission, and power: the text is presented in such a way as to make clear the BSRC calls the shots on the requirements for qualification. One of the trends noted by Chu (2008) in the Chinese media over recent years has been a shift from sender-centred to audience-centred media. This 1998 text, clearly, is sender-centred—it is all about the message.

Equally with text 25, headlined ‘Art auctions mushroom.’ Here, the only sayer is the *China Daily* journalist: there are no quoted sources. The journalist is classified as a government sayer because the *China Daily* was and is state-owned: and most of the modal evaluation is in the form of deontic modality of obligation. Text 25 is, like text 2, an example of the *China Daily* acting as government mouthpiece. It may seem odd to describe a report on China’s art market in this way. But the text itself makes clear art is big business: ‘The total trade volume of art works through auctions reached 1 billion yuan last year’. The concern of the government, however, is also clear: there are too many auction companies fighting for a share of this market. In text 25 the journalist, on behalf of the government, is essentially issuing a series of exhortations about how the art market should be regulated.

Importantly, the quantitative statistics in Table 1 and 2 above show that this picture—of government sayers issuing instructions or commands using the modal language of obligation and permission—is broadly repeated across the corpus of 1998 texts.

By 2010, however, the picture has changed. The percentage of modal evaluation that is of obligation or permission has fallen from 56 per cent in 1998, to just 28 per cent. There is also a much wider diversity of sayer associated with modal evaluation as is demonstrated in Table 6. The analysis reveals that, in contrast to 1998, only 11 of the 31 instances of modal evaluation found in the three texts are associated with government speakers: and of these, only three are modals of obligation or permission. This picture is summarised in Table 7.

Table 6: Modal evaluation in *China Daily* 2010—top three texts

	Sayer		Subject	Modal			Object or circumstance
	Govt.	Non-Govt.		obligation	permission	other	
<b>Text 20</b>		Analysts	China			can reduce	holdings of dollar assets
		(Analysts)	(China)	should not overdo			it (reduction of dollar assets)
	Narrator <sup>3</sup>		massive scale of the holdings			could backfire	
	Narrator		China dumping its dollar assets			could lead to	a domino effect on investments
		Jing Ulrich <sup>4</sup>	China			could be more actively diversifying	its currency reserves
		Jing Ulrich	the country			might be shifting	some exposure to other currencies
		Sun Lijian <sup>5</sup>	the country	should keep			a considerable proportion of dollar assets
		He (Sun Lijian)	China	should not overly reduce			its dollar assets
		Sun (Lijian)	China	must have			enough resources to protect financial

<sup>3</sup> Reporter for *China Daily*.

<sup>4</sup> Managing director and chairman of China Equities and Commodities at JP Morgan.

<sup>5</sup> Fudan University economist.

							viability
		Narrator	China's reserves			could invite	speculative capital inflows
		Dong Yuping <sup>6</sup>	China	must quicken			pace of balancing domestic demand and exports
<b>Text 9</b>		Zhu Xiaochun <sup>7</sup>	Policy-makers	should raise			interest rates
		China	Commercial banks	must keep			(more money) in reserve
		Qu Hongbin <sup>8</sup>	China			may continue	to raise the requirement (for reserves)
		Qu	Interest rate hike			could come	(in April)
		Qu	inflation			could be	very serious
		Economic forecasts	China's CPI			could be	Mild
		Analysts	It (China's CPI)			can rise	3 per cent
		(Analysts)	Consumption			can still pick up	

<sup>6</sup> Economist at China Academy of Social Sciences.

<sup>7</sup> Central Bank governor.

<sup>8</sup> HSBC's chief China economist.

		Nomura Securities	Inflation			could stabilise	
		Zhang Lan <sup>9</sup>	The possibility of interest rate hikes			would decrease	
<b>Text 36</b>	Yi Gang <sup>10</sup>		Gold		cannot be		a major investment
	Yi Gang		Purchases			could push up	prices
	Yi		the market price will surge			(which) would affect	consumers
	The reports		gold purchases			could help	reduce the risk
		Liu Xiu <sup>11</sup>	it (China raising its holdings)			would cost	\$300 billion
		Liu	That			would account for	15 per cent of foreign reserves
		Some US legislator	China			could gradually reduce	its holding of US treasuries
	Yi		China			would keep	the currency steady
	Yi		expectations of a stronger yuan			would intensify	

<sup>9</sup> Head of research at Changjiang Securities.

<sup>10</sup> Head of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

<sup>11</sup> Senior metal analyst at China International Futures.

	(Yi)		Exports			would also rise	
<b>Total</b>	11	20		7	1	23	

Table 7: Modal evaluation breakdown in *China Daily* 2010

Type of Sayer	Modal of obligation	Modal of permission	Other modal
<b>Government</b>	2	1	8
<b>Non-Government</b>	5	0	15

Notably, there are actually more modals of obligation associated with non-government speakers than with government ones. Thus in text 20, headlined ‘Caution urged on dollar assets’, we get Jing Ulrich of international bank JP Morgan gently advising that China *could be* more actively diversifying its currency reserves. Fudan University economist Sun Lijian is more robust. China *must have* enough resources to protect financial viability, he says. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences economist Dong Yuping joins in: China *must quicken* the pace at which it balances domestic demand and exports.

Much the same is true of 2010 texts 9 and 36. In text 9, headlined ‘Rate of inflation still low’, there are two modals of obligation. In one, China (i.e. the Chinese government) tells commercial banks they *must keep* more money in reserve. In the second, Central Bank governor Zhou Xiaochun (a government sayer) talks about the ongoing debate among officials over when policymakers *should raise* interest rates. Set against these two modals of obligation, however, are a string of modals of possibility or speculation in which, as in text 20, a range of non-government experts speculate about likely future trends in China’s inflation rate. Text 36, meanwhile, has a single modal of permission—government sayer Yi Gang, head of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, saying gold *cannot be* used as a major investment—and a string of modals of possibility or speculation, some associated with Yi, others with non-government sayers.



The pattern observed—of government sayers only rarely using modals of obligation/permission; and of numerous non-government sayers (often academics) advising the government on what it should do—is very different to that found in 1998. And as Table 8 reveals, this is a pattern broadly replicated across the entire 2010 corpus: it is not true simply of these three texts. Where in 1998, 63 per cent of all modal evaluation associated with government sayers involved deontic modals of obligation and permission, by 2010 just 26 per cent of modal evaluation associated with government sayers was of this form. And where in 1998 fewer than one fifth of modal evaluation was associated with a sayer other than government, by 2010 almost half was.

Table 8: Deontic modals associated with government and non-government sayers

	<i>China Daily</i> 1998		<i>China Daily</i> 2010	
	Government sayer	Non-Government	Government sayer	Non-Government
<b>Deontic modals of obligation or permission (<i>must, should, ought to, some forms of may or can</i>)</b>	40 (63%)	4 (27%)	24 (26%)	27 (30%)
<b>Other modals, including of possibility and speculation (<i>could, would, might, some forms of may or can</i>)</b>	23 (37%)	11 (73%)	68 (74%)	64 (70%)
<b>Total</b>	63 (100%)	15 (100%)	92 (100%)	91 (100%)

This appears, then, to be a genuine shift in the way modal evaluation is used. The question can be asked how truly independent of government are

sayers such as Fudan University academic Sun Lijian and economist Dong Yuping, who in 2010 text 20 are encountered advising the government what it *should* and *must* do? It is hard to know. Both are employed by state-owned academic institutions—but equally, they are academics, rather than Party or government representatives. In the 1998 corpus, there was not a single example of such an academic advising the government what it should do. Furthermore, many of the non-government sayers advising the government in 2010—such as Jing Ulrich of JP Morgan—are unambiguously independent of the state.

Could the changing pattern of usage then be to do with the fact that the topics of the texts are different? The first 1998 *China Daily* text analysed qualitatively above, text 2, is about the highly politically sensitive topic of relations with Taiwan. It is unsurprising, in such a text, to find a high level of deontic modals associated with senior political figures. The other two 1998 texts analysed, however, deal with economic/financial matters (one with art as a business). This is little different from the three 2010 texts analysed, which all deal, in one way or another, with the economy and finance. The criteria for selection of the two corpora of texts were the same. And as Table 9 below reveals, there was no fundamental shift in the type of topics dealt with, apart from a decrease in 2010 in the number of finance-related texts.

Table 9: Comparison of topics of the *China Daily* texts analysed

	Topic								
	politics/ govt. policy	finance/ econom- ics	other	interna- tional relations	sport	crime	arts	agri- culture	Total
<b>1998</b>	10	17	7	6	4	3	2	1	50
<b>2010</b>	10	8	13	9	0	6	1	3	50

#### *Modal evaluation in direct speech, reported speech or narrative*

The other key finding of the statistical analysis was a statistically significant increase, between 1998 and 2010, in the proportion of modal evaluation occurring in direct speech, from 12 per cent in 1998 to 42 per cent in 2010.

At an obvious level, modal evaluation occurring in direct speech can be said to be the sayer's own language, and hence is revealing of the sayer's attitudes and perception of power relationships (though it may also be revealing of the journalist's attitudes to the extent the journalist chose to report it). Modal evaluation occurring in reported speech is possibly the sayer's own language, but as edited/interpreted by the journalist. Evaluation in the narrative is the journalist's language, hence is revealing of the journalist's attitudes and perceptions.

The use of direct speech as opposed to reported speech or narrative is revealing in a different way, however. Suzanne Eggins (1994) appears to posit the existence of a continuum of attitudinality of texts, from the highly attitudinal (spoken texts) to the minimally attitudinal (texts written to be read). Texts at the 'attitudinal' end, she suggests, are more approachable and 'interactive', while those at the non-attitudinal end tend towards distance and authority. Direct speech in newspaper reports is plausibly an attempt to capture some of the attitudinal nature of speech. Reported speech, being filtered and edited by the journalist, is less attitudinal and less dramatically rich. Texts which consist of narrative only, meanwhile, are minimally attitudinal.

The 2010 text with most direct speech modal evaluation (six instances) is text 26, headlined 'Doubts over increase in property price':

- 'Only a 1.5 per cent increase? *Shouldn't it be 15 per cent?*' Zhang (company executive Zhang Lan) asked in disbelief.
- 'An increase of 20 per cent from last year in a common, small town... is quite ordinary, let alone major cities like Beijing and Shanghai where the price *could have* soared by at least 50 per cent,' he (Zhang Lan) said.
- 'Property prices *may differ* greatly from city to city... and it is natural that people in different areas *may have* different views of the sector,' said Qin Xiaomei of property firm Jones Lang LaSalle, Beijing.
- 'As the accuracy of such statistics is key to policy making, the NBS (National Bureau of Statistics) *could publish* the pricing details of each city,' said Carlby Xie, of property firm Colliers' North China division.
- 'Sale prices are likely to fall from mid-2010 as slower demand, higher supply and various government initiatives *could dampen* market sentiment,' said Bei Fu, associate director of corporate rating at S&P.

These quotations, as you would expect when modality is involved, are full of opinions. Because the modality occurs in direct speech, these opinions are directly associated with named individuals. The fact that these are direct speech quotations rather than reported speech quotations, however, also puts them at the attitudinal end of Eggins' continuum of attitudinality. The use of direct speech even allows a little of the character of the speakers to come through, especially in the case of Zhang Lan's 'Only a 1.5 per cent increase? Shouldn't it be 15 per cent?' The reader can almost hear the note of incredulity. This, then, is a text written in a style seemingly intended, in part at least, to be dramatic and interesting. This is evaluation in its purest form, producing a text peopled with real individuals expressing real opinions. But what about when modal evaluation is put in reported speech?

The 2010 *China Daily* text with most reported speech modal evaluation (seven instances) was text 9, already encountered, headlined 'Rate of inflation 'still low'. The modal evaluation found, almost all of it (seven out of eight instances) in reported speech, is set out in Table 6 above. Here, again, the modal evaluation is associated with identifiable sayers. However, they are often impersonal sayers (economists or analysts) or organisations rather than recognisable individuals with opinions, lives or idiosyncrasies of their own. Even when there is a named individual, Qiu Hongbin, as sayer, the fact that his opinion is expressed in reported speech divests it of real character or individuality. A typical example reads: 'Qu said an interest rate hike *could come* in April because inflation *could be* very serious.' The text is, in Eggins's terminology, less attitudinal. The language by means of which Qu's opinion is expressed is flattened and moderated, and much of the dramatic richness is lost.

Modal evaluation occurring in the narrative is different again. Interestingly, the 2010 *China Daily* text with most modal evaluation in the narrative (five instances) is text 35, headlined 'Avatar is Chinese choice'. This is actually an opinion piece written by a named author, Raymond Zhou, identified as a 'renowned film critic'. As such, it is in one sense highly individualised. As with the cases of direct speech modal evaluation seen above, it is clear that these are the opinions of a particular individual, expressed in that individual's own language:

- People *can read* all kinds of messages into it (Avatar)

- If we *could* vote, we *would no doubt* have made George Clooney the best actor
- If a Hong Kong actress was so convincing in such a role, she *would surely be recognised* by her peers
- Some swore that they *would never eat* shark's fin again

Nevertheless, the text is still less dramatically rich and complex than text 26 above: it presents only a single voice, rather than the multiplicity of (sometimes disagreeing) voices we had there.

It is interesting to compare this text with a 1998 *China Daily* text rich in narrative modal evaluation: text 25, headlined 'Art auctions mushroom' already encountered, which contains seven instances. The modal evaluation in this text, all in the narrative, is set out in Table 4 above. There is not a single sayer, whether individual or institutional, quoted in either direct or indirect speech. The result is a flat, sender-centred piece, which outlines, in statistical terms, the expanding art market in China—and then sets out, in authoritarian style, a strategy for reform of what is clearly seen by the Chinese government as an increasingly chaotic Chinese art market. The text is minimally attitudinal, and hence distant and authoritative.

As Table 2 above reveals, the bulk of modal evaluation in the 1998 *China Daily* (more than 50 per cent) actually occurred in reported speech, not the narrative as in text 25. A closer look, however, reveals that functionally this is often narrative modal evaluation at one remove, either by being associated with a single sayer—often a government spokesman—or attributed to another state-owned newspaper.

Almost half of all the modal evaluation occurring in reported speech in the 1998 *China Daily*—17 out of a total of 40 instances—occurs in just two texts: texts 2 and 46, already encountered. The modal evaluation in these two texts—almost all of it in reported speech—is also set out in Table 4 above. Apart from the fact that the modal evaluation is associated with Qian, the form and style of text 2 is in many ways similar to text 25. There is the same sense of a powerful authority saying how things must or should be; the same lack of alternative perspectives. This is again a case of the *China Daily* as mouthpiece: it is just that here, the government message conveyed is attributed to a single, identified individual—vice-premier Qian Qichen. The modal evaluation in text 46, meanwhile, is to all intents and purposes narrative in nature. The text is essentially a list of conditions which must be

met by companies that wish to issue shares to the public. The modal evaluation is categorised as reported speech rather than narrative only because the opening paragraph makes clear these conditions have been set out by the Beijing Securities Regulatory Commission.

Where it occurs in the remaining 48 *China Daily* texts from 1998, reported speech modal evaluation is often, as here, found in the context of texts setting out the government's vision for how things should be. The overwhelming majority of modal evaluation in the 1998 *China Daily*—88 per cent, or 69 out of 78 instances—occurs either in the narrative or in reported speech in this way. In the entire corpus of 50 texts, there are just nine instances of modal evaluation in direct speech (12 per cent of the total), compared to 77 instances in the 2010 *China Daily* (42 per cent of the total). The contrast is striking, and, whether consciously designed or not, the effect is to make the 2010 *China Daily* texts studied more attitudinal, approachable and interactive, while the 1998 *China Daily* texts are more distant and authoritative.

### Conclusion

The analysis above has identified a number of statistically-significant changes in the *China Daily* between 1998 and 2010 in the newspaper's use of what Labov labelled modal evaluators—changes that I argue could well be revealing of the changing social and political factors acting upon the newspaper, and its response to them.

To recap, the key quantitative differences identified are as follows:

- A significant increase in the use of modal evaluation overall in 2010 compared to 1998.
- A significant change in the type of modal comparator evaluation encountered. There are proportionally far fewer deontic modals of obligation and permission in the *China Daily* in 2010 than in 1998, and many more modals of possibility and speculation.
- A significant change in the type of sayer associated with modal evaluation. In 1998, most sayers were government spokespeople. By 2010, a much greater range of sayers was encountered.
- A significant change in the type of modal evaluation associated with government sayers. In 1998, 63 per cent of modal evaluation associated with such sayers involved deontic modals of obligation and permission. By 2010 this had fallen to 26 per cent.

- A significant change in the context in which modal evaluation occurs. In 1998, the bulk of modal evaluation occurred in the narrative, or in reported speech that was only one degree removed from being the voice of the narrator. By 2010, a significantly greater proportion of modal evaluation occurred in direct speech.

These changes are interpreted as follows:

- The change in the use of modal evaluation of obligation and permission in the *China Daily* between 1998 and 2010 may reflect a shift in the social and political climate in China, which on the evidence of this study may have affected both the way senior government figures think about or present themselves and the way journalists at the *China Daily* write about them.
- The greater range of sayers using modal language may or may not reflect a growing government receptiveness to independent advice. It does, however, seem to reflect a willingness on the part of *China Daily* to represent a broader spectrum of opinions and perspectives.
- The increase in modal evaluation overall by 2010 may suggest that the *China Daily* is becoming more audience-centred, since the effect of evaluation is to create texts that are dramatically rich and interesting. This finding is underlined by the significantly increased occurrence of modal evaluation in direct speech: a contrivance which serves to increase the attitudinality of texts. The emphasis on readability that these changes suggest is not in itself indicative of changing media attitudes towards power and authority, but does perhaps reflect the fact that the newspaper in 2010 exists in a more market-driven culture: one in which there are a greater range of competing printed and other news media (including the internet) so that the newspaper is less able to take its readership for granted than it did in 1998.

The evidence may not in itself be sufficient to demonstrate that there has been a genuine shift in the power and status of government figures in China. The linguistic changes identified in this study may be no more than what the Chinese economist Zhang Weiyang is quoted in a recent magazine article (Zhuang, 2013) as calling ‘linguistic corruption’—in other words, they may be evidence simply that the Chinese government is using its state-owned newspapers, such as *China Daily*, to make it seem as though change is happening, where none really is. But linguistic corruption or not, the evidence

does suggest that the way authority figures are presented in the media—or at least, in the *China Daily*—has changed. This may be a response, perhaps, to China’s emergence on the global stage and the Chinese leadership’s growing sensitiveness to how it is perceived by the international community. Even if the latter, however, it would seem to suggest that at the very least Chinese government figures and/or the *China Daily* feel the need to moderate the language of power associated with the governing elite. By 2010 the *China Daily* also clearly feels able to turn to a much wider range of sources than just government representatives when constructing news reports—a further sign at least of presentational change.

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**Waldron, Scott (2010), *Modernising Agrifood Chains in China: Implications for Rural Development*, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 250 pages; ISBN (10): 1 – 4438-2507-7, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2507-8.**

Principally, this book provides an informative account of agrifood chains with particular focus on a case study of the Chinese beef industry. It aims to examine the retail, processing, marketing and production sectors, and the integration of these sectors that form the industry. Waldron highlights the beef industry as worthy of particular attention because it is considered a 'pillar industry' in the development of many poor areas. Waldron deconstructs the value chain to focus on low, mid and high value markets and the changing consumption trends within them. The study draws on a vast data set spanning a period of over ten years of fieldwork.

The book contributes to Chinese studies in a number of ways. It examines the major trends in the beef industry and identifies the pitfalls, inaccuracies and problems associated with relying on state statistics. Waldron therefore attempts to triangulate sources in order to present a more realistic picture which has more policy relevance. It recognises that assumptions based on inaccurate statistics have often led to inappropriate policy and investment decisions. This means the book will be of interest to both practitioners and academics working within commodity governance in China and developing countries. By utilising iterative social science research methodology, Waldron also provides a comprehensive example of how to present the complexity of accumulated datasets for both social scientists and PhD students.

The book highlights a number of important factors, namely the different simultaneous structures, institutional practices and actors involved in the different levels of low, medium and high value chains. It also identifies the fundamental consumption preferences which impact how China's development may not follow the Western view of 'modern supply chains'. The 'quality' required, actors within the value chain, freshness requirements

(Chinese consumers prefer to buy meat that has been slaughtered on the day and not refrigerated), safeguards of standardisation, branding, and certification systems all seem to differ in their approaches to Western value chains. Since Waldron highlights that surveys show that 'tenderness and juiciness are the least valued quality attributes' (119) in China in contrast to Western countries and Japan, it follows that different forms of value chains will be required to facilitate consumer preferences. Moreover, whilst Chinese consumers require certain 'quality' characteristics, simultaneously different supply chains are operating to meet the needs of Korean, Japanese and Western food chains within China.

The section on 'Health and food safety attributes' provides an interesting but brief account of price premiums for certified green and organic products. Waldron highlights that since monitoring is an issue in practice, and there is a fundamental lack of trust in public systems, brand value and brand trust operate to secure price premiums. This is a significant contribution. It would be interesting for Waldron to reflect further on the implications this has for certification and branding. This 'branded agriculture' presents an alternative means of safety assurance in light of failing trust in third party certification schemes. As Waldron highlights, in the beef market this leads to a lack of standardisation, therefore Waldron posits the need to establish 'a common beef language in China' (123). This is important due to five star hotels turning to overseas suppliers to mitigate risk. Interestingly, Waldron identifies how consumers are increasingly prepared to pay for safety assured produce for dishes consumed out of home. This has great implications for expectations on standardisation and certification of produce. Moreover, with international livestock associated disease scares such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Creutzfeldt- Jakob Disease (CJD) and Avian Influenza there is a need for China to increase standardisation in order to create tighter controls and guidelines as preventative measures.

Without reading all the supporting publications by Waldron over the ten year period, I was left wondering about the richness of the data and opinions that were left out. Whether Waldron is pushing for a reassessment of the 'value' in value chains, or advocating assimilation with global models (even though Waldron points to an efficient system which does not take an industrial route) is not exactly clear. Whilst the methodology sets out a positive economic approach which avoids normative assumptions, the book may

benefit from greater reflection on Chinese institutions and institutional processes and the implications this has for the 'modernisation' of value chains in the context of global processes and standardisation. Waldron touches on interesting institutional dimensions but does not explore the implications further. For example, markets in Hong Kong and Taiwan have not necessarily followed the development route of Western supermarket reliance, which has implications for the interpretation of 'modernisation' and 'development'. Fundamentally, more scrutiny could be paid to deconstructing the different 'values' within the value chains in order to provide guidance for standardisation which is both conducive with Chinese institutional operational realities and the broader scope of the global political economy.

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**Standen, Naomi (ed.) (2013), *Demystifying China: New Understandings of Chinese History*, Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 244 pages; ISBN 978-1-4422-0895-7.**

Naomi Standen's edited volume *Demystifying China* aims to bring current scholarship to bear on a reading public awash with today's intense media coverage of China. Popular and academic interest in China and the Chinese is nothing new, of course, having gone through stages of mixed fascination and fear over many decades of missionary activity, world wars, and commercial ties. Today we are witnessing China's resurgence as an economic and political leader on the world stage, a quite different context and subject of commentary from the 'decaying' dynastic realm or Maoist revolutions that had inspired so much print in previous generations. Yet problematic perceptions generated in times past continue to influence today's conversations, shaping often simplistic media treatments of this massive and diverse thing we call 'China' and its past.

Following on the heels of similarly minded books like Jeffrey Wasserstrom's *China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: What Everyone Should Know* (2010), Standen's volume seeks to 'demystify' its subject by encouraging readers to see China

and its history as a multilayered construct of the Western imagination, of official Chinese sources, both nationalist and Communist, and of generational shifts in scholarly debate and interpretation. Each chapter endeavours to convert the timeless and homogenous monolith presented by much received wisdom on the country into a complex social and political animal that has shared many of the same processes of other modern nation-states.

The volume brings a diverse and international group of 24 contributors together, each of whom sets out to identify problematic but persisting perceptions on a particular topic from ancient, imperial or modern China, or on subjects spanning the millennia. Considering the daunting number of possibilities from which to choose, the topics are well selected, from 'Traditional Chinese and the Environment' to 'Islam in China' and 'Chinese Medicine'. Many of the contributors also walk the reader through the provenance and propagation of common misperceptions: that a singular Great Wall existed since classical times to cut China off from the outside world (the Wall, as we know it, was actually built in the late Ming for the shelter of early firearms, while 'the extravagant claims for the Great Wall appear to have begun with the members of the frustrated Macartney mission to China in 1793' [Lorge, 2013: 26, 29]); that 20<sup>th</sup> century radicals, hell-bent on cultural transformation and literacy gains, gutted traditional Chinese characters ('the majority of modern simplified characters occur in medieval manuscripts from Dunhuang' [Galambos, 2013: 194]); or that the 'One-Child Policy' has been applied with unbending vigilance across the nation ('no such law was codified until 2001, so in effect central government left implementation of this policy to provincial and local governments, resulting in great variation in interpretation across time and space' [Mittler, 2013: 199]). The result is two dozen valuable mini-studies of the often highly politicised creation of knowledge on China in general. These are ambitious goals for six or seven-page chapters, but the writing here is concise, and often engaging.

Some sections, though, do not meet the stated goals of the volume as well. The chapter on Tibet illustrates a recent shift in Beijing's claims on the region (from a Nationalist-era practice of citing Qing precedents for Chinese control toward one in which the region is seen as always having been part of an 'historical China') with long quotations from CCP mouthpieces without giving any indication of what might lie behind Beijing's continued stranglehold of the region (Sperling, 2013: 146-7). Nearly half of the world's population lives



downriver from the Tibetan plateau, and pointing out that China's long history of struggle with drought is undoubtedly as much of a factor in China's Tibetan policy as blind nationalism, would have been more illuminating, and 'demystifying', on the subject of Chinese motives than the chapter's concentration on a polemical push to refashion history.

And there are some rather narrow historical interpretations here that readers might take issue with, such as a chapter that seeks to refute longstanding charges of incompetence against the Nationalist regime by extolling its fiscal policy, but without giving any attention to this policy's huge social costs, particularly to rural communities, costs that help account for the urban-based regime's 1949 defeat by the rural-based CCP. *Demystifying China* should nonetheless prove helpful to a variety of audiences and for a variety of uses: it strikes a good balance of accessibility and depth for use as a classroom text on fundamental subjects in Chinese history, as a primer for journalists and policy-makers seeking clarity on the region, and a handy reference for historians seeking refreshers on topics beyond their own area or period of expertise. Especially helpful are the further readings listed and briefly described at the end of each chapter. These offer quick references to influential works on particular subjects while giving a sense of where the historiography on China has come from over the last century.

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**Lai, Amy Tak-yee (2011), *Chinese Women Writers in Diaspora: Jung Chang, Xinran, Hong Ying, Anchee Min, Adeline Yen Mah*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 187 pages; ISBN (10): 1-438-2847-5, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-2847-5.**

This is a brave book, brimming over with energy and enthusiasm for the subject. Lai gives the reader a critical overview of the work of five well-known Chinese female authors all now living outside China, and all published and well-received in English. It is not a book that would be easily read by a novice in this field of literature, and, for reasons discussed below, it might not find

acceptance among experts in the field. If used with care, it might be suitable recommended reading for undergraduate and masters' level students of modern Chinese literature and/or gender issues in literature. I would wait for a revised, proofread version before recommending it to students.

The book deals linearly with each writer and applies a separate literary concept or theory to each. The chapter devoted to Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* is very brief, and is entitled 'Prologue: More Wild Swans': Lai uses this work as a springboard for the broader, more varied and perhaps more literary work of the remaining four writers. The chapter on Xinran, 'Self and Other', concentrates mainly on the autobiographical voice in Xinran's reports of the lives of the women of China. The emphasis of the chapter on Hong Ying is on the cyclical nature of Hong Ying's narratives, the relationship to Buddhism, and the cyclical structuring of Chinese history. Anchee Min's work is reviewed in terms of theatricality and Adeline Yen Mah's stories are examined in the light of the European fairy tale tradition.

The author has worked hard to scour relevant sources, and presents a comprehensive picture of the subject matter and messages of each of the works discussed. The research has obviously been very thorough, but the writing up is less satisfactory. Perhaps because of the author's urgent sense of mission, the information pours out, and there is not always a clear distinction between the stories as told by the diaspora writers, the facts about their works and the author's analysis of them. Lai seems to have decided to apply one theory per author and ignore all else. For those readers who are not familiar with the works, this could offer somewhat skewed and perhaps even unfair perceptions of the writers. The insistence on the autobiographical nature of Xinran's writing, for example, perhaps overstates the case. All writers inevitably write from their own viewpoint, however objective they try to be: all writing is in some sense deictic, and to insist that because Xinran reflects on how the women's stories affect her personally does not mean that this is 'autobiography'. The weight given to the notion of theatricality in Anchee Min's work (perhaps rather too obvious, given Min's background) excludes the deep and subtle treatment Min gives to the huge psychological impact of the years of the Cultural Revolution. My feeling is that Lai has been swept away by the appeal of the lurid, the vivid and the sensational, which, after all, are there to reveal something the reader might not otherwise see. The chapter on Mah's writing and its relationship to fairy tales dwells almost

exclusively on the European tradition, only touching briefly on the Chinese tradition, from which she could have drawn much more very rich supporting material. The topics of sister hierarchy, and orphan and stepmother, for example, seem to be viewed in this work as western concepts, yet they are found elaborated widely in Chinese nursery rhymes and stories. Lai's categorisation tends to be rather rigid, and at times she makes some very dogmatic statements, with rather liberal use of words like 'therefore' and 'hence', when there is actually no stated causal link. There is sometimes a disquieting lack of coherence, possibly due to careless cutting for the sake of the word count. At one point Lai writes: 'This is not to say that the novel betrays an overwhelming sarcasm towards Western stories' (169). This is puzzling, since she has not previously mentioned sarcasm or satire, and has gone to great lengths to show the positive influence of the 'Western' stories on Mah's writing.

The work does have redeeming features: it is a stimulating read, and could lead students to wider reading and considerations of the field. There are, however, many problems, which could have been avoided by careful editing and proofreading. If anything, the work is over-ambitious. Fewer authors and works would have allowed greater depth of analysis and a more balanced consideration of some of the qualities and characteristics attributed to the writers. The initial drawback of the book is that the chapter titles and contents page are opaque, and there is no index: there is no signposting for the reader at all. A clearer structure with subheadings, listed in the contents pages, would have helped the writer herself to construct a meaningful progression for each chapter, with a brief statement of the aims and content of the chapter, followed by essential context of the authors and their times, synopses of the works, and then, a clearly structured analysis. The prologue and epilogue are really just short chapters, rather than true introductory and concluding discussions. The reader has to work quite hard to develop his or her own formal schema, since none is provided by the author. Readers who are able to read Chinese would probably be dissatisfied with the lack of distinction between work written in Chinese and translated into English, and work written in English. There is a world of difference. When dealing with translated text, Lai does not provide the Chinese source text, a major omission.

Sadly, the whole book is riddled with misprints (including the dreaded 'pubic' for 'public' and 'vices' for 'voices'), there are numerous grammatical

and syntactic infelicities which sometimes lead to a degree of incomprehensibility, and there are numerous misleading malapropisms (for example 'engrossed' for 'involved'). Quotations from the writers discussed are frequently miscopied. The number and degree of errors would make this book rather bewildering for a novice in the field. Thoroughly revised and re-structured, it might become a useful book.

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**Hernandez, Lili (ed.) (2012), *China and the West: Encounters with the Other in Culture, Arts, Politics and Everyday Life*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 184 pages; ISBN (10): 1-4438-3780-6, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-3780-4.**

China constitutes one of the best stages for demonstrating the conflict and convergence of East and West. Boasting a long history and unique traditional culture as well as stronger interaction with the West day by day, China is, in the words of Hernandez, 'a conjunction of elements of past and present, the traditional and the modern, immutability and on-going transformation' (ix). The subject of China and the West has never failed to attract the attention of relevant scholars in a variety of fields and this edited volume is a case in point containing, as it does, perspectives from different academic backgrounds. The eleven essays in the book will be informative to readers, both academic and non-academic, who are not so familiar with the theme 'encounters with the other', as well as those who are particularly interested in, for example, media, art and anthropology. Building on the notion of stereotypes as first explored by Said (1979) in his work *Orientalism*, this book offers expanded notions on how 'the other' can be analysed in different contexts; however, due to its wide coverage of a number of disciplines, some chapters can only serve as general introductions with little room for deeper insight.

The first five chapters are media-related studies: a negative encounter between the West and Chinese youth cultures as revealed in an online website (Chapter One), contrasting US and Chinese media representations of the 2001

Hainan Incident (Chapter Two), Sinophobic perspectives shown in a BBC documentary film *The Chinese Are Coming!* (Chapter Three), and introductions to other Western or Chinese produced documentary films: *China* or *China from the Inside* known in the U.S, *Nanking, City of War: The Story of John Rabe* and *City of Life and Death* (Chapters Four and Five). The next two chapters explore encounters with multiculturalism through Westerners' lives, experiences and identities in southern China: Shanghai (Chapter Six) and Ningbo (Chapter Seven). Chapters Eight and Nine proffer art-related studies involving the national and transnational in 798 art zone and Chinese contemporary art theory, while Chapter Ten introduces a pilot study on Chinese academics' and students' perceptions of Australian literature, where the notion of soft diplomacy comes into play. The final chapter focuses on *linglei* 另类, new Chinese youth subcultures that have clear Western influences.

Some of the chapters, particularly One, Six and Seven, embrace the main theme of the volume to provide readers with valuable new perceptions through local or specific case studies, either adding depth to the wide expanse of existing broad studies of the subject or offering the counter story in terms of 'encounter with the other'. Chapter One, for example, does the latter by shifting attention to anti-western sentiment exhibited by Chinese youth based on a study of 'anti-CNN.com'. Chapter Six and Seven, do the former, by examining everyday life in Shanghai and Ningbo to reveal a vivid picture of how Chinese and Western cultures both collide and cohere on a day-to-day basis. Other chapters, however, seem ill-fitting. Chapter Two, for example, offers a typical comparative media study using content analysis of a news event, yet I fail to see how it connects to the theme 'encounters with the other'; 'representation of the other to one's own interest' appears to be a more suitable theme here.

The number of existing works on China and the West is not small, yet this volume did stand out in two significant respects. First of all, the context of this book is modern China rather than China from the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Earlier works have tended to focus on this initial period of 'encountering the other' and have applied theories of colonialism as well as imperialism (pertinent examples include Hibbert's 1970 book *The Dragon Wakes: China and the West, 1793-1911*; Bergère's 1981 chapter 'The Other China': Shanghai from 1919-1949' in *Shanghai: Revolution and Development in an Asian*

*Metropolis*; and Bickers' more recent 1999 work *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-49*). *China and the West*, however, presents encounters of the other in a social environment where concepts of globalization, post-colonialism and post-modernization are more applicable. Secondly, unlike much of the existing research on the subject, *China and the West* invites us to view the subject through multi-various disciplinary lenses. Nonetheless, as I mentioned above, this arrangement also results in inadequacy in terms of depth of analysis (an interesting contrast in this regard would be Velingerova and Wang's 2001 volume *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project*, which seems to find a better balance in this regard). The advantage of this structure means that the book will be able to reach a wider range of readers, especially those that are still seeking a way in to a better understanding of China's encounters with the West in more modern times; it might frustrate, however, those more familiar with the subject.

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