Constructing the Revolutionary Past: Mass Movements, Traditional Worldviews, and Cultural Memory in Mao's China

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Table of Contents

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Introduction

This dissertation investigates the role of traditional Chinese worldviews in the revolutionary politics of socialist China. The Chinese communist revolution and the longer leftist tradition that preceded the revolution were unmistakably hostile to China's past. From the anti-Confucian literary creations of the New Culture Movement to the smashing of Buddhist images during the Red Guards Movement, the communist movement saw itself as carrying on the task of destroying the old world and creating a new one. This image of the Chinese communist movement was deeply ingrained both in popular memory and in academic conceptions. However, the past was not merely a target to be destroyed, my dissertation shows that traditional Chinese philosophies, literatures, and worldviews were as important as Marxism in Mao's effort to construct the new world.

The subject deserves careful study because the paradox between CCP's anti-traditional leitmotif and Mao's recurring attempt to uphold certain traditions from China's past became a major tension that increasingly defined China's socialist ideology. A correct understanding of the past thus became a recurring theme that was integrated into political discourse from 1956 to 1976. On a policy level, this tension was expressed through highly ambiguous and often paradoxical instructions from Mao and CCP ideologues. For example, Chen Boda, in an influential speech in 1958 titled "The Intellectual Great Leap Forward," put forward the principle of "favoring the present over the past" (*hou gu bo jin*) as a guideline for academic production in PRC. [1] According to Chen, scholars, especially historians, should not bury themselves in obscure questions in ancient classics because this attitude was a dangerous bourgeois indifference to

[1] Hou, Guo. "Hougubojin, Bianxuebiangan de yiyi". *Li Lun Yu Shijian*. Vol. 1 1958.

China's socialist project. Instead, scholars should learn from workers and research and write about current political and social issues. Chen's message, echoed by Mao several times, were ostensibly anti-traditional. However, when Mao emphasized the same principle in academic production, he soon returned to China's past. While Mao appropriated Chen's principle in his own movements, his campaigns attempted to locate the historical figures in the past, such as the Qin Shihuang and Wu Zetian, who supposedly favored the present over the past. Despite the CCP's repeated disdain for various Chinese traditions and its mission of modernization, in its propaganda and political strategies, the past appeared to be inexorable.

This dissertation focuses on the mass movements centered around cultural traditions between 1956 and 1976. In these two decades, China engaged in a highly politicized warfare waged over traditional literature, drama, popular religion, and philosophy. For many intellectuals and political actors, the right and wrong of the literary and religious conventions from the distant past were immediately relevant to the current political situation and one's personal survival.

In recent years, there has been growing academic attention to the cultural and intellectual aspects of Maoist China. In her pathbreaking book, *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture*, Barbara Mittler examined the popular reception and lasting impact of propaganda arts from the Cultural Revolution. Maggie Greene, in her *Resisting Spirits: Drama Reform and Cultural Transformation in the People's Republic of China*, explores the role of ghost drama and the struggles of political intellectuals that triggered the onset of the Cultural Revolution.[2]

[2] Mittler, Barbara. *A Continuous Revolution: Making Sense of Cultural Revolution Culture.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012. Maggie Greene. *Resisting Spirits: Drama*

While recent and past scholarship sheds light on the various aspects of cultural life and policies of Mao era, there was insufficient study on the individual topics discussed in this dissertation. Some of these movements, such as the Hundred Flowers Movement, were frequently mentioned in most narratives of PRC history, such as Maurice Meisner's *Mao's China and After* and Rebecca Karl's *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World*.[3] These works emphasize the realpolitik aspect of the movements and illuminate their impact on political economy as well as the fate of Chinese intellectuals. However, they do not engage with the impact and legacy of traditional Chinese motifs upon which the movement was centered.

The creation of Confucian-Legalist Historiography and the Criticize *Water Margin* Movement were briefly examined by historians like Merle Goldman in late 1970s shortly after these events took place. While their analysis provided valuable insights into the movements at the time, the materials they engaged with were often limited by the opaque nature of Chinese sources in 1970s.

The complex relationship between traditional Chinese worldviews and China's modernization project were eloquently examined by Wang Ban, Viren Murthy, and Wang Hui in

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Reform and Cultural Transformation in the People's Republic of China. University of Michigan Press, 2019.

[3] Meisner, Maurice. *Mao's China and after: A History of the People's Republic*. New York: Free Press, 1986. Karl, Rebecca. *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century* World: A Concise History. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

a series of books and articles about the concept of *Tianxia*.[4] While most of these works focus on international politics and China's role in the world, my dissertation demonstrates the construction of a separate Chinese value system that unintentionally refuted internationalism and championed Chinese particularities. By paying close attention to the materials produced by intellectuals and the CCP organs in this period, my dissertation explores the complicated ideological implications of these movements beyond Mao's political struggles.

Instead of seeing traditional China as a unified and unchanging entity, this project reveals the ways in which Maoist China upheld and reconfigured different literary, religious, and philosophical traditions to construct an alternative past that was more in line with the Communist revolutionary ideals. The emphasis on China's past and Chinese worldviews inevitably produced a more nationalist revolutionary culture that increasingly diverted from that of orthodox Marxism and the politics of the Soviet Union.

The dissertation is centered around four movements from 1956 to 1976: The Hundred Flowers Movement of 1956 and 1957, Mao's "fight the ghost" campaign in 1961, the creation Confucian-Legalist historiography from 1974 to 1976, and the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign in 1975 and 1976. These movements all focused on highly literary and philosophical questions and attempted to mobilize China's past to serve the current political issues. My research articulates the role of traditional Chinese worldviews in socialist ideology. It aims to illuminate

[4] Wang, Ban. *China in the World: Culture, Politics, and World Vision*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2022. Wang, Ban. editor *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

four aspects of Maoist China's culture and politics: philosophy, literature, knowledge production, and mass movements.

Firstly, this dissertation is about the role of traditional Chinese philosophies in socialist China. My project explores the growing institutionalization of traditional knowledge from 1956 to 1976. Throughout different political movements in this two decades of time, Mao and his allies repeatedly attempted to renegotiate the position of traditional Chinese philosophies in socialist China. In 1956, historians and philosopher outside of the CCP made use of the intellectual vibrance of the Hundred Flowers Movement to argue for the legitimate existence of traditional knowledge. Their scholarship amounted to a collective effort to reconcile Marxism with traditional Chinese worldview. While this attempt was thwarted by the Anti-Rightist Movement in the following year, this renegotiation of traditional Chinese knowledge's position was then undertaken by Mao himself. In 1970s, behind the massive Criticize Lin Biao and Criticize Confucius movement was the attempt to create a grand historical discourse of "Confucian-Legalist conflicts". Relying on the same group of intellectuals Mao had persecuted in 1957, Mao and the Cultural Revolution Small Group used Legalist philosophies to justify their strengthening of the state apparatus when faced with mounting challenges from the Cultural Revolution. However, the incorporation of traditional Chinese worldview into socialist ideology was uneasy and often led to unexpected consequences. In 1970s, the creation of Confucian-Legalist Historiography forcefully juxtaposed traditional Chinese philosophies and Marxist worldviews. Such juxtaposition risked overwhelming and replacing Marxism entirely with Chinese worldviews.

Secondly, my dissertation explores the role of traditional literature in socialist China. I am interested in the ways traditional literature was uneasily incorporated into socialist culture. In

particular, I investigate the politics of fear, exorcism, appeasement, and inclusion in traditional Chinese literature and how they have shaped political movements in socialist China. In the PRC, compared to philosophy, literature was more associated with state ideology and propaganda and thus carried higher political consequences. Starting from "Talks on the Yan-an Forum of Literature and Art", Mao repeatedly emphasized the central position of literature in the communist revolution. Literature must serve the politics and apolitical literature should be eliminated. The CCP deemed most of the traditional literature as reactionary and corruptive. This attitude was reflected in the continuous effort to regulate and limit the publishing of traditional Chinese literature in 1950s and the virtual disappearance of most traditional literary works in bookstores during the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, literatures about ghosts and rebellions remained an exception. Ghost stories or the tale of epic rebellions lend power to the leftist cause of revolution and egalitarianism.

However, the fluid nature and dynamic ways these works could be interpreted created opportunities to empower the masses as well as subvert the revolution. The conventions of vengeful ghosts haunting corrupted politics and appeasing rebellions through official recognition and incorporation reflected the possibilities of derailment of these stories once cherished by Mao and the CCP. The compilation of *Stories of Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* and Mao's campaign against the vernacular fiction *Water Margin* reflected Mao's effort, largely unsuccessful, to contain and regulate the impact of traditional Chinese literature.

These campaigns about China's past also constituted a larger project to produce traditional Chinese knowledge and disseminate them from Mao and the academia to the masses. These mass movements reached workers, peasants, and children and, in many cases, forced them to contend with highly philosophical and literary questions about China's past, such as how to

evaluate the legacy of the First Emperor or whether the philosophy of Xunzi constituted scientific materialism. These literary and philosophical questions were thus juxtaposed with the daily production and livelihood of ordinary Chinese.

The knowledge production aspect of these movements may have been unintentional, but its impact was profound. The Cultural Revolution's disruption to the educational institutions and publishing had created a significant shortage of knowledge and books. These movements also mobilized students in Chinese universities to work closely with an older generation of philosophers and historians, who received their training abroad or in the Republic of China, to create propaganda materials. Mao's project about traditional Chinese worldviews, especially after the Confucian-Legalist Conflict and the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign, had impacted a generation of Chinese students who became interested in traditional Chinese philosophy and literature because of their experience and involvement in these movements. Several important scholars in both Chinese and American academia, such as Yu Yunguo and Dingxing Zhao, traced the origins of their scholarly interests to the Maoist campaigns in 1970s.

Lastly, this dissertation shed light into the nature of Mao's mass movements. Scholars like Andrew Walder, Elizabeth Perry, and Roderick MacFarquhar examined different elements of the Cultural Revolution, such as the Red Guards, the Sent-down Youths, the Marxist Propaganda Teams.[5] At the same time, Timothy Cheek and Maggie Greene's works on Deng Tuo, "Sanjiacun", and the ghost play of Li Huiniang illustrate the role of traditional Chinese

[5] Walder, Andrew G. *Agents of Disorder: inside China's Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2019. Perry, Elizabeth J. *Proletarian Power: Shanghai in the Cultural Revolution*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997.

knowledge in elite political struggles.[6] Filling the gap between mass movements and elite politics, my dissertation examines Mao's attempt to mobilize the masses to contend with issues about China's past. The movements I examine took place before and towards the end of the Cultural Revolution. They typically involve less revolutionary violence on the streets and relied more on readings and writings. However, they were undoubtedly mass movements in the sense that Mao was trying to reach not just the intellectuals, but also students, workers, peasants, and soldiers and attempted agitate them with contradictions from China's past. Mao's campaign against the "ghosts" forced school pupils to write essays about ghosts, exorcism, and their relationship to socialist China. In the 1970s, publications about purported new findings about Legalism and new understandings about Song Jiang and *Water Margin* not only came from universities and political journals, but also from factories and communes. Workers and peasants wrote about how Shang Yang and Song Jiang affected their daily productions. While the participation of peasants and workers in these movements remained mechanical and superficial, there was an ostensible effort by Mao and the CCP, albeit being less successful, to democratize traditional Chinese knowledge and use it reenergize the revolutionary project.

While Confucianism and its representations at all levels of society were the main target of Mao's revolution, the Communist movement drew power from literary, religious, and philosophical traditions that were non-Confucian or dwell at the margin in the Confucian moral hierarchy. This project views the socialist cultural discourse as an uneasy continuation of traditional China, instead of a break. The meaning of such continuation is multifaceted. Firstly, since the Yan-an era, the continuation of traditional cultural nexus in cultural productions

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[6] Cheek, Timothy. *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China: Deng Tuo and the Intelligentsia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

enabled the communist movement to appeal more to the Chinese rural public. The ability to frame and translate the communist revolutionary ideals into traditional cultural values such as virtue, prosperity, justice, and revenge contributed to the success of Maoist mobilization. The active reconfiguration of traditional literature into revolutionary dramas were meant to appeal to the less cosmopolitan population outside China's urban centers. Secondly, the resilience of traditional cultural values in communist revolutionary ideals complicates the linear temporality of modernization of Chinese revolution. Instead of viewing China's past as backward and seeking modernity from the outside, Mao sought to locate and release the repressed revolutionary modernity from China's past. Instead of following the Soviet-led global Communist revolution, Mao saw the communist movement as carrying on and finally completing the Chinese tradition of peasant uprising. Thirdly, since the Hundred Flowers Movement, the employment of traditional Chinese values as the spearhead of political struggle provided readily identifiable allies and enemies in the Cultural Revolution as the ways Mao utilized traditional Chinese worldviews in political struggle tap into conflicts among different traditional value systems in China.

The first chapter examines the Hundred Flowers Movement initiated by Mao in 1956. In particular, I look at the ways in which intellectuals in PRC imagined Springs and Autumns and Warring States period as a time of progress and democracy. In late 1956 and early 1957, a group of scholars from diverse backgrounds enthusiastically debated about the legacy of Pre-Qin philosophies. Taking advantage of the seemingly open academic environment, they challenged the domination of Marxist ideology in the field of history and philosophy. American-trained philosophers such as Feng Youlan and He Lin argued for a reconciliation between materialism and idealism in the study of Pre-Qin philosophies. Their effort to depoliticize philosophical

discussion had achieved brief recognition from the CCP. Senior Marxist political scholars such as Guo Moruo and Hou Wailu contended about the issue of periodization and the relationship between Pre-Qin Chinese history to Marxist historical materialism. These discussions had resulted in a series of academic and popular publications that illuminated on their uneasy effort to reconcile Marxism with the Chinese past as well as creating space for legitimate existences of philosophers and historians in socialist China. While these discussions were not sponsored by Mao, they took place with CCP support and encouragement, and *People's Daily* frequently published these scholars' newest articles and speeches. Universities in Beijing started to offer courses on Hegel and Spinoza.

While the debate exhibited different opinions and emphasis, it constituted a collective effort between the CCP and the intellectuals to seek a reconciliation between Marxism and China's past. Despite later retribution from the Anti-Rightist Movement and the Cultural Revolution, the Hundred Flowers Movement set a precedent of locating progressive elements of China's past to empower the political struggles at present and revise Marxist principles with national elements.

The second chapter engages with the rhetoric of ghosts and demons in Maoist political discourse. In particular, I examine the creation of the book *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts.* Mao sees the utility of opening up the cultural creations that previously were categorized as superstitions with the Hundred Flowers Movement. Literary creations that used ghosts to subtly voice the grievance to the new socialist system soon emerged. Most notably, the group of party-connected writers and artist known as Sanjiacun that were most active at the time created numerous influential works using a traditional framework of ghost tales. By doing so, the group of writers were engaging in two long-standing literary traditions. First, the literary tradition of

ghost stories as a critique of the imperial system and demand for social justice in imperial China. Second, the Chinese leftist tradition of using of vengeful ghosts to symbolize the revenge and empowerment of the weak, which was most exemplified in Lu Xun's works. While Sanjiacun had received the praise of many party officials, Mao and Jiang Qing suppressed the writers. Ironically, this suppression did not end the discourse of ghosts and demons, but intensified and reconfigured it. The 1960s saw the creation of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*, a collection of ghost stories mainly from late imperial times. Instead of carrying on the leftist tradition of using ghosts as signifiers of rebellion and critique of the system, Mao's project constructed an image of ghost ranging from mortal enemies to subjects that waited to be reformed.

Contrary to the anti-superstition narrative, Mao's discourse on ghosts did not aim at erasing the belief of ghosts, but signaled a continuation of a traditional worldview. Although the rhetoric of ghosts continued into 1960s, it was deployed for a radically different purpose. While the CCP and Mao previously identified with the disruptive and vengeful ghost, in 1960s, Mao imagined himself to be a master exorcist that sought to exterminate the ghosts. As part of the larger "fight the ghost" campaign that Mao was envisioning, *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* significantly influenced the languages and tactics of political struggles for the coming Cultural Revolution.

Chapter 3 examines the Criticize Lin Biao Criticize Confucius Movement. I investigate Mao and his followers' effort to establish Legalism as an alternative correct ideology of China's past in the "Evaluate Legalism and Criticize Confucianism" campaign in 1974. The chaos of the Red Guards Movement, factional struggles, and the Lin Biao Incident had increasingly challenged the coherence and legitimacy of the Cultural Revolution. This period saw the rise of

underground youth literary groups, especially in Beijing, that independently and creatively interpreted Marxism and challenged the dominant ideology of the Cultural Revolution. Abandoning the tactics of public struggle sessions, Mao resorted to police and military to crack down these sentiments. The situation needed a different set of ideology that could lend power to Mao's notion of revolutionary violence.

Legalism, according to the campaign, has the potential of releasing the creative power of the leadership and masses to stir the history into the revolutionary direction. Mao saw strength in Legalist philosophers such as Shang Yang and Han Fei, who emphasized the importance of law, order, punishment, military hegemony, and the centralization of political and cultural power. At the center of the movement was the reevaluation of the First Emperor Qin Shihuang and his infamous act of Burning the Books and Killing the Scholars, which was long seen as the epitome of tyrannical overreach in Chinese history. Mao, however, romanticized the decisiveness of such violence and created a strong parallel between the First Emperor's violence and the prosecution of reactionary intellectuals and bureaucrats in China.

Moreover, the movement undertook a more ambitious project to rewrite Chinese history from Springs and Autumns to present-day through a "Confucian-Legalist historiography". Historians and philosophers, such as Feng Youlan and Yang Rongguo, who were previously persecuted during the Cultural Revolution, were put back into universities to lead the collective writing groups for this project. While few historical figures after the Qin Dynasty identified themselves as Legalist, the writing groups creatively and often arbitrarily designated rulers and philosophers, such as Wu Zetian and Wang Anshi, as pro-Legalist and anti-Confucian. The project had a distinctively nationalist undertone. From the killing of Shaozheng Mao in 500 BC to the writings of Zhang Taiyan in early 20th century, this narrative not only provided

justification to Mao's abandonment of mass politics in favor of state apparatus, but also subsumed Maoist revolutionary politics under a meta-narrative of Chinese history that constituted a socialist national myth.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign that took place towards the end of the Cultural Revolution. While the late imperial vernacular fiction had long been an example of peasant rebellion and revolutionary spirits of Chinese people, the 1975-76 campaign attributed the tragic ending of the rebellion to the tendency of surrender and resilience of Confucian culture among the rebel leaders. The radical shift of the narrative of the *Water Margin* in 1975 and 1976 manifested the deeply embedded paradox between rebellion and normalization. Such paradox of revolution was not only the product of the infringement of the coming neoliberal world order, but also suggests the continued relevance of China's literary and popular religious paradigm of the normalization and integration of rebellions and heresies into imperial political order. By rejecting and denouncing the fictional amnesty, Mao sought to push his revolution beyond the cycle of rebellion and normalization that characterized most peasant uprisings in China's past. The campaign also shed light on the political struggle against Deng towards the end of the Cultural Revolution. As the main target of the campaign, Deng's past and his relationship with Mao was seen as a modern reenactment of *Water Margin*.

Chapter 1: Imagining a Progressive Past: The Hundred Flowers Movement and the Renaissance of Pre-Qin Philosophies in Socialist China

During the speech at the State Council Conference on May 2nd, 1957, Mao made the following remark about the cultural and intellectual creations in the People's Republic of China.

> Now the spring has been here. We should let a hundred kinds of flowers bloom. We cannot let some flowers open and not let other flowers open. This is called "A Hundred Flowers Blooming Together." "The Contention of the Hundred Schools" was from the age of "the multitude of scholars from a hundred of schools," during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States Period. Two thousand years ago, there was many different schools of theories, and they contend with each other freely. Now we need this as well. It is necessary to have the policy of A Hundred Flowers in the field of arts and to have the policy of A Hundred School in academic fields. Within the limit of the constitution of People's Republic of China, all kinds of theories, let them speak.[7]

The conference marked the beginning of the ill-fated Hundred-Flowers Movement. For the brief period of a year, the country moved to encourage a relative degree of intellectual and artistic freedom, and actively encouraged the artistic and academic innovation and debates. Previous scholarship focused on the movement's connection with the de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union and the PRC's initial success in economic and agricultural reform.[8] Although de-

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[7] Mao, Zedong. *Mao Zedong Nian Pu*. Volume 2. Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2002. 576

[8] Richard Kraus. "Let the Hundred Flowers Blossom, Let A Hundred Schools of Thought Contend", in *Words and Their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution.* Edited by Wang Ban. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011

Stalinization started to become a major source of contention between the PRC and the Soviet Union, Mao had repeatedly voiced his intention to avoid the Stalinist excess in political and intellectual control.

Looking beyond the international aspect of the Hundred Flowers Movement, this chapter examines the ideological justification for the movement from China's Pre-Qin philosophical and political traditions. The phrases of "The Hundred Flowers" and "The Hundred Schools" were a direct reference to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, which was the formative years of various Chinese philosophical traditions. The movement brought renewed attention to the Pre-Qin period and intellectuals, with CCP's encouragement and under the spotlight of China official newspapers and major publishing houses, a group of historians and philosophers from highly diverse backgrounds put in significant effort in locating a progressive ideological foundation in the Pre-Qin period. Debates about materialist philosophies and progressive ideological formations in Pre-Qin era contributed to the vision that Springs and Autumns and Warring States was the age of significant historical progression and contained the intellectual roots for China's socialist modernization. In a political and academic environment that appeared to be less focused on class struggle, the debates mobilized notable Marxist intellectuals such as Guo Moruo, as well as scholars who were considered not completely aligned with the CCP, such as Hou Wailu and Feng Youlan. While the debates challenged the rigidity of the official historical materialist worldview, it also created a system of language for the CCP to juxtapose traditional Chinese worldview with Marxist materialism. The debate consolidated a historical narrative that was in line with the Hundred Flowers Movement: the linearity of Chinese history in which intellectual freedom was a necessary stage for historical progression, instead of a standard and constant state.

De-Stalinization and Chinese Worldviews

The discussion of materialism and idealism in Springs and Autumns and Warring States mirrors Mao's interpretation of this period. The freedom and prosperity of intellectual and cultural participation was not unconditional. Instead, it could only happen in a safe environment where the society had already become sufficiently progressive. By 1956, Mao had announced the partial victory of socialist revolution. Lu Dingyi, in his talk at Huairentang that served as a detailed clarification of Mao's announcement, claimed that internal enemies in China had been significantly reduced and did not pose a real threat.[9] In the capacity of the head of the Department of Propaganda, Lu Dingyi's statement was seen as representing the official policy from Mao. In the previous months, Lu Dingyi had personally voiced growing concerns about Lysenkoism in the Soviet Union and its potential influence in China.[10] Under Lysenkoism, Soviet scientists who promoted the genetic effect in natural selection were labeled as bourgeois and reactionary and faced imprisonment and execution. For Lu, the main field that needed liberalization was science, and his reason to support liberalization was more practical than ideological – political interference in scientific research, as demonstrated in the case of Lysenkoism, contributed to scientific stagnation. The liberalization of art, literature, and historical research were left in a much more ambiguous light.[11]

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[9] *People's Daily*, Lu Dingyi: "Bai hua qi fang, bai jia zheng ming – yi jiu wu liu nian wu yue er shi liu ri zai Huairentang de jianghua" June 13, 1956

[10] Lu Dingyi. *Lu Dingyi Wenji*. Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe. 1992. 840-845

[11] Ibid.

The logic of the Hundred Flowers Movement was further articulated in Mao's "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People",[12] which came out after the Soviet intervention of Hungarian Uprising in 1956. While Mao firmly approved the Soviet intervention and calling the Hungarian Uprising a bourgeois attempt to overthrow the socialist system, Mao emphasized that the PRC's situation was much more stable than that of Hungary. "Counter-revolutionaries" in China had been greatly reduced and their activities should be permitted as it stopped being a threat. While Mao's speech was warmly received by many intellectuals as a call for intellectual freedom, Mao's vision of democracy and freedom as reflected in this speech was much more ambiguous. Further using the Hungarian Uprising as a counter-example, Mao said,

> After the incidents in Hungary and Poland, certain people are very happy. Let big democracy come. Their so-called big democracy is about hundreds of thousands of people protesting on the street. They are happy about what happened… Democracy as such sometimes seems to be an end, but it is in fact only a means. Marxism teaches us that democracy is part of the superstructure and belongs to the realm of politics. That is to say, in the last analysis, it serves the economic base. The same is true of freedom. Both democracy and freedom are relative, not absolute, and they come into being and develop in specific historical conditions. Within the ranks of the people, democracy is correlative with centralism and freedom with discipline. They are the two opposites of a single entity, contradictory as well as united, and we should not one-sidedly emphasize one to the exclusion of the other. Within the ranks of the people, we cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline; we cannot do without democracy, nor can we do without centralism. This unity of democracy and centralism, of freedom and discipline,

[12] Mao, Zedong. *Mao Zedong Wenji*. Volume 2. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe. 1996

> constitutes our democratic centralism. Under this system, the people enjoy broad democracy and freedom, but at the same time they have to keep within the bounds of socialist discipline. All this is well understood by the masses.[13]

Mao's speech therefore laid out important restrictions and pre-conditions for such liberalization. Democracy and freedom could only exist within the economic and ideological structure of socialism for Mao. Both democracy and freedom were not universal values that needed to be upheld, but utilitarian tools in serving the socialism. They could and should be suspended if China's condition became akin to that of Hungary or if they became unnecessary when China had reached a more unified ideological state in which all would truly embrace socialism.

While both Lu Dingyi and Mao's push for the Hundred Flowers Movement was shadowed by the ongoing political rearrangement in the Eastern Bloc, the traditional Chinese tone of the movement contradicts the appearance of synchronization of China's ideological development to that of Soviet Union. The terms "Hundred Flowers" and "Hundred Schools" were ostensibly Chinese. It harked back to the age of division that ensued after the decline of the Zhou Dynasty, which was also considered the formative era of Chinese philosophies. The fragmentation of political and military power coincided with the flourishing of a diverse array of philosophies and political theories.

Therefore, Mao's advocates of the Hundred Flowers Movement had an implicit nationalist element. It embodied an effort to increasingly seek ideological tools within traditional Chinese resources to resolve political crisis. While this emphasis on Chinese past may contradict CCP's ostensible call for modernization, the Hundred Flowers Movement, as well as subsequent political campaigns that also appealed to a traditional Chinese ethos, demonstrated the

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[13] Ibid.

preponderance of traditional Chinese worldview in PRC and Mao's policies. The Hundred Flowers Movement had thus elevated the Pre-Qin era to a time of democratic possibilities that could empower political progress in 1950s' China. While the call for intellectual freedom may unavoidably put a favorable light on western liberal democratic values, which proved to be dangerous in the Soviet Union's De-Stalinization effort and the Hungary Uprising, Mao's use of Pre-Qin China as a model may provide a uniquely Chinese ideological alternative that could be easier to control.

Negotiating the Line between Materialism and Idealism in Spring and Autumn and Warring States Period

The Hundred Flowers Movement not only opened space for the scholarship on history of philosophy of Pre-Qin China, but also provided a highly publicized and politicized platform for deliberations on a range of topics regarding the legitimacy of traditional Chinese philosophy in Socialist China. From July 1956 to June 1957, *the People's Daily* frequently published history and philosophical essays from prominent Chinese scholars on Spring and Autumn and Warring States period. Unprecedentedly, it allowed the scholars to respond and disagree with each other in the 7th page of *People's Daily*. Scholars including Guo Moruo, Feng Youlan, Hou Wailu, etc. frequently published articles on two pairs of contradictions: materialism versus idealism and feudal society versus slave society.

Among the most vocal philosopher at the time was Feng Youlan, who was a renowned philosophy professor specializing in Confucianism. Feng was trained in the Columbia University and a student of John Dewey, who was later attacked relentlessly in PRC as a central figure of "idealist philosophy". After returning to China, while being a scholar, Feng became deeply

associated with the Nationalist Party. After the Communist takeover, Feng remained in the mainland. He had repeatedly written to Mao to renounce his past "philosophical mistakes". While John Dewey was deemed a reactionary philosopher providing an idealist philosophical framework for the west, Feng was eager to distance himself from his academic lineage.[14] The Hundred Flowers Movement created a space for him to present his new scholarship in a supposedly historical materialist framework that was enlightened by Marxism.

In his article "The Conflict Between Materialism and Idealism in Chinese History of Philosophy from the Perspective of Several Major Issues in Chinese Philosophy"[15] published on May 19th 1956, Feng stressed the materialist root of Chinese philosophy and worldview that was consolidated during the Pre-Qin era. Feng argues that the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period marked China's transition out of the shadow of religion. In the article, Feng proposed to investigate the history of Chinese philosophy through the confrontation between materialism and idealism in four different issues: Heaven (tian), Air (qi), Heart (xin), and Idea (li).[16]

Feng argues that the concept of Heaven was deeply religious during the Shang Dynasty and reflects an omnipotent moral authority. During Spring and Autumn, however, this religious aspect of Heaven was reduced. The Confucian concept of Heaven still conveyed a sense of authority that dictates the world, but it only exists as a vague and abstract concept devoid of personalities. Confucius talks about the mandate of heaven (*Tianming*) that determines the rise and fall of humans, but humans have the volition to go against the mandate of Heaven. The

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[14] See Feng, Youlan, *Sansongtang zixu*. Sanlian chubanshe. 2009.

[15] *People's Daily*, Feng Youlan: "Cong zhongguo zhexue zhong de jige zhuyao went kan zhongguo zhexue zhong de weiwuzhuyi yu weixinzhuyi de douzheng" May 19, 1957.

[16] Ibid.

cultivation of morality was also free from the heaven. Therefore, Feng argues that Confucianism exhibits a materialist and human-centric tendency despite its emphasis on Heaven.[17]

In Feng's analysis, Daoist ideology was the most pronounced about the materialist worldview among the pre-Qin philosophies. Feng explains that for Laozi, the Way (Dao) exists above the Heaven. Citing Laozi's famous line "the humans follow the earth, the land follows the Heaven, the Heaven follows the Way, and the Way follows itself", Feng further argues that the Way in Laozi is a materialist concept, as "certain vague material existence before Heaven and earth". Feng uses the idea of Air to further illustrate the Daoist materialist ideology. Air in Daoism has very concrete material properties. It could be heavy or light and would float or sink. The Air constitutes the world and was the basis of life. Although, according to Daoist philosophers like Guanzi, Air has a spiritual and moral aspect. The material basis of Air indicates that materials dictate the idea in Daoism.

Feng came to the conclusion that materialist philosophy reached a climax towards the end of the Warring States period. However, this materialist foundation was gradually eroded after Han Dynasty. Dong Zhongshu had "distorted" the pre-Qin materialist philosophies, and mystified the concepts of Heaven and Air. The introduction of Buddhism during Tang Dynasty further shifted China's prevailing worldview from materialist to idealist.

Citing Engels' dialectic of qualitative and quantitative change, Feng refutes the over-simplified version of history of philosophy that depicts the direct confrontation between the "materialist camp" and "idealist camp". Instead, he argues that the materialism and idealism in China were heavily influenced by each other. For example, the Buddhist concept of Idea existed

[17] Ibid.

on top of the Daoist discourse of Air. Idealist philosophers could also leave materialist philosophical legacies, such as Dong Zhongshu's influence on Wang Chong.[18]

While Feng strived to adopt the Marxist historical materialism to his philosophical analysis, his writing, as it appeared on *People's Daily*, was still vastly different from the narratives from scholars that were more closely associated with official CCP politics, such as Guo Moruo and Yang Rongguo, who often steered away from any ambiguities and argued for a clear-cut history that is more akin to, in Feng's words, "two armies confronting each other". Feng refutes dividing materialism and idealism as two "camps" and argued that they were mutually influencing and building on each other's discourse. For Feng, the dynamic within the Pre-Qin philosophies and their long-lasting impact on Chinese intellectual history provided opportunities to justify the co-existence between materialism and idealism in China.

Feng's article that used Pre-Qin philosophies and their legacies to complicate the confrontational approach on materialism and idealism was echoed by He Lin, an expert in both traditional Chinese and western philosophy. In his article "Opinions About the Two Controversies in Philosophical Research",[19] He elaborated his opinion on the conflict between materialist and idealist philosophies in China's past and on the issue of inheriting philosophical legacies. He further advanced what Feng only briefly touched on: a distinction should be made between actual wars or political conflicts and philosophical debates. He wrote,

> Political and religious conflicts frequently took the form of killing and political persecution, but the conflict between materialism and idealism did not kill nor start war…

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[18] Ibid.

[19] *People's Daily*, He Lin: "Dui zhexueshi yanjiu zhong liangge zhenglun wenti de yijian" Janurary 10, 1957

> I admit that the frontline of philosophy should closely cooperate with the frontlines of politics, economy, and military, but one needs to understand that philosophy is staying behind. It is not within the range of artilleries and bombers.[20]

His effort to tone down conflicts in philosophy tests the limit of Hundred Flowers Movement. While the CCP, similar to the case in the Soviet Union, had long viewed idealist philosophy as the ideology of the oppressor, He tried to distance philosophical debates from class conflicts and lower its political stakes. As the Hundred Flowers Movement had promised the intellectuals a safe and open environment for debate and He's challenge had received initial success. Towards the end of 1956, Peking University had decided to offer courses on "idealist philosophies" and allowed He to teach a course on Hegel.[21] However, research and publications on idealist philosophies in both China and the West had remained a taboo.

In addition, He refuted using the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary dichotomy to define philosophical debates.

> The debate between materialism and idealism is not simply revolutionary and counter-revolutionary. They could sometime happen between teacher and students, and among friends. It could also happen between today's self and yesterday's self… A philosopher can be materialist on one issue, and idealist on another issue.[22]

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[20] Ibid.

[21] *People's Daily*, Ai Qing, Zhang Shiying: "Jinnian you sansui gaodeng xuexiao zengshe zhexuexi, Beijing daxue zhexuexi kaishe weixinzhuyi zhexue kecheng" 今年有三所高等学校增设哲学系 北京大学哲学系开设唯心主义哲学课程, Sep. 2, 1956.

[22] Ibid.

Using Hegel's influence on Marx and Feuerbach, He argues that one should not view materialism and idealism as "two camps". Instead, they build on each other's discourse and are mutually-inseparable.

The affirmation of materialist philosophy in pre-Qin China was further advanced by Zhu Bokun, who argued that pre-Qin philosophies were not only materialist, but also dialectic. As a younger generation of philosopher, Zhu received his education at Tsinghua University during the civil war and in the initial years of the PRC. Zhu remained at a teaching position at Tsinghua's Department of Philosophy and served as Feng's assistant.

In his article, "The Problems We Encountered in Research of History of Chinese Philosophy," Zhu wrote that one of the major issues in history of Chinese philosophy is how to approach dialectic materialism and historical materialism.[23] Zhu argues that, in previous scholarship produced under socialism, there could not be dialectic materialist philosophies in history of Chinese philosophy because dialectic materialism was only allowed to appear after Marx. However, there did exist dialectic materialist philosophies in China, especially in Pre-Qin era, and scholars attempted to avoid the issue by saying that "certain philosophers were materialist in one issue, and dialectic in another issue. However, scholars were not allowed to combine ancient philosophers' materialism and dialecticism. Moreover, while existing scholarship in socialist China concedes the presence of elements of materialism in history of Chinese philosophy, it refused to acknowledge such existence on the level of system of thoughts or worldview.[24] Using Confucian and Legalist precedents in Pre-Qin, Zhu argued that, instead of

[23] People's Daily, Zhu Bokun: "Women zai zhongguo zhexue yanjiushi zhong suo yudao de yixie wenti" 我们在中国哲学史研究中所遇到的一些问题, Oct. 14, 1956.

[24] Ibid.

existing only as occasional and coincidental instances and elements, different variations of materialist worldviews existed abundantly in pre-Qin Chinese philosophies. Zhu wrote,

> Han Fei did not accept the will of the heaven and human's subjective will as the force behind social development. He thinks that the accumulation of wealth and population in a society are the main factors that influence social changes. This view is of course unscientific, but what is materialist is his attempts to find the driving force behind social change in the material condition of a society. There are plenty such examples in history of Chinese philosophy. For example, Xunzi's theory of human's innate evil. Xunzi was certain that human nature is evil. This is an idealist thought. However, he argued that morality is not given by the heaven, but a product of environment after birth. This is a materialist idea.

In addition, Zhu argues that classic Chinese materialist philosophy possessed many dialectic elements that naïve materialism in the West did not have, such as the concepts of Air.[25]

While these scholars disagreed on the issue of philosophical inheritance, all their works affirmed the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period as the foundation of Chinese materialist philosophies. Moreover, these scholarships also agreed on the particularity of Chinese philosophy that required a different kind of analysis than Marx's interpretation of history of western philosophy. While these philosophers did not deviate from Marxist historical materialism, their writings all stressed the different trajectory Chinese philosophy compared to European philosophy, which necessitated the revision of earlier rules that treated materialism and other progressive and scientific thoughts only as products of modern and Marxist influence.

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[25] Ibid.

Hou Wailu and the Asiatic Mode of Production (AMP)

One of the most prominent scholarly events in the field of history and philosophy during the Hundred Flowers Movement was the creation and publication of the new *General Chinese Intellectual History*[26] by a group of historians and philosophers including Hou Wailu, Zhao Jibin, and She Guoxiang. Hou, as the main author, had been writing and publishing three volumes of *General Chinese Intellectual History* from 1936 to 1949. Hou Wailu was one of the most senior Marxist historians and philosophers that still remained in the PRC in the 1950s. At a young age, Hou was exposed to leftist ideology through Li Dazhao and joined the CCP while studying in Paris, where he translated Marx's *Capital* into Chinese. In the following years, Hou published eclectically on political economy, Chinese intellectual history, as well as more politicized news articles and social commentaries that were critical to the policies of the Nationalist Party.[27] However, unlike Guo Moruo, despite his political activism and his close relationship with the CCP leadership, Hou remained primarily as a scholar and kept greater distance from politics.

Hou's interpretation of ancient Chinese history through AMP in the new *General Chinese Intellectual History* further affirmed China's particularity and attempted to reconcile this particularity with the Marxist worldview. In the first volume of the new *General Chinese Intellectual History*, Hou combined many of his pre-1949 scholarship on pre-Qin history and philosophies with a more direct Marxist interpretation. In particular, Hou attempts to apply principles from AMP in Marx and Engels' writings on pre-Qin Chinese societies.

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[26] Hou, Wailu. *Zhongguo Sixiang Tongshi*. 中国思想通史 Beijing: Remin chubanshe. 1956.

[27] See Hou, Wailu. *Ren de zhuiqiu*.韧的追求 Beijing: Sanlian shudian. 1985.

Because Marx's discussions of AMP were scant and mainly focused on India, it left space for Hou to construct a new theory that focused on the particularity of Chinese pre-Qin societies. In *Capital* and a series of articles on India, Marx briefly outlined the characteristic of AMP, including the presence of oriental despotic government, centralized control of irrigation, the absence of private ownership of land, etc.[28] Marx's concept of AMP co-exists with his four conventional modes of production: Tribal, Ancient, Feudal, and Capitalist. However, whether AMP exists independently from these modes of productions or as a variation under one of them was open to questions. This question had raised heated debate in the Soviet Union in 1920s and 30s. Whether China could be analyzed through AMP became a politicized question for the Soviet Union because it pertains to whether the Soviet cooperation with the Chinese Nationalist Party was appropriate.[29]

In China, there were fewer debates on AMP and it appeared to be less politicized. However, whether Chinese history should be analyzed through AMP and whether AMP is part of Ancient Mode of Production still have considerable political implications, especially when Mao started to promote the Hundred Flowers Movement, which directly appealed to a Chinese, instead of Marxist, tradition. Hou's discussion of the AMP then negotiated the delicate balance between the extent of Chinese particularity and how much it still fits into conventional Marxist analysis.

The chapter on AMP in the new *General Chinese Intellectual History* published in 1957 was largely based on the older version of this chapter published in 1947. However, the chapter in

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[28] Fogel, Josha. "The Debates over the Asiatic Mode of Production in Soviet Russia, China, and Japan." The *American Historical Review*, Vol. 93, No. 1, Feb., 1988. 56-79

[29] Ibid. 58

the new edition included many additional paragraphs directly referencing Marx and based Hou's analysis more firmly upon "instructions from Marxism". Although the main argument and analysis did not change from 1947 to 1957, the original chapter negotiated with Marx's concept of AMP, whereas the new edition ostensibly treated Marx's words as absolute truth but still sought to establish a sense of Chinese particularity in the space where Marx left. The decision to include this chapter in the 1957 edition reflect the CCP's affirmation of Hou's position in the new political environment.[30]

While accepting the Marxist AMP analysis of China, Hou refutes the idea of separating AMP from Marx's conventional modes of production. Hou writes that, in Marx's *Capital* and *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, there is no temporal order between AMP and the Ancient Mode of Production. Instead, Hou expanded the Ancient Mode of Production to include multiple "paths". Hou argued that the European "Classic Ancient" and China's "Asiatic Ancient" are two different paths under the same Ancient Mode of Production. Hou used Marx's precedent of indicating colonies and Imperial Russia as anomalies from "conventional modernity" to argue that there could also be anomalies or different types of the Ancients other than the conventional "Classic Ancient". AMP is therefore not independent from the conventional stages nor a transitory stage from Tribal to Ancient because, as Hou writes,

> The relationship (the "relationship" refers to mode of production) between the owner of means of production and the direct producers reveals the complete formation of a society.

[30] Hou, Wailu. *Zhongguo Sixiang Tongshi*. 中国思想通史 Beijing: Remin chubanshe. 1956.

> Regardless of whether their status was mixed, Marx clearly indicates that AMP revealed the formation of a society. The "formation" is therefore clearly ancient.[31]

Hou's strategy of affirming China's AMP but attributing it as one of the "paths" of the Ancient Mode of Production created space for him to assert China's particularity while not causing excessive modification to the Marxist principles.

Using Marx's analogy between ancient civilizations and child development, Hou characterized pre-Qin China as a "precocious child". The formation of AMP in the orient, such as China, was centuries earlier than that of the "Classic Ancient" of Europe. While the ownership of land by the kings in Europe was short-lived, China at a very early stage had established state-ownership of land.[32]

This Chinese "precociousness" implied a comparatively progressive social formation in pre-Qin China that is radically different from the West. Hou sums up the difference between the West and China as "revolution vs reform". The formation of state in the "Classic Ancient" is a process of revolution: the state replaced the families in its domination of land and resources through revolutions. On the other hand, such process in China took place through reform: the families were reformed into the state, and the state contains elements of the families, which resulted in the distinctive Chinese state of Soil and Grain (Sheji). Such difference in state formation also resulted in different ideological and philosophical foundation. As Hou writes,

> The former (the west) is a world of citizens, and the latter is the world of "gentlemen" (junzi). If we follow Marx's interpretation of Aristotle's words "man is by nature political animals" to mean that man is by nature urban animals: the idea of man is abstracted into

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[31] Ibid. 4

[32] Ibid. 5

> citizen, then we can apply the same logic to Xunzi, who possessed a philosophical legacy equal to the greatness of Aristotle. Xunzi said, "the way of man is the way of gentleman" (Ren zhi dao ji junzi zhi dao)… It is sufficient to say that Xunzi had abstracted the concept of man into "gentleman within the state".[33]

Hou's interpretation of AMP as one of many paths under "ancient society" had created tremendous space for him to assert the social and intellectual development of pre-Qin society as a different, more advanced and progressive path than the European "Classic Ancient". Similar to Feng and other philosophers' efforts of locating materialist worldviews in pre-Qin China, Hou characterized the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period as a time of important progressive historical breakthroughs. As a "precocious child", Chinese society in the East Zhou and early Spring and Autumn period had given rise to private property and effectively undermined the domination of hereditary families. In this process, Hou argued, important progressive and materialist elements emerged in literary works that created the foundation for the Hundred Schools philosophies.

Comparing it with the Greek tradition, Hou argued that such progressive and materialist elements were embodied in literary "tragedies" in West Zhou. In particular, Hou examined "Change of Feng" (bian feng) and "Change of Ya" (bian ya) that was associated with the social changes that happened with the decline of the West Zhou Dynasty.[34] Inspired by the Greek tradition, Hou defined "tragedies" as literary works that acknowledge larger social and historical turmoil while depicting individuals' inability to change or escape from them. The existence of tragedies, according to Hou, reflected the psychological ambiguities that typically associate with

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[33] Ibid. 12

[34] Ibid. 109

transitional stages, in which "the new class had not typically emerged, and the old tradition had suppressed the development of history". While the "Feng" and "Ya" tradition largely came from officials and nobilities, they illustrate their own increasingly precarious situation while sympathizing with the people. Hou compared such ambiguity with works of Honoré de Balzac, which, on one hand, lamented the decline of French aristocracy, but on the other hand, enthusiastically depicted their depravity and impotence.[35]

Hou further categorized the poems of "Change of Feng" and "Change of Ya" into six categories: "exposures of social crisis", "mockery to the decline of hereditary noble households", "exposure of people's sufferings in warfare", "exposure of labor force crisis", "exposure of the destruction of means of production", "exposure of changes of class relations". Hou attempted to use a materialist lens to examine several well-known examples from *The Book of Odes*. For instance, Hou argued that the poem "Big Rat" (shuo shu), which depicts a large rat consuming farmer's grain, reflects both the decline of productivity due to warfare and the increasingly extreme exploitation by the land-holding nobilities to the peasants. Hou explained the "ambiguity of tragedy" in a series of poem such "Looking Up" (zhan yang), "Zhao Min", from *The Book of Odes*, which laments the decline of nobilities and the rise of new elites. While the poem depicts a sorrowful situation in which the old elites, who were supposed to embody the righteousness of the heaven, the poem spoke of this process of decline as natural and almost ordained by heaven.[36]

For Hou, the poems of "Change of Feng" and "Change of Ya" also embodies a revolutionary sentiment against the early Zhou's notion of Mandate of Heaven. While the notion of Mandate of

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[35] Ibid. 115

[36] Ibid. 114-121

Heaven in early Zhou was deeply religious and entails a set of moral principles such as Gentleman's virtues and filial piety, the poems of "Change of Feng" largely defies them. As Hou writes,

> The Change of Feng goes against the intellectual traditions (of early Zhou). It not only makes accusations against the Heavenly God (shangdi), but also questions ancestors. Its ideology has revolutionary elements and represents a primitive version of materialism. It refuses the ideals of Early Zhou and embodied the tragedy.[37]

The presence of tragedy thus indicates the rising discontent and opposition to Early Zhou values, albeit the ambiguous ways they were expressed. Hou points out that the Change of Feng during the decline of Western Zhou challenged the religiosity of the Mandate of Heaven. In these poems, heaven was no longer represented as moral and omnipotent, but often portrayed as unreasonable, reactionary, and vicious. In several other poems, the existence of heaven and the moralities and rituals heaven represented were seen as altogether irrelevant. Hou argued that this increasing marginalization of the religious concepts "heaven" and "way" paved way for the intellectual prosperity of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period. It embodied a more scientific worldview that is "close to the people".

Zhang Dainian's *A Brief History of Chinese Materialist Thought*

Hou's characterization of the materialistic and progressive intellectual basis of Spring and Autumn period was echoed by voices from more official and popular menus, such as editorials and articles from *Red Flag* and *People's Daily*, as well as publications aimed for popular readership. One of the most notable popular publications of Chinese philosophy during the

[37] Ibid. 116

Hundred Flowers Movement is Zhang Dainian's *A Brief History of Chinese Materialist Thought*, which was published in March 1957 by The Chinese Youth Publishing House. Zhang Dainian was of a younger generation of philosophers than Hou Wailu and received his education entirely in China. By mid-1950s, Zhang was teaching at Peking University and became one of the most vocal scholars during the Hundred Flowers Movement. Together with Feng Youlan, Zhang took advantage of the seemingly more open environment of 1956 and started to offer courses on the history of Chinese philosophy at Peking University.[38]

Like Hou Wailu's attempt to harness AMP into an expression of Chinese particularity, Zhang's work interpreted materialism as a fundamentally Chinese concept instead of a modern Western import. Zhang started with the linguistics of materialism and sought to use language from traditional China to frame materialist philosophy. While the translation of the word "materialism" as "*weiwulun*" or "*weiwuzhuyi*", borrowed from Japanese, could trace its origin to Buddhism, Zhang located the origins of materialism in traditional Chinese philosophical concepts, such as "reality" (*shi*), "existence"(*you*), "material" (*wu*), "objects" (*qi*), "phenomenon" (xiang), and "air" (qi). Among these concepts, Zhang argues that "air" could essentially be equated to the modern concept of materialism. Zhang concludes there were three main characteristics of "air" that made it the closest counterpart of Marxist materialism. First, the existence of "air" is independent from human observation. "Air" could be observable or unobservable by humans, but its existence was perpetual. Second, "air" formed the basis of all objects. "Mountain, rivers, lands, stars, clouds, rains, dews, grass, trees, birds, beasts, and even

[38] Zhang, Dainian. *Zhang Dainian Xiansheng Xuepu*. 张岱年先生学谱 Edited by Liu Epei, Du Yunhui, Beijing: Kunlun chubanshe, 2010

human bodies were all constructed by 'air'."[39] Third, air is perpetually moving and transforming. The movement and transformation of "air" is the cause behind the movement and transformation of all things.[40]

Zhang's characterization of "air" as foundations of the material world was heavily based on Xunzi's theory on nature. In *A Brief History of Chinese Materialist Thought*, Zhang placed the greatest importance on the philosophies of Xunzi and hailed him as the most important materialist philosopher of the Warring States period. In particular, Zhang attempted to make direct connections between the theory of "air" and modern scientific consciousness. Citing Xunzi's *Kingly Rules* (*Wang zhi pian*), Zhang wrote,

> Xunzi came up with a materialist theory about basic differentiations among all things. He argued that water and fire had "air", but they had no life. Plants had "air" and life, but no consciousness. Beasts and birds had consciousness, but no morality. Humans possess "air", life, consciousness, and morality, and therefore are the most valuable. Thus, Xunzi had differentiated inorganic materials, plants, animals, and materials… "Air" is the most fundamental and is the basis for life and consciousness… This so-called "air" is apparently what we call "materials" today… Xunzi had illuminated the relationship between materials, life, and consciousness.[41]

Zhang further elaborated on Xunzi's idea that "spirit was born after the existence of the body" (xing ju er shen sheng) and argued that the theory of "air" as the basis of the world had rebuked

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[39] Zhang Dianian, *Zhongguo weiwuzhuyi sixiang jianshi*. 中国唯物主义思想简史 Beijing: zhongguo qingnian chu banshe, 1956. 12.

[40] Ibid. 13-14

[41] Ibid.

the earlier religious worldviews of Heaven and Heavenly God (shang di). Similar to Hou Wailu's analysis of the diminishing role of Heaven in the poems of Spring and Autumn, in Xunzi's worldview, Heaven transformed from a fixed and sacred entity to one that that could be negotiated and even utilized. The idea of making use and making changes to Heaven implicitly corresponds to the Maoist ideal of conquering nature.

A more unconventional aspect of Zhang's discourse of Chinese intellectual history was his analysis of Confucius, Mengzi, and Laozi and the inclusion of these philosophers in the more "materialist" and "progressive" camp. While Confucius became a frequent target for attack for most left-wing thinkers in 20th century China, there were also left-wing scholars who defended Confucius for his humanistic worldview. Most notably, Guo Moruo argued vehemently against his fellow leftist-thinkers in favor of Confucius in the mid-1940s. In his *Book* of *Ten Criticisms*, Guo had interpreted Confucius' idealized Zhou society as an egalitarian world evocative of communism.[42] Zhang's interpretation in 1957 was reminiscent of Guo's praise of Confucius from 1945. Zhang depicted Confucius as an educator who broke the aristocratic monopoly in knowledge and sought to democratize education. Similar to Guo, Zhang emphasized the humanistic aspect of Confucian philosophy, such as his alienation from the "Heavenly Way" (*tiandao*).[43] However, Zhang went further as to argue that Confucius was not only progressive, but also scientific and materialist. For example, Zhang argued that Confucius's teachings about

[42] See Wang, Pu. *The Translatability of Revolution: Guo Moruo and Twentieth Century Chinese Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018.

[43] Zhang Dianian, *Zhongguo weiwuzhuyi sixiang jianshi*. 中国唯物主义思想简史 Beijing: zhongguo qingnian chu banshe, 1956. 20.

ancestral worship were a prototype of atheism. Because Confucius asked people to treat the spirit as the ancestors as if they were present, he thus rejected the real existence of spirits.

Despite Zhang's attempt to package materialism as a philosophy in the traditional Chinese lingo, Zhang still had to position Chinese philosophies as subordinate to that of Marxist. Zhang wrote that although China had sophisticated materialist philosophies, the idealist philosophies were still dominant for the most part of the imperial or "feudal" era. Zhang, like other philosophers and historians in the 1950s, viewed the cultural prosperity and progressiveness of the Pre-Qin era as temporary and transitory. Moreover, materialist philosophies in China could not take the place of Marxism. As Zhang wrote,

> Marxist dialectic and historical materialism are the highest form of materialism and the peak of the combined forces of natural sciences, social sciences, and philosophies that humans produced for the past thousands of years. In the past there was an allusion, an elderly person could speak of something, and a child could speak of the same thing. For the old person, his words were the result of lifelong experience and knowledge. For the child, his words were merely words.[44]

Similar to Hou's narration of ancient China through AMP, Zhang creates an alternative vision of Chinese intellectual history that was progressive, but ostensibly subsumed under the larger Marxist meta-history. However, despite Hou and Zhang's effort to reconcile Pre-Qin philosophies and Marxist historical materialism, the relation between the two was uneasy. Hou's characterization of AMP and Zhang's effort to juxtapose the Pre-Qin philosophies with modern scientific notions conveys a sense of nationalistic imitation and competition. They risk the marginalization of Marxism in Chinese history as well as the marginalization of Chinese history

[44] Ibid. 14-16

in Marxism. The idea that the ideological and intellectual foundation of science and progress lies within Chinese history provided a legitimate role for traditional learning and non-Marxist scholars in the Hundred Flowers Movement.

Conclusion: The End of the Hundred Flowers Movement and the Continuation of Chinese Intellectual Particularities

Towards the latter half of 1957, the short-lived and ill-fated intellectual vibrance gave way to the harsher reality of Anti-Rightist Movement. A June 8th editorial from *The People's Daily* marked reversal of the policy. The editorial, titled "Why is this Case?" (zheshi weishenme), blasted the political criticisms and scholarly opinions from the Hundred Flowers Movement as attempts to overthrow the CCP and the socialist system.[45] Although Mao's wrath was mainly directed at social criticisms and calls for political liberalization from 1956 and early 1957, many scholars of traditional Chinese history and philosophies that participated in the 1956 debate about Chinese materialism and Pre-Qin philosophies were also attacked and prosecuted. Guan Feng, serving as the head of the Philosophy Group in Central Political Research Office at the time, attacked the 1956 debate as "revisionism in the history of philosophy"[46]. Feng Youlan, who attempted to soften the confrontational dichotomy between materialism and idealism during in 1956 and early 1957, became the target of attacks from students and various newspapers and

[45] People's Daily. "Zheshi weishenme". 这是为什么 June 8, 1957.么

[46] Edited by Zhao Xiuyi, Zhang Yixing. *Shoudao 1957: 1957 Nian Zhongguo Zhexueshi Zuotanhui Shilu yu Fansi*. 守道 1957: 1957 年中国哲学史座谈会实录与反思 Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe. 2

journals for several months. Younger scholars, such as Zhang Dainian, received less public attack, but were labelled as "Rightist" in the upcoming Anti-Rightist Movement.

The dramatic reversal of the Hundred Flowers policy had eliminated the possibility for a Chinese intellectual history to deviate from the official discourse of class struggle for the next twenty years. Mao's statements and the official editorials in 1957 attempted to frame the Hundred Flowers Movement as "luring the snake out of its hole" – a deliberate act to provide a false sense of freedom so that the reactionary elements would come out and expose themselves. However, scholars, such as Spence and Meisner, highlight the discontent of the movement from other CCP leaders, such as Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi, who, in the wake of 1957, began to increasingly question Mao's decision of inviting political criticisms to the CCP. Instead of being a carefully planned trap, the Hundred Flowers Movement was Mao's failed attempt to energize China's cultural and political fields. Meisner points out that the premise of the Hundred Flowers Movement entailed its eventual failure. "The people," for Mao, were supposed to be united as a singular entity, and the purpose of the Hundred Flowers Movement was the further integration of "the people" through open deliberations. This premise itself was paradoxical because it already eliminated the possibility of voices that came outside of the accepted political parameters.[47]

The cultural and political celebration of the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States by scholars like Hou and Zhang also contained the same kind of paradox. The division and multitude of schools and ideas of the Pre-Qin period were seen as a transitory stage for an increasingly unified intellectual state in China. Scholars like Hou Wailu, Feng Youlan, He Lin, and Zhang Dainian, all emphasized the particularities of Pre-Qin society, literature, and

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[47] Meisner, Maurice. *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*. New York: Free Press, 1999.

philosophy and their difference from their European counterparts. However, such particularities could only be celebrated when they conformed to the Marxist worldview.

While Mao reversed the cultural policies of the Hundred Flowers Movement, its nationalistic effort to locate progressive elements in Chinese worldviews proved enduring. However, instead of creating a forum of free intellectual exchange, the effort to promote Chinese particularities became incorporated into elite politics and power struggles. Since 1957, there would be numerous efforts by Mao to juxtapose orthodox Marxism with traditional Chinese worldviews. The effort to locate and utilize traditional Chinese ideological resources became increasingly institutionalized. What was started by a few prominent but politically questionable scholars in 1956 was later undertaken by Mao himself as well as his closest allies. Many of the scholars that were attacked in 1957, most notably Feng Youlan, would later be absorbed into more official and politicized writing groups as their expertise in traditional China turned out to be indispensable. This nationalistic project coincided with the growing divergence between China's revolutionary ideology and that of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The Hundred Flowers Movement thus provided the precedent and language to justify the position of Chinese philosophy in revolutionary China.

Chapter 2: Fighting the Ghosts: The Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts and The Politics of Ghost Stories

In a news conference that took place on July 1, 2016, the spokesman of China's Ministry of National Defense sternly claimed, "the Chinese military has never been afraid of ghosts or believed in dark arts! We do not seek what does not belong to China, but we will defend every inch of what does belong to China. This is the result of China's will and power."[48] The statement was responding to the escalating tension in the disputed area of South China Sea, and reflected China's increasing assertiveness to demonstrate its military and political prowess. The phrase "never been afraid of ghosts or believed in dark arts" may seem out of place in the statement of Chinese officially atheist regime in the twenty-first century. The trope of not being afraid of ghosts and courageously fighting against those who practice dark arts as political metaphors was constructed in the late 1950s and early 1960s as part of the political discourse of Anti-Rightist movement at the dawn of the Cultural Revolution. Starting from 1959, Mao Zedong had envisioned an ideological campaign of "Fighting the Ghosts (Dagui)" which aimed to respond to various social and political challenges created by the Hundred Flowers Movement, the Great Leap Forward, and international threats. At the center of the "Fighting the Ghosts" campaign is the creation of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* a compiled collection of *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi* literature from the Jin to the Qing Dynasty. [49], Traditionally, the late 1950s and early 1960s have been viewed by scholars as an age of unprecedented anti-traditionalism. Historians

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[48] People's Daily: Su Yicheng: "Guofangbu Lixing Jizhehui: Jiu Nanhai Wenti deng Huida Tiwen". June, 1. 2016

[49] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi*. Xianggang :Sheng huo, du shu, xin zhi san lian shu dian, 1961. Print.

like Frank Dikötter argued there was a top-down cultural control in the 1950s. I aim to reveal the creation of the ideal socialist subject as the product of negotiation between Mao's socialist revolutionary world view and the traditional Confucian morality and order. The fighting the ghosts campaign reflected the creation of socialist subjects as courageous, masculine, and rational. While Sheila Fitzpatrick defines the Soviet socialist subject as completely anti-traditional, in China, the ghosts and their human counterparts locate the ideal socialist subjects in Confucian culture and morality.

At first glance, *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* is an anomaly of its age. The late 1950s and early 1960s is a time of "adapted plays" that reworked the stories from the imperial past to comment on the present and align with the standards of socialist art.[50] *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* reveals a more complex relationship between Chinese traditional literature and socialist ideology. While traditional literature provided language and justification for class struggle, it was also given new meaning by the revolutionary politics. The meaning of the ghosts underwent a process of contestation. Ghosts become devoid of meaning as writers and political players used them as political metaphors. In order to assert their interpretive power, Mao and He had to laboriously control the meaning of the ghosts. First of all, the reader must be constantly reminded that the ghosts were only metaphoric, and there were not actually ghosts. Second, ghosts must be uniformly evil and call for destruction. Third, only the right people can tell ghost stories and interpret them.

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[50] Greene, Maggie. "'A Ghostly Bodhisattva and the Price of Vengeance: Meng Chao, "Li Huiniang', and the Politics of Drama, 1959-1979". *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 24.1 (2012): p. 167. Print.

Previous scholarship, including Leo Tak-hung Chan's book about the *Zhiguai* genre and storytelling, Judith Zeitlin's work on female ghosts of late imperial times, and Rania Huntington's work on foxes in Zhiguai and Chuanqi literature provided precious insights into the genres of ghost stories in imperial China and their relations to Confucian morality. Here, I emphasize ghost stories' renewed relevance and meanings in the socialist era. While *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* reveals a vision of socialist modernity that was rooted in traditional social morality, it also demonstrates the versatility of the Chuanqi and Zhiguai tales that allowed them to be imagined as having both revolutionary and reactionary potential .

The position and legitimacy of ghost stories in cultural productions have been subjected to heated debate in China's official political discourse since the late-nineteenth century. I categorize the ghost stories such as those *in Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* as part of popular religion and superstition (*mixin*). Prasenjit Duara distinguishes the imperial state orthodox cult of Confucianism from more personalized and violent popular religion. The former was practiced by sacrifices and reverences, and the latter was conceived of in terms of threats and rewards working through supernatural efficacy.[51] Ghost stories in Chinese literature, because of their preaching of karmic forces and disruption to the Confucian moral order, belong to the category of popular religions that later were labelled as superstition by China's modernizers. According to Mei-hui Yang, like the concept of religion (zongjiao), the term superstition was imported from the West through Japan to describe "misguided beliefs" that do not fit the state

[51] Duara, Prasenjit. "Religion and Citizenship in China and the Diaspora," in *Chinese Religiosities Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*. Eds. Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. Print. 47.

social and moral order. In the face of widely perceived national weakness and crises, Chinese reformist intellectuals, pioneered by Liang Qichao, were the first ones to denounce superstition as a source of Chinese backwardness. Liang proposes that China should retain the religious teachings that are useful to Chinese society and destroy superstitions that damage Chinese society.[52]

While the Communist revolution and the PRC regime are characterized by their radical effort to eradicate superstitions, such anti-superstitious ventures are not new inventions of the CCP regime. The Chinese state's attempt to counter and eliminate superstition is a prolonged process that started in the late 19th century. As Yang notes, in 1898, the Guangxu emperor decreed that all temples in the empire should be taken over by local officials and transformed into schools and state offices, with the exception of temples for state sacrifices. Although the late imperial Chinese courts frequently engaged in anti-clerical movements from a Confucian perspective, the decree in 1898 is considered a turning point because it assumed an unprecedented position from outside of religion and aimed to promote science and modern education, instead of simply preserving state orthodoxy (zhengjiao) against heterodoxy (xiejiao).[53] Under the influence of Western science, social evolutionism, and Marxism, the May Fourth Movement added further impetus to anti-superstition efforts. In 1918, Marxist intellectual Chen Duxiu published a long article in the journal *New Youth* titled "On Smashing of Idols" that fiercely denounced Chinese idols of immortals and ghosts as deceitful and deserving to be destroyed.[54]

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[52] Ibid. 10-12.

[53] Ibid. 16.

[54] Ibid 18.

Fighting the ghosts as a political engagement started to appear in the New Culture Movement. Hu Shi coined the term “fighting the ghost” in his article “Rearranging the National Heritage and Fighting the Ghosts”. Hu aimed to wage a campaign against the belief in the Confucian classics. He wrote, “I very much believe there existed many old ghosts in the ‘ancient pile of papers’. They can eat and confuse people, and are more harmful than the various viruses discovered by Louis Pasteur… Although I cannot kill the viruses, I can ‘catch the monsters and fight the ghosts’.” For Hu, the national past is of superstition and submissiveness, which like ghosts, needed to be unmasked and destroyed.

In the Republican era, the KMT authority continued the anti-superstition venture in more concrete policies. According to Rebecca Nedostup, officials in the KMT regime in the late 1920s and 1930s perceived themselves as being engaged in a competition of two “affective regimes” – the world of superstition and the world of nationalist modernity. Central to this competition was Sun Yat-sen’s concept of “psychological construction” (xinlijianshe) that was needed for proper citizenship. Sun argued that in order to initiate a revolution, we must “transform hearts and minds” (geming xian gexin 革命先革心). Such ideas became the ideological basis for anti-superstition movements in the KMT era. Traditional lunar calendar festivals and their various rituals, such as the Ghost Festival and the burning of incense, became the targets of eradication. The KMT officials argued that if people believe and revere mythical forces, they would have less confidence in themselves and in their ability to transform reality. Therefore, superstition promoted a lack of faith in oneself. Among all lunar calendar festivals and activities, the Ghost Festival is the most consistently targeted event in different times and spaces throughout the KMT

regime because at the center of this festival is the belief in ghosts.[55] Nedostup argues that the KMT government's anti-superstitious venture belongs to the same discourse against clerical power under popular religion, but was reworked into a rationalist and nation-state discourse.

The Disappearance of Ghosts: 1949 to 1956

Nevertheless, the CCP, during the revolution and after its victory, largely continued the anti-superstitious discourse from the late Qing. The competition between the revolutionary ideology and superstitious beliefs under the KMT regime as described by Nedostup were also undertaken by their contemporary communists. In the famous "Report on Hunan Peasant Movement", Mao wrote that "the system of ghosts and gods" is one of the major systems that oppressed the rural population. In the areas that the Peasant Association had overthrown the vested interests of the landlord, they started to target the superstitious practices and traditions. Mao noted that Peasant Association had confiscated funding and lands of temples for the usage of schools. Mao would ask the peasants, "Can the God of War (Guanshen) and Bodhisattvas overthrow the local tyrants and evil gentry for you? It is a pity for the God of War and Bodhisattvas, because you have worshipped them for hundreds of years and they had never brought down a single local tyrant and evil gentry. Now who should you believe in if you want to reduce your rent? Would you believe in the gods or the Peasant Association?" The attempt to transfer the peasant's belief from ghosts and gods to the Communist revolution echoes the KMT's anti-superstitious venture of reinforcing the confidence in self and in revolution.

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[55] Rebecca Nedostup. "Religion and Citizenship in China and the Diaspora," in *Chinese Religiosities Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation*. Eds. Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. Print. 88-89.

After 1949, "superstitious features" in traditional and Western cultural productions were censored or transformed into natural forces. For example, in the traditional theatrical drama *Lin Chong's Night Escape* from *The Water Margin*, a Boddhisatva comes forward to Lin and warned him of the coming danger. Because the story features the Buddhist god and thus was considered to be superstitious, in the new versions from 1950s, Lin Chong falls asleep and dreamed of the coming danger, instead of having the god telling him so.[56] In the Chinese editing of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, instead of the ghost of Hamlet's father telling the story of his death, the new version had Horatio witnessing the whole event and informing Hamlet.

On the grassroots level, the Party initiated various campaigns against the belief in ghosts and gods in rural China. In the late 1950s, China's major newspapers were filled with "good news" from the rural area of the peasants destroying their beliefs in superstition and adopted scientific method of production and living. The anti-superstitious discourse renewed the KMT era's mission to cultivate confidence in individuals and collectives to transform the world. For example, a report in *People's Daily* of rural grain production in Guangdong claims "There is no Jade Emperor in the heaven; there is no Dragon King in the field. We are the Jade Emperor and Dragon Kings and we shall order the mountains to yield to us." The report then praises the young peasants who used tombstones to build their pigpens and transform the old graveyards into farmlands.[57] In another report about rural residents' living condition in 1956, the reporter noted that comparing to the rural families before 1949, one important progress is that there are no longer pictures of God of Wealth and God of Kitchen in their houses. Before the revolution, the

[56] People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), March 25, 1957.

[57] People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), June 8, 1958.

article noted, on average a household had to spend half a silver dollar per year for worshiping these gods, but nowadays there are no longer these expenses because people trusted their own productive power instead of ghosts and gods. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, reports in anti-superstitious efforts in rural and suburban communities and urban working units appear multiple times every week in *People's Daily*. They reflected a continuation of the KMT era's anti-superstitious movements' purposes of cultivating confidence and alleviating financial burden.

The Return of the Ghosts: Hundred Flowers Movement and the position of the ghosts

The onset of Hundred Flowers Movement had unleashed a nuanced debate about position of ghosts and gods in cultural productions and as popular belief. Taking advantage of the assumed open environment of speech of the Hundred Flowers Movement, many intellectuals voiced their defence of the supernatural forces in cultural productions. Instead of viewing the beliefs in supernatural forces as reactionary feudal remnants, many intellectuals argued that there were still positive and even revolutionary forces in them. In 1957, Chinese historian and philosopher Zhang Shouheng published an article called *The Struggle Between Materialism and Idealism and Class Struggle in Chinese History of Philosophy*. Zhang argued that it is too general to categorize traditional Chinese intellectuals according to the materialist-revolutionary/idealist-reactionary dichotomy. There existed many Chinese movements and philosophers who promoted beliefs in supernatural power, but still fought for the interest of the oppressed slaves and peasants, such as the Taiping Rebellion's belief in God, Zhu Xi's Song-Ming rational idealism, and Dong Zhongshu's theory of interaction between heaven and mankind. Conversely, there also existed many philosophers who proposed materialist world views but worked for the interests of the aristocrats, such as Laozi and Zhuangzi's naturalist

theories, and Wang Chong and Fan Zhen's relentless attack on religion. The author argues that these philosophers' actual political intention supported the interests of the aristocrats.[58] Zhang therefore separated the assumed association between superstition and feudal oppression, and argued that "anti-superstitious" philosophers could and even tend to be on the side of the orthodoxy, which is more likely to signal feudal oppression.

Chen Mengjia, the famous Chinese archaeologist and romanticist poet who was active since the May Fourth Movement, argued in *People's Daily* in 1957 that although many great works of traditional literature were about ghosts and gods, since most people in the PRC no longer believed in them, people should not mind that the story appeared in the form of ghosts and gods. Moreover, Zhang argued that one should historicize the ghosts and gods in traditional literature and popular religion, and try to find the "shadows of history" in them. One should not use "modern standards" to judge and criticize the works of ancient time. The story of ghosts and demons, such as those from *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, were actually a reflection of human emotions. The stories about the ghosts were actually the stories about men, and would be good sources to truly understand the peasants.

These competing discourses on ghosts and gods in Chinese cultural productions was the result of the temporary diverse cultural and political environment of the Hundred Flowers Movement. They reflected Mao's confidence in his own leadership during the initial phase of the Hundred Flowers Movement. Mao assumed that the proletarians in China had achieved an overall victory over the oppressive classes, and most contradictions that were left in the fields of science, arts, and literature, are contradictions among the people, and should be resolved by

[58] People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), Feburary 4, 1957.

means of debate and persuasion.[59] In an article published in February 1957, Mao declared that "different forms and styles in art should be able to develop freely… Using political and administrative means to forcefully advance one style or scholarship, and prohibit another style or scholarship, would be harmful to the development of art and science." Mao writes that there still existed feudal and capitalist remnants, and the proletarian's complete victory over the bourgeoisie were still yet to be achieved. Marxists still were the minority among the intellectuals and overall population in China. Therefore, Marxists should allow themselves to be challenged by other elements since Marxism only grew among struggles and contradictions.[60]

Mao further articulated his policy on cultural productions about ghosts one month later in his speech at a conference with "representatives from the field of art and culture". Mao claimed, "there are many 'ox-ghosts and snake gods (niuguisheshen)' in the society and in play scripts. Since Chinese people no longer really believe in ghosts anymore, there should be no harm if you could put them on stage and let the people see them. Many young people do not know what are "ox-ghosts and snake gods" and we should not mind letting them watch them… Watching the plays does not mean believing in the ghosts. If we just go panic when ghosts and gods went on stage, then this shows a lack of confidence in the people and their ability to tell the good from the bad." Here Mao once again demonstrated his confidence in the domination of Marxist-materialist ideology in China, and Marxism would eventually come out as the rightful choice of the people.

Contrary to the state's effort to counter superstition under popular religion. Mao's attitude towards ghosts were more ambiguous than the Marxist materialist ideology. Instead of

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[59] People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), Feburary 2, 1957.

[60] Mao, Zedong, 1893-1976. *Mao Zedong Wen Yi Lun Ji*. Beijing :Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she, 2002. Print.

simply positioning ghosts as the opposite of modern science and materialist revolutionary ideology, Mao saw ghost stories, such as those about foxes turning into human from *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*, as reflections of social contradictions. However, Mao argued that the contradictions they reflected are not concrete and scientific, and thus are naïve, imaginary, and subjective.[61] Mao also noted that many of Pu Songling's ghost stories are against arranged marriage, corrupted government officials, and should be praised for their historical value. Since those advocacies cannot be voiced freely in the feudal society, he had to make ghosts and foxes to speak for him.[62]

Mao also commented on several tales of ghosts from *Stories from a Chinese Studio* as "reflecting the author's feudal ideology, but also his sympathy to the peasants" and "reflecting the strong will to liberate individuality. The relationship among people should be democratic and equal." On the one hand, Mao condemns the feudal and sometime oppressive nature of the ghost stories in the traditional literature and drama. On the other hand, he also saw traces of revolutionary potential in them that could be utilized for present day struggle.

However, the creation of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* was not meant to praise the revolutionary potential in those ghost stories, but to suppress them. The harsh international hostility and domestic disasters in the late 1950s had negated Mao's favor to the ghosts. The creations and adaptations of cultural productions about ghosts by Chinese artists and intellectuals became visibly problematic by 1959, as the image of the ghosts and the storylines pointed to human sufferings after 1949. This new situation called for the creation of *Stories*

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[61] Mao, Zedong, 1893-1976. *On Contradiction*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965. Print.

[62] Mao, Zedong. *Mao Zedong Wen Yi Lun Ji*

About Not Being Afraid of the Ghosts, in which the ghosts were only to be recognized, defeated, and reformed.

Fighting the ghosts: The Creation of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*

In a meeting with ambassadors from the Soviet Block countries in May 1959, Mao introduced to the ambassadors his plan to create *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*. Mao said to the ambassadors,

> there are some stories about not being afraid of ghosts in Chinese novels. I believe there are similar stories in your (countries') novels too. I want to compile these stories and novels about not being afraid of ghosts into a little book. Experience tells us that we cannot be afraid of ghosts. There will be more ghosts if we fear them, and there will not be any ghosts if we do not fear them… There are many ghosts in today's world. There are a big hordes of ghosts in the West, and they are imperialists. There is also a big horde of ghosts in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and they are the reactionary running dogs of the imperialists… The Tibetan problem is a big issue, and we need to make a big deal out of it, maybe half or one year… Our mission is to educate the proletarian people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and to make the Communist Parties in their countries not afraid of ghosts as well.[63]

Contrary to the previous practices of erasing the presence of ghosts in cultural productions, Mao wanted to make the ghosts central to these stories and show how they were defeated. Even though these ghosts were apparently metaphors for the perceived threats of

[63] Mao, Zedong, 1893-1976. *Mao Zedong Wen Ji.* 8 (vol.) People's Publishing House, 1999

socialism, throughout the 1960s and 1970s *Stories About Being Not Afraid of Ghosts* were still consistently discussed within the anti-superstitious framework. One can observe an expansion of the concept of superstition under the socialist regime. Superstition was no longer situated only against orthodoxy, science, and modernization, but against the fear and belief in the seemingly powerful and resilient enemies of socialism.

While the intellectuals and political players used ghosts to advance their political agendas, ghosts lost their previous meanings. Therefore, Mao and He had to actively take control of the meaning of the ghosts to support the Maoist. First of all, the reader had to be constantly reminded that the ghosts were metaphoric, and actual ghosts did not exist. Second, ghosts are uniformly evil and call for destruction. Third, only the right people can tell ghost stories and interpret them.

Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts is a collection of ghost stories from Jin to Qing dynasty's novels, although with a heavy emphasize on Chuanqi and Zhiguai novels from the Qing, which literally means "records of the strange" and "tales of the marvellous". While novels in the west convey a sense of fictionality, the boundary between history-writing and fiction is vague in Chuanqi and Zhiguai tales. Zhiguai tales usually assert that the work is recording events the author had witnessed or heard about, and its task is more concerned with transmitting than creating. Chuanqi, on the other hand focuses more on the characters instead of the events. While it is more in line with fictional invention, they are still not considered as intentional invention, even though it may be false recording.[64]

The tales were published in 1961 in their original classical Chinese language, but many

[64] Huntington, Rania. *Alien Kind : Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center : distributed by Harvard University Press, 2003. Print. 17.

were subjected to change and deletion. In the same year, Mao ordered the Foreign Language Press of China to translate the book into English, French, German, and Spanish. In addition to popular circulation, the book was initially distributed to cadres as study materials. In 1962, the Writer's Press translated and rewrote it into modern Chinese language. Various picture books based on *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* were also published late into 1970s and 80s.

In 1959, Mao had deemed the publication of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* as an important tool for ideological education and political struggle for the party cadres. Mao appointed He Qifang (何其芳), the head of the Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences at that time, to lead a team from the institute to work on the compiling of the stories for this book. Mao also had He write a preface that articulates the political intention of this book. However, after He finished the draft of the preface, Mao heavily revisedit, and wrote much of the most politically revealing contents in the preface himself. Before publication, Mao sent copies of the draft to Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Guo Moruo, and some other important political and literary figures, and instructed the newspapers such as *People's Daily* and *Red Flags* to publish the preface. Such meticulous attention to the publication of this book showed the centrality of this book to Mao's response to social and political crises around him.

The creation of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of the Ghosts* is a politically charged response to a deeply-felt crisis of Mao's leadership. Such anxiety was amply demonstrated in the preface of the book. Mao wrote through He Qifang in the preface,

> The Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences started compiling this book in the spring of 1959 when, all over the world, imperialism, the reactionaries in various countries and the revisionists organized a big anti-China chorus; by the summer of that year the compilation was basically completed. That was the time when revisionists

inside the country rose in response to international revisionism and launched their frenzied attack against the leadership of the party.[65]

Therefore, the stories of struggling against the ghosts was responding both international and domestic problems that became heightened since 1959. Chinese scholar Chen Jin (陈晋) notes that Mao had created the book in order to respond to the "eventful autumn" of the late 1950s. The ghosts in the stories thus had a double meaning of both international threats and domestic disorders.[66] The exchange of artillery fire over the islands between China and Taiwan had opened up the possibility of open armed conflict not just with Taiwan, but also with the Pacific presence of the US military. The Tibetan armed revolt in 1959 and the subsequent armed suppression had damaged China's relationship with India, which hosted the 14th Dalai Lama who had just gone into exile. The Chinese nuclear weapon research project came to a bottleneck in 1959 as the Soviet Union started to withdraw its support. Amid all these difficulties, Mao's project to create "*Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*" is similar to Sun Zhongshan's anti-superstition campaign of "psychological construction" that prepared people to the difficulties of revolution. However, Mao's "psychological construction" against ghosts was a more metaphorical one. Instead of promoting a materialist world view and banning ghost stories, Mao's message through the book is that even though there exists ghosts-like forces in the world, the socialist people should be courageous enough to struggle against them. As He wrote in the preface of the book:

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[65] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. 12-14

[66] Chen, Jin. *Mao Zedong Di Wen Hua Xing Ge*. Beijing :Zhongguo qing nian chu ban she : Xin hua shu dian jing xiao, 1991. Print.

> Many people still harbor superstitions; they have still not emancipated, or have not completely emancipated their minds. They do not understand that the apparent "power" and "strength" of imperialism and all reactionaries at certain times is, historically speaking, merely a transient phenomenon, a factor playing only a temporary role.

In this sense, Mao and He expanded the scope of anti-superstition. Instead of eliminating people's belief in ghosts, the book attempted to eliminate people's belief in "reactionary forces".

On the other hand, the ghosts in the stories also refer to domestic hardships and potential enemies. By 1959, it is certain that the Great Leap Forward was a failure which had catastrophic effect on Chinese rural population. The Hundred Flowers Movement unleashed serious criticism to the CCP and its policies, which resulted in Mao's increasing hostility towards the intellectuals. Mao therefore initiated the Anti-Rightist Movement that largely reversed its previous open-minded policies in the fields of cultural production. Some of the criticisms that were encouraged during the Hundred Flowers Movement were now labelled as "frenzied attacks against the leadership of the Party". Moreover, Mao saw the international and domestic crises as intimately connected with each other, as he articulated in the preface of the book that the domestic revisionists "rose in response to international revisionism and launched their frenzied attack against the leadership of the party."[67]

However, the authors were aware that talking about the ghosts could be risky and the meanings of the ghosts must be constantly controlled. The reader should not read the ghost stories as ghost stories, but to follow rules of interpretation. He and Mao needed to emphasize that ghosts do not exist in real world, and need to give political meaning to every ghost story. Once the control of meaning is lost, as later events show, anyone could interpret the stories, and

[67] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi*. 97.

the creators of the book could become the ghosts that need to be destroyed.

Contestations of the Meanings: Who the Ghosts Are

The ghosts in the stories from the collection amply reflected this intertwined picture of international and domestic reactionary forces in Mao's view. Just like the original authors of Ming and Qing Zhiguai tales who often asserts Confucius moral meanings into the story in order to justify their writings, Mao and He meticulously control the meanings by assigning political interpretations to each kind of ghosts. Despite their shared feature of being deceitful and preying on the weak minded, there are a variety of ghosts that refers to different forms of enemies and difficulties of the socialist state and people.

One of the most common forms of ghosts in the book is seductive and deceitful female ghosts that committed suicide by hanging themselves. In traditional Chinese literature, the spirits of these women who committed suicide usually cannot enter the process of reincarnation until they find a substitute to die in their places. Therefore, their ghosts wander in the night and seduce people to commit suicide. One of the most famous stories of this kind in this book is *The Hanged Ghosts* from *Short Sighted Stories*, a Qing Dynasty Zhiguai collection. A young scholar spent a night in a haunted house which no one dared to come near. In the middle of the night, he saw a beautiful woman with heavy makeup (which was of course a ghost). The scholar knew she was a ghost, but he was curious how the hanged ghost tricked people into hanging themselves. He pretended to be in agony, and the woman approached him with a bamboo circle, inside which were beautiful mountains and rivers, and demanded that he go inside the circle. The scholar first put in his hand and feet, but refused to put his neck in. He laughed at the ghost and said she was doing the evil deeds because of her resentment. The ghost disappeared forever, and the house

was no longer haunted.

The story is a very typical Qing dynasty Zhiguai tale. The man who dares to spend a night in a haunted house is a familiar trope since the Six Dynasties tales.[68] The female hanged ghosts luring others into suicide by taking seductive forms is also a common occurrence in Zhiguai tales. Usually, the ghost would attempt to persuade the person to put their necks into a circle, which then would turn out to be the loop of the hanging rope. However, in the context of 1959, the story became a clear indication of the threat of revisionism, which, unlike the direct force of western imperialism, was represented as deceitful, seductive, and in seemingly innocuous forms. The beautiful palaces and pavilions in the bamboo circle mirrored promises of prosperity of revisionism and capitalism, which must be recognized, refused, and destroyed by upright socialist men.

In another story, "The Carefree Gentleman", a Zhiguai tale that was selected from Yuan Mei's *What Confucius Does Not Speak of* (Zibuyu) from the Qing Dynasty.[69] The story starts by noting that a famous Song Dynasty scholar once said, the ghosts usually have three tricks: enchantment, obstruction, and intimidation. The author then recorded that his cousin, a free-spirited scholar was traveling through a village at dusk, as he saw a woman with clumsy makeup tampering with a rope. He picked up the rope and recognized that it is the hanging rope of a dead woman. Knowing that the ghost would be trying to find a substitute, he hid the rope in his cloth. The ghost then used the three tricks in order to get the rope back, first transforming into a beautiful woman, then trying to block his way, and eventually turned into a ghastly devil. The author's cousin did not yield to the ghosts. He told the hanged ghost that he recognized the three

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[68] Huntington, Rania. *Alien Kind : Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative.* 229.

[69] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi*. 63.

tricks, but was still not afraid. The ghost admitted that she hanged herself because of a conflict with her husband. The scholar educated her that she should not replicate her misfortune unto others. She begged the scholar to let her family find some holy monks to pray for her reincarnation. The scholar said he himself knows how to transcend her ghost into reincarnation, and then performed the spell on the ghost. The ghost thanked him and disappeared forever.[70]

The story is still describing a typical encounter of a female hanged ghost that was prevalent in Qing Dynasty's Zhiguai collections. The carefree gentleman reflects a prototypical scholar official with Daoist virtue and knowledge. However, unlike *The Hanged Ghost* from *Short Sighted Stories*, Yuan Mei's depiction of the hanged ghost is more humanized. Although the ghost is seeking a substitute and is still dangerous, she was described as foolish, instead of evil. Moreover, instead of been completely silent, Yuan Mei had given this female ghost a voice to express her misfortune and regret, and to express her desire to be freed from the form of a ghost. Although she was in the form of a ghost, her mind and action was not that different from a human. In 1959, however, Yuan Mei's hanged ghost story echoes Mao's policy of reform and reeducation of those that were deemed hostile to the socialist state and people. As in the preface of the book, Mao mentions a kind of ghost that is still half human, "if they are not completely reformed, they will become completely ghosts. While they are still half-human-half-ghost, their reactionary aspect will engage in sabotage just like other ghosts."[71]

The most direct reference to this kind of half ghost and half human is other third world countries, especially India. In multiple occasions, Mao had referred to Jawaharlal Nehru as a half-human-half-ghost. During the meeting with ambassadors from the Soviet Bloc, after

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid. 5.

introducing the ambassadors with his plan to create *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*, Mao spoke of Nehru as the centralist among the Indian bourgeois, and was therefore different from the completely reactionary Rightists. Mao went on saying, "What is Nehru? He is a half ghost and half human. He is not entirely a ghost, and we need to give a wash to his face."[72] In the mid-1950s, Mao was ambivalent to India's nationalist reform under Nehru, and his attitude towards Nehru turned particularly sour after Dalai Lama fled Lhasa for India in 1959. However, he still distinguishes India's policies from more direct forms of Western imperialism, and acknowledge its revolutionary potential and chances of redemption.

Moreover, the half-human-half ghost metaphor also applies to the lower class people who were oppressed but were also part of the oppressing regime. They not only need to be liberated, but also need to be reformed and reeducated. Another Yuan Mei's story included in *the Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghost* called "Breaking the Ghosts' Rules" exemplifies the oppressed but still feudal lower classes in socialist China.[73] The story records a young scholar named Li who lived by a river. One day he heard a ghost saying, "tomorrow there will be someone crossing the river. He will be my substitute." Li understood that this is a substitute-seeking ghost who would let someone else drown in his place, so the next day he managed to stop the person from crossing the river and turned him away. The ghost came again in the night and blamed the scholar for sabotaging his plan to find a substitute. Li asked the ghost, "why do ghosts like you need to find substitutes in order to enter the reincarnation." The ghost replied, "The underworld has always been like this and I too, do not understand why. In the human world if someone wants to become an official, he has to wait for a position to be emptied. I think this might be a similar

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[72] Mao, Zedong, 1893-1976. *Mao Zedong Wen Ji.* 8 (vol.)

[73] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi*. 78.

process." Li then educated the ghost by saying that the positions of officials are limited because they took the government's money and grain. This is natural and just. However, the living the dying of the humans is a different matter. The scholar says, "the humans in this world are procreating and perishing by themselves, and they eat what the produce. How is it possible that heaven has time to keep this useless record?" The ghost replied that the king of reincarnation is indeed keeping this record. Li then courageously claimed, "Tell the king of reincarnation what I said. If the king still insist that you need a substitute, you can come back and bring me as your substitute, so I can meet the king of reincarnation and curse him in front of him." The ghost was delighted. He left without ever coming back.[74]

Like Yuan Mei's tale of the hanged ghost, this story also took the form of Zhiguai which records extraordinary occurrences. The tale also employs the familiar story line of scholar seeing through the tricks of a ghost who was attempting to lure people into death. However, the author gave the ghost more humanistic features. The ghost was able to engage in a conversation with the scholar just like a human. He shares human sentiment and could be enlightened by human reasoning. He is also not a completely evil ghost as he seems to be forced into finding a substitute because of an unjust bureaucratic rule of the underworld. The rule of the incarnation serves as direct reference to the rule of selecting imperial officials. The story could easily be viewed as criticism to the imperial bureaucratic system, which echoes Mao's increasing dissatisfaction with the CCP bureaucrats at that time. Moreover, the story's extraordinary developments rendered it particularly useful in the PRC political environment. Unlike the previous stories about the hanged ghost, the emphasis of this story is not on the cunning tricks of the ghost and the scholar's courage and wisdom to see through them. Rather, Yuan Mei offered a

[74] Ibid.

story about an oppressed ghost who resembles the majority of peasants and lower class urban residents who were part of the feudal remnants, but also had the potential to be enlightened, liberated, and reformed. The real enemy or the "ghost" in this story that one should not fear is the king and the bureaucratic system of reincarnation. Since early 1960s, Mao launched frequent and harsh criticism to various branches of government bureaucracies in China, and saw them as the corrupted by revisionism, who late became the significant targets of the Cultural Revolution.

Despite Yuan Mei's story of humanized substitute-seeking ghost, the majority of the ghosts from the *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* do not have such sophisticated personalities. Most tales in the collection did not have explanations for why and how the ghost were threatening, instead, the ghost's mere presence indicates perversion and calls for exorcism. In most Ming and Qing literature and popular belief, the presence of a ghost, monster, demons, or other alien kinds signals the turmoil and downfall of family and dynasty.[75] Huntington had described the close association of fox and the threat of invasions from "the northern barbarian (胡)". Foxes usually took the form of foreign bodhisattvas or were purchased from a foreign land.[76] Foxes became symbols of foreign elements that infiltrate into the heart of human society. Such parallel is also apparent in 1959 when China, like in the imperial era, still faced foreign threats at its different borders. The possibility of an open arm conflict still loomed large. Instead of northern barbarians, western imperialism was a major threat for Mao in the 1950s, and many tales from Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts amply reflect such anxiety. These stories show that Mao had a vision of continuity of Chinese people's struggle with the foreign

[75] Huntington, Rania. *Alien Kind : Foxes and Late Imperial Chinese Narrative.*

[76] Ibid. 13.

perversions from the imperial times to the PRC era.

One of the most important stories of this kind in the collection is "Black Magic" from Pu Songling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*.[77] Pu records that in the reign of Chongzhen emperor of the Ming Dynasty, there was a man surnamed Yu who was brave and loved adventure. Yu was also strong and talented at martial arts. When he went to the capital to take civil examination, his servant fell gravely ill and he decided to consult a fortuneteller in the market about his servant's illness. Much to his surprise, before he asked, the fortuneteller knew he came for his servant's illness. However, the fortuneteller claimed that the servant would be fine, but Yu himself would be dead after three days unless Yu could pay the fortuneteller some fees in order to perform some magical arts to change his fate. But to Yu's way of thinking, no magical arts could change one's fate, so he just rose up and went back to his hostel.

Three days later during midnight, Yu saw a small human figure with a spear slipping into his room from the crack of the window. Once on the ground, the figure turned into man's size. Yu fought the figure with his sword, and eventually struck the figure at its heart. The figure turned back to the miniature size, and turned out to be a paper figure cut in the middle. Soon, another ogre like figure crept into the room from the window, Yu struck it fiercely before it reached the ground, and was able to cut it into pieces with his sword, and the figure turned out to be a clay image smashed into pieces. After a long time, Yu heard a huge and ghastly noise outside and the entire house was shaken by it. Yu decided to go out and fight to avoid being crushed by the crumbling house. A huge ogre-like figure with coal-black face and glittering yellow eyes was outside and shot arrows at Yu. After prolonged close combat, Yu defeated the ogre, and found out it was actually a life-size wooden figure. Yu understood that the

[77] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi*. 49.

fortunetellers sent these monsters in order to kill Yu so the fortuneteller's prediction could come true. The next day he went to the market to find the fortuneteller. The fortuneteller used the trick of the invisibility to hide from Yu. Following Yu's friend's advice, Yu sprinkled dog blood at the place where the fortuneteller was, and the latter was forced to manifest himself. His face looked exactly like the ogre he had fought the night before. Yu seized him and handed him to the local authority, which put the fortuneteller to death.[78]

The story assumes the familiar *Zhiguai* and *Chuanqi* style of storytelling, which emphasized both the strangeness of the supernatural and the marvelousness of the human. In the original story, Pu Songling included a commentary at the end, in which he admonishes the act of seeking fortunetellers and warns the readers of the danger of the fortunetellers who sacrifice other people's lives in order to demonstrate their magical arts. Commentaries like these are frequent in Qing dynasty *Zhiguai* tales. Leo Tak-hung Chan argues that while Qing Dynasty's longer novels were able to criticize traditional morality, Zhiguai tales usually had to lean towards traditional ethics by using commentaries in order to add moral meaning to the tales and justify *Zhiguai* as a genre.[79]

Comparedto the Yuan Mei's substitute-seeking ghosts, the fortuneteller in this story is not only completely evil, but also possesses real power to potentially kill the protagonist by force, instead of just using lure and deception like the hanged ghosts. This distinction was meaningful in the PRC political environment as it refers to the powerful threat of foreign imperialism. Unlike the domestic enemies that could be easily reformed and destroyed, the

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Chan, Tak-hung Leo, 1954-. *The Discourse on Foxes and Ghosts : Ji Yun and Eighteenth-Century Literati Storytelling*. Honolulu :University of Hawaii Press, 1998. Print. 19.

foreign enemies, like the fortuneteller in Pu's story, were formidable and aggressive. As He Qifang wrote in the preface of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* about "Black Magic",

> If Yu had not shown himself to be unafraid of magic powers, ghosts or monsters, and at the same time being very cautious and alert, and were fully prepared in terms of weapons and skills in martial arts, would he not be killed by the fortuneteller's monsters? Then how could Yu see through the black arts of the fortuneteller in the end? How could Yu give the fortuneteller the punishment he deserved… These stories reflect this truth: on the whole, ghosts are nothing to be afraid of; it is entirely possible for men to defeat and subdue them. But with regard to each specific ghost and the specific circumstances under which ghosts are handled, it is necessary for men to be prudent and resourceful before they can win the final victory.

This echoes Mao's famous pronouncement of "take the enemy lightly in the overall strategy of fighting, but take the enemy seriously in the technic of fighting" from "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War"[80], which was addressing the dire situation of facing KMT army's encirclement in 1936. Mao claimed that one of the most important features of the revolutionary war was that the enemies of the Communist forces were powerful and the Communist forces were weak. However, Mao argues that because China's unevenness between the urban and the rural, the Communist were able to win by leading a land revolution. This became a recurring rhetoric that persisted into Sino-Japanese War, the civil war, and PRC's participation in the Korean War. Facing powerful international threats in the late 1950s again brought back the anxiety of confronting a formidable enemy that appeared to be stronger than the CCP. Although

[80] Mao, Zedong, 1893-1976. *Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War*. Peking :Foreign Languages Press, 1954. Print.

the Chinese Volunteer Army was able to stage a decent fight with the United Nation forces led by the US, the possibility of armed conflict with the US opened up after exchange of artillery fire with KMT forces across the Taiwan straight. The fear and anxiety about the US military's presence in the Pacific and US nuclear power were frequently expressed by the state newspapers, which frequently condemned the increasing collaboration between the KMT forces and the US military and the power of US nuclear arsenal.

Tales like "Black Magic" in the *Stories About Not Being Afraid of the Ghosts* reflected this fear and Mao's desire to downplay it among the cadres and the broader public. The story thus expresses the similar claim as Mao's "Problems of China's Revolutionary War's Strategy". While it was essential to be not afraid of the ghosts and to take the ghosts lightly in the overall strategy and be fearless and confident like Yu from the story, it is also important to be well prepared in terms of weapons and skills and take the ghost seriously in terms of tactics. The implication of the story is that while one should not fear its foreign enemies, China also should not overlook the power and threat of imperialism, and should increase its military and overall strength in order to defend China from it.

Furthermore, despite taking the ghosts seriously and be well prepared in order to fight the ghosts, there are also stories in which one should mimic the ghosts' way and do what the ghosts do in order to defeat them. One of the most famous stories of this kind is "Song Dingbo Catches a Ghost" from *Tales of Strange Things*, which was written in the Wei-Ji Dynasty.[81] The story records that Song, a young man from Nanyang, encountered a ghost when he was walking at night. When questioned by the ghost, Song lied to the ghost and said he was a ghost as well. It turned out that they were both going to the same town, and the ghost suggested that they should

[81] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi*. 1.

carry each other in turn. When the ghost was carrying Song, the ghost asked him, "How heavy you are! Are you really a ghost?" Song replied that he was a ghost of a newly deceased man so he was still heavy. Song then asked the ghost, "As I am a new ghost, do you know what we ghosts have to fear most?" The ghost replied that they fear men's spittle the most." They proceeded together until they came to a stream. The ghost crossed the stream without any sound. Song, however, made much noise doing so. The ghost became suspicious and questioned Song again, to which Song replied that since he was a new ghost, he had not been accustomed to wading through water." When they reached the town, Song forcefully held the ghost on his shoulder. He spat on the ghost before he put the ghost down, and the ghost turned into a goat, and Song managed to sell the goat on the market for some money.[82]

Even though the ghost in this story did not exhibit malicious intention, he was assumed to be dangerous and should be evaded. However, instead of directly confronting or evading the ghost, Song cleverly disguised himself as a ghost as well. It is interesting to note that in this tale it is the human that was deceitful and cunning. During the compiling process of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*, Mao commented on "Song Dingbo Catches a Ghost",

> Despite taking the enemy lightly in strategy, we should also talk about taking the enemy seriously in tactic. For every particular ghost, one needs to analyze it in a particular way, one needs to think about tactics, and needs to take it seriously. Otherwise the ghost cannot be defeated. In "Song Dingbo Catches a Ghost", the ghost carried him across the stream and realized he was heavy. So he lied to the ghost and claimed that he is a new ghost. "New ghost is big and old ghost is small", so he should be heavy. He then learned

[82] Ibid.

about what the ghost feared from the ghost, so he used it to subdue the ghost.[83] While ghosts were usually depicted as deceitful, it is clear that deceitfulness and cunning is not only justified, but also required for human in order to defeat the ghost. The implication in the late 1950s and early 1960s context was that when treating the particular enemy of the international imperialism, one must sometime adopt the enemy's way, which includes the strengthening of military and readiness to enter war.

Such logic was more apparent in the tale "Chen Pengnian blows away the Hanged Ghost" from Yuan Mei's *What Confucius would not Discuss*.[84] The tale claims to record an unknown story about Chen Pengnian, a famous Qing official in the early eighteenth century. When Chen was still less famous to the public, one night he went to his countryman Li Fu's place to have a chat. Li was a financially-struggling scholar, and he asked Chen to wait in his home while he went out to sell his wife's hairpin for the money to buy some wine. While Chen was waiting for Li, he saw a tousled-haired woman dressed in blue. The woman opened the door, but shrank back at the sight of Chen. Thinking she might be a member of Li's family who would not come out in front of a stranger, Chen turned his seat away from her. The woman entered the yard and placed a rope at the doorstep. Chen went to the door and found the rope was foul-smelling, and had blood stain on it. Realizing that the woman was the ghost of a someone who hanged herself and was now back to find a substitute, Chen hid the rope in his boot.

The woman returned after a while and could not find the rope she had hidden. In anger, she confronted Chen and demanded the rope back. While Chen pretending to be oblivious, the hanged ghost opened her mouth and blew an icy gust of wind at Chen. Chen's hair stood on end

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[83] Ibid. 1-14.

[84] Ibid. 64.

and his teeth chattered, while the lamp turned pale and was on the point of going out. However, Chen thought to himself, "Even the ghost has breath, do I not have breath too?" So he took a deep breath and blew back, and wherever his breath touched the woman it made a hole on her body, piercing first her belly, then her breast, and it finally blew her away like thin smoke.

Li returned home and found his wife had hanged herself, but Chen was not worried because he had the hanged ghost's rope. Chen told Li what happened, and together they revived Li's wife. Li's wife said that she was frustrated at her husband because he took her hairpin to buy wine. A woman, who claimed herself to be a neighbor, appeared to her and said she could reach the land of Buddha if she went into a loop. However, the rope kept loosening up and the woman said she went away to find her own Buddha belt but never came back. While she was still in the dream, the men came to rescue her.[85]

Like the previous hanged ghosts in Yuan Mei's *What Confucius Would Not Discuss*, the ghost employs the familiar trick of disguising in order to talk people into hanging themselves. However, unlike other hanged ghosts who use lure and deceit, the hanged woman in this story was able to mount a formidable attack on the living men. Chen, on the other hand, learned from the ghost, adopted the ghost's way of fighting, and eventually managed to destroy the ghost. Mao wrote for the preface about this story, "They have breathe; do we not have breathe too?"[86] The ghost of the hanged woman thus represented the international imperialism, and the gust wind blew by her the threat of seemingly superior industrial and military prowess of the west, which in Mao's view, China could and should have the same. The late 1950s was an era of such imitation and catching up. The Great Leap Forward, with its aim as "Catching up with Britain and

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid. 5.

surpassing America", attempted to rapidly transform the rural agrarian labor power into industrial power and surpass the imperialists at their own game. Moreover, late 1950s was also the time when China ventures into the nuclear weapon research. From late 1950s, Chinese newspapers fiercely condemns the nuclear testing and deployment of the United States and France, and supported Japanese anti-nuclear movement at the time. However, with the help of Soviet experts and equipment, China established nuclear research bases in 1958. Despite the withdrawal of Soviet support, the research was able to yield a successful atomic explosion in 1964.

Despite domestic and international enemies, ghosts in the late 1950s were also associated with the Great Leap Forward. The sightings and discussions of ghosts were popular following the catastrophic famine that resulted from the Great Leap Forward. Erik Mueggler records that many rural communities characterized the period from 1958 to 1960 as "the age of wild ghosts", which captures and responds to the massive human casualty of the famine. Stories of ghost sightings and possessions accumulated into strategies for peasants to subvert state projects, to call for justice, and to create ways of mourning.[87] While *Story About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* is a state project, it also sought to address doubts and fears of the Great Leap Forward and the famine. The ghosts not only refer to domestic and international enemies, but also natural disasters. In the preface, Mao listed four major types of ghosts in real life: imperialism, revisionism, natural disasters, and unreformed landlords and bourgeois.[88] The collection included several ghost stories that deem nature as ghost.

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[87] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi*. 3.

[88] Mueggler, Erik. The Age of Wild Ghosts Memory, Violence, and Place in Southwest China. Berkeley :University of California Press, 2001. Print. 3.

One of the most famous one is "Gao Zhong Fights a Sea Monster" from *Miscellaneous Notes* by Niu Xiu from the Qing Dynasty.[89] The story records that in the autumn of twenty-two-year of Kang Xi's reign (1683), a monster was sighted along the coast line in the Wendeng County of Shan Dong Province. The monster stirred tremendous terror at local people, so they reported to the county government. Gao Zhong, a servant of the county magistrate, was a courageous man with great martial skill. He requested his magistrate to give him a sharp lance and a good horse so he could kill the sea monster. The magistrate granted his wish, and Gao rode alone to the coast with the lance in hand. In the night Gao reached beach, and saw a blue-faced ghost more than ten feet tall, with sharp horns and long teeth, hairy arms and a back covered with fish scale. The ghost was sitting on the beach eating and drinking, with five cooked chickens and ten jugs of wine. Gao stormed to the beach with his lance and the ghost plunged into the sea in panic. Gao sat down, and started eating the chicken and drinking the wine. The ghost came back with a sword and attacked Gao. After a long fight, Gao used the lance to pierce through the ghost's belly. The ghost fled but left the sword behind. The sword was engraved "The Swan-Feather Sword", which was later kept in the county armory. The sea monster was never sighted again.[90]

The book adopts the Chuanqi style of writing, which emphasize on recording the marvelous deeds of a person. The story opens with noting the specific time and location, and thus generates a sense of reality that was generally found in historical writings. It is worth noting that in that the word "monster (guai)" and "ghost (gui)" were used in an interchangeable way to describe the uncanny creature in the sea. In late imperial times, the sightings of sea monsters and

[89] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi.* 57.

[90] Ibid.

dragons along the coast were highly associated with political turmoil, epidemic, and natural disasters.[91] A brave magistrate servant's successful attempt to drive away the sea monster could be seen as appeasement of a disaster and a service to the common people. Nature itself was personified into a ghost or monster: ugly, violent, and bringing disasters upon the people. However, brave and strong men were also able to fight and defeat nature, and thus bring the disaster to an end. While the nature of a sea monster does not exactly fit the category of the ghost, which traditionally refers to the spirit of the dead that still lingers in the world of the living, the fact that this story is still included in *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghost* suggests that it was responding to the particular disaster that was happening in China in the late 1950s. Although the famine that followed the Great Leap Forward was largely the result of the implementation of state policies, the famine was officially framed as "three years of natural disasters", and thus evade the manmade factors. The story "Gao Zhong Fights a Sea Monster" illustrates that natural disasters, like class enemies and imperialism, could be defeated if one has sufficient courage and skill.

"Some Ghosts Are Harmless": *Li Huiniang* and the *Village of Three Households*

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* is not the only work that use ghosts to contend about current political issues. From 1959, topics about ghosts and contemporary politics appear frequently on Chinese major newspapers. Similar to *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*, many of them also used ghosts as a metaphor of various enemies of the socialist system. However, there are also cultural productions that are

[91] Brook, Timothy. *Troubled Empire China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*. Cambridge :Harvard University Press, 2010. Print.

radically different from *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*. There existed competing discourses of ghosts in cultural and artistic productions. The Hundred Flowers Movement allowed the intellectuals and artists to engage in reconfigurations of classical ghost stories that contained their own political agendas and views on the ongoing revolutionary struggles. Most prominently, the revolutionary intellectual and artist Meng Chao's play *Li Huiniang*, an adaptation of a avenging female ghost story from *Story of Red Plums* (红梅记), created heated political debates among party officials and revolutionary artists. The representation of the ghost in *Li Huiniang* severely challenged the image of uniformly evil and harmful ghost in *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghost*.

The original *Story of Red Plums* was a Chuanqi novel created by the Ming Dyansty novelist Zhou Chaojun. The story of Li Huiniang was set in the late Song Dynasty that was confronted by the Northern Jin's invasion. Li Huiniang and his father fled their hometown to evade the war and eventually reached Hangzhou, one of the traditional literary centers of China. The perverted prime minister Jia Sidao saw Li and was attracted by her beauty, so he killed Li's father and forced her to be his concubine. Two months later, the prime minister Jia took Li to the Western Lake, where Li met the handsome young scholar Pei Shun. Li praised Pei for his beautiful outlook, which made Jia extremely jealous. Enraged, Jia killed Li with his sword after they returned home, and confined Pei in his library. However, Li's ghost did not go away because of the tremendous injustice she suffered. The judge of the underworld was moved by her and gave her a fantastic fan that would enable her to travel back to the living world. Li's ghost

managed to travel back and rescued Pei, and cursed Jia for the crimes he committed.[92]

Unlike the ghosts from *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*, which are uniformly evil and malicious, the ghost of Li Huiniang stands for the justice and moral retribution. While Yuan Mei's hanged ghosts passively receive liberation and enlightenment from wise scholars, Li Huiniang was able to act upon the world and bring justice herself. Although Li Huiniang was a weak woman when alive, she became invincible after death.

According to Maggie Greene, Meng Chao's version of Li Huiniang was using the drama adaptation to both criticize party policy of the Great Leap Forward and participating in a bigger movement of rescuing and renovating traditional Chinese dramas.[93] Meng's adaptation focuses more on the prime minister's lightheartedness in front of the Mongol invasion. In Meng's version, at Jia's birthday party, Pei Yu and other young students harshly criticized the prime minister for his lack of concern for the national crises. Moreover, the new Li Huiniang's admiration for the young scholar Pei was not just due to his handsome look, as in the original story, but stemmed from the young scholar's courage to struggle with the corrupted prime minister who endangered the nation and people in front of a Mongolian invasion. As the line of Li Huiniang goes, "My worry is for the bitterness of refugees of disasters, my worry is for the resentment of those forced to wander... Farmland lays fallow, for the common people are injured."[94] These revisions to the original work forcefully echoes the incompetence of the government and the suffering of China's rural population. Towards the end, when Meng Chao's

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[92] Greene, Maggie. "'A Ghostly Bodhisattva and the Price of Vengeance: Meng Chao, "li Huiniang', and the Politics of Drama, 1959-1979"

[93] Ibid. 164

[94] ibid p167

Li Huiniang returns as a ghost, she offers herself up to relieve the suffering of the people: "I want to be as Guanyin, a ghost bodhisattva, relieving suffering and assuaging difficulty. For hurting people, there is you (Jia Sidao) – for saving people, look at me!"[95] Her revenge was therefore elevated to the consciousness of saving the country and people from a national disaster.

Moreover, *Li Huiniang* not only hinted contemporary disasters and the incompetence of the government in the late 1950s, but also gained political consciousness that conform to the image of socialist new women. As Tina Mai Chen argues in her analysis of female icons in 1950s China, the socialist gender discourse encouraged women to demand change themselves. Women's agency was central to historical progress as women were taught to assert politically themselves against the various feudal oppressions and transcend their individual actions with consciousness in nationalism and socialism.[96] Meng Chao's representation of Li Huiniang represents the female agency in the new socialist order, as the ghost of Li Huiniang was able to actively seek revenge against the feudal authority and extended her own sorrow to the suffering of the people.

The righteous, complex, and powerful ghost in *Li Huiniang* serves as a stark contrast to the passive and voiceless ghosts in *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*. While the original Zhiguai and Chuanqi stories may depict ghost characters that are complex and positive, capable of human feelings and could act upon the world, such characters were muted and censored in

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[95] ibid p186

[96] Joan Judge. "Portraits of Republican Ladies: Materiality and Representation in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Photographs." In *Visualising China. Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, eds. Christian Henriot and Yeh Wen- hsin, 131–70. Leiden: Brill 2012.

Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts. One of the most famous stories in the collection is from Qingfeng, which Mao cited frequently during various political meetings in late 1950s. Qingfeng was one of the most recognized vixen stories *from Stories from a Chinese Studio*.

The original *Qingfeng* tells the love story between a young patriarch scholar and a beautiful vixen in human form. The young scholar Geng Qubing encountered a fox family in a haunted and abandoned estate that belongs to Geng's family. After revealing his identity, the elder fox invited Geng to a drink and Geng was able to impress the fox family with his knowledge. As Geng grew drunk, he boldly flirted with the beautiful young vixen daughter Qingfeng. Alerted, the fox family abruptly retreated. The next night Geng waited in the same room hoping to meet Qingfeng again. This time, a ghost with matted hair appeared. "Its face was as black as charcoal, and it stared at him with bulging eyes." Undeterred, Geng laughed and smeared his own face with black ink and stared back at the ghosts. Ashamed, the ghost left. The story abruptly ends here in *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*, and renders the story illogical and confusing.

The original plot continues to explain that the ghost was actually Qingfeng's father trying to frighten away Geng. Even though Qingfeng revealed that she shared the romantic feeling with Geng, the fox family moved out from the estate in order to avoid him, and the estate was no longer haunted. One year later when Geng was sweeping the family tomb, the fox family in their fox forms were pursued by a dog, and Geng was able to save Qingfeng. Overjoyed, Qingfeng decided to stay with Geng against the fox family's will, since her fox parents must had assumed she was killed by the dog. They were able to live happily and even rescued and reunited with the fox family years later[97].

[97] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi.* 51.

Similar to the ghost of Li Huiniang, the story of Qingfeng could be seen as resistance and disruption to feudal order in several ways. Qingfeng successfully challenged her patriarchal family structure and chose to marry based on her own preference. Qingfeng's later successful attempt to rescue her family also defied the traditional inner and outer division of gender. Like Li Huiniang, the Qingfeng could also be viewed as a resisting female. By censoring the later development of *Qing Feng*, Mao and He Qifang reduced the female protagonist to a voiceless, obedient, and vulnerable daughter who is merely a subject of male desire and not capable of its own liberation. The edited version also changed the the name of the story from "Qingfeng", the name of the vixen, to "Geng Qubing", the name of the scholar. By doing so, the new version completely shifted the emphasize from the uncanny to the man. Mao's interpretation of the story focuses exclusively on the courageous confrontation between two males, the young scholar and Qingfeng's father. While Li Huiniang is able to take revenge herself and rescue the male scholar, in the case of the revised "Qingfeng", the patriarchal structure that confines her could only be challenged by a male figure on behalf of the her.

The play Li Huiniang thus represented a way to use the ghost to talk about the present that is in direct opposition to *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*. Previous adaptations of *Stories Of the Red Plumb* after 1949 had erased the plot of Li Huiniang's death, and thus made Li Huiniang a revenging living person in order to avoid "superstitious elements".[98] While the humans in the play is corrupted and weak, the ghost is powerful and represents the just struggle against the feudal authority. While the Hundred Flowers Movement lifted bans on cultural creations about ghosts and gods, the presentation of Li Huiniang as a righteous and powerful

[98] People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), December 28, 1961.

ghost was still shocking in 1961. Making the ghost a central and positive character challenged the common representation of ghost as bad and evil. Whether it is permissible for a ghost be not evil and harmful became a question that triggered major ideological debate among Chinese intellectuals and Party officials.

In defense of *Li Huiniang* in the following heated debate about the play, Liao Mosha, the head of United Front Work Department at that time, published an article on *Beijing Evening News* shortly after the play was staged. Liao argued that even though the play *Li Huiniang* was about ghosts, it should not be seen as feudal remnants because it reflected feudal oppression to women, and developed the original work into a ghost's struggle against oppression which ended victoriously. Liao writes, "Li Huiniang was originally a human, and became a vengeful ghost after death. She is surely part of the social struggle. We should not simply see Li Huiniang's ghost on the stage as ghost, but also as an image of a resisting woman that would not yield even until death... what we want to ask, is not whether she is a ghost, but who does she represent, and who does she resist."[99] In the end, Liao invites the readers and audience to ask the question, "whether she is a good ghost or a bad ghost?" The idea that there exist good ghosts and that people need to ask whether the ghost is good or bad posed challenge to the politics of ghosts in 1961, in which all ghosts were assumed to be bad, even though they did not manifest apparent threats and danger.

Besides cultural productions that feature ghosts that were righteous and invincible like *Li Huiniang*, there also existed people who questioned the fearlessness of those who claim to be not afraid of ghosts. Later in 1961, as part of the later famous collection of *Miscellaneous Writings*

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[99] Greene, Maggie. "'A Ghostly Bodhisattva and the Price of Vengeance: Meng Chao, "li Huiniang', and the Politics of Drama, 1959-1979"

of Village of Three Households[100] that was severely criticized during Cultural Revolution, Liao published an article named "Gentle Mocking of Those Who Are Afraid of Ghosts", which directly responded *Stories About Being Afraid of Ghost*. Liao commented on the tale *Zhang Xiang and Wang Fu*, which was selected by the *Stories About Being Afraid of Ghost*, and warns that those who claimed to be not afraid of ghosts may not really be so fearless.

The tale records Zhang Xiang and Wang Fu from the Jia Qing reign of the Ming Dynasty that both claimed that they were not afraid of ghosts. One day, Wang made a bet with Zhang, and dared Zhang to remove the corpse of a newly dead person from his coffin in the night. Wang agreed and said he would prepare a jug of wine if Zhang really did that. After sunset, Zhang went to the graveyard but was surprised to discover that the coffin was already opened. Suddenly a pair of hands reached out from the coffin and grabbed Zhang by his neck. Zhang was scared and prayed to the corpse, "Please come out for a moment. I will bury you tomorrow after I have won the bet." However, the hands only grabbed tighter as he spoke and Zhang began to scream and eventually fatigued. Later on, it was discovered that it was actually Wang that was hidden in the coffin in order to scare Zhang.[101]

Liao writes that although both Wang and Zhang claimed to be not afraid of ghosts, Zhang actually feared ghosts unto death. Moreover, although he feared the ghost so much, he was still willing to open the coffin and remove the corpse because he wanted to win the bet of Wang's wine. However, Zhang wanted the wine so much that he even forgot how coward he was. Therefore, a person like Zhang lacked comprehensive thinking and was too enchanted by wine

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[100] Wu, Han, 1909-1969. *San Jia Cun Zha Ji*. Beijing :Ren min wen xue chu ban she : Xin hua shu dian Beijing fa xing suo fa xing, 1979. Print.

[101] Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. *Bu Pa Gui De Gu Shi.* 49.

and betting. Liao then concludes

> In my opinion, there should be a book called "Stories About Being Afraid of Ghosts", which select the stories of those who claim to be not afraid of ghost but in reality feared them unto death. The book should record their stories, so the people would know how ridiculous they are.[102]

Like the title suggested, Liao seems to write the "Gentle Mocking of Those Who Are Afraid of Ghosts" in a lighthearted way and should not be taken seriously. However, in the early 1960 context, Liao's work could be viewed as a serious challenge to Mao's "Strategy of Fighting Ghosts" as reflected in *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*. Liao's article at least suggests that those who claim to be afraid of ghosts may not really be so fearless. In 1961, it was Mao who were claiming to be not afraid of ghosts. Liao could thus be seen as implicitly criticizing the unrealistic resolution of the Great Leap Forward and China's stance against the threat of US imperialism.

Whether Meng Chao's "Li Huiniang" and Liao's "Gentle Mocking of Those Who Are Afraid of Ghosts" were actually undermining Mao's resolution to be not afraid of class enemies, natural disasters, and imperialism is unclear, but the followers of Mao did not hesitate to interpret them so. Beginning in May 1966, Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan published relentless attacks on Meng Chao and "Village of Three Households", the nickname of a group of three authors who supported Meng's Li Huiniang and published *Miscellaneous Writings of Village of Three Households* which includes "Gentle Mocking of Those Who Are Afraid of Ghosts". On May 11th 1966, the front page of *People's Daily* published Yao's article "On the 'Village of

[102] Ibid. 57

Three Households'", which accused Liao and the other two authors of "twisting the purpose of the Hundred Flowers Movement in an attempt to install a capitalist restoration". Yao writes,

> The latter ("Gentle Mocking of Those Who Are Afraid of Ghosts") uses vile language to slander Maoist thought and revolutionary Marxist-Leninists as "big words and small deeds", "those who claim to be not afraid of ghost but feared them unto death in reality", and want the people to know "how ridiculous they are." … Liao Mosha wanted to compile a "Stories About Being Afraid of Ghosts". Is he not cooperating with the reactionaries and revisionists home and abroad and vilifying the Chinese people, the Party, and the Maoist revolutionaries who are not afraid of ghosts?[103]

It is clear from Yao's accusation that *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* represented a logic of revolution and struggle, and it was threatened by intellectuals who question it. Yao further warns that if people follow the Liao's logic China would not have achieved many successes, such as oil drilling and atomic weapon research. Yao thus suggests that these successes were the result of not being afraid of ghosts. Yao concluded his attack by citing a poem that Mao wrote: "The golden monkey wields his heavy cudgel, and cleared all the dust in the clean sky."[104]

The golden monkey refers to Sun Wukong, the immortal monkey from *A Journey to the West* that sweeps away all the demons, monsters, and ghosts on their pilgrimage journey. Mao frequently praised and cited the Monkey King's courage to challenge authority and to fight against the demons and ghosts. Here, the immortal monkey became a symbol of fighting against

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[103] Yao, Wenyuan. *Ping "San Jia Cun" -- Yan Shan Ye Hua, San Jia Cun Zha Ji De Fan Dong Ben Zhi*. Shanghai :Shanghai ren min chu ban she, 1966. Print.

[104] Ibid.

all enemies that were labeled as ghosts. “The glorious Maoist thought”, Yao wrote, “will shine into every dark corner and reveal all the demons and ghosts.” [105]

Mao also personally weighed into the attack. In May 1966, Mao stated “We still have prolonged struggle against capitalist and bourgeois thought. Those who do not understand this situation and are giving up the struggle are wrong. All wrong ideas, poisonous weeds, and ox ghosts and snake gods should be criticized. They definitely should not be allowed to freely proliferate.”[106]

Mao suggests that there was only one way to talk about ghosts. Ghost dramas and other cultural productions about ghosts were prohibited in 1963. Both *Li Huiniang* and *Miscellaneous Writings of Village of Three Households* became targets of relentless political struggle that marked the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. They were both labeled as “poisonous weed” that should be eliminated. *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* reflects the only legitimate way of talking about ghosts. The ghosts were to be recognized, destroyed, reeducated, and reformed. This politics of ghosts provided an important ideological basis for the Cultural Revolution and became a frequent phrase to label political enemies. Countless intellectuals and government officials who were marked as “ox ghosts and snake gods” were severely struggled, marking the height of Mao’s “strategy of fighting the ghosts”.

The Post-Mao Ghosts

[105] Ibid.

[106] Mao, Zedong, 1893-1976. *Mao Zedong Wen Ji.* 8 (vol.)

The publications of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* and its rhetoric of fighting against the ghosts had persisted beyond the Cultural Revolution, but with a very difference face. Once the vanguards of Mao's "fight-ghost strategy", Yao Wenyuan and Jiangqing became the targets of its rhetoric. Since mid 1970s, various newer versions of picture book (连环画) of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* were published. These newer versions all adopted a shorter version of preface that was based on the original preface written by He Qifang and Mao. The preface starts with Mao's introduction that there are no ghosts such as are described in the stories, but there are actually many things in this world which are like ghosts. However, instead of "revisionism, serious natural calamities, and certain not-yet-reformed landlord and bourgeois class", the examples of ghosts in the newer versions became the Gang of Four. In May 1978, *The People's Liberation Army Daily* published several stories from the book, and the editor prefaced the stories by emphasizing the importance of thoroughly criticizing the Gang of Four. The editor writes,

> The reason we publish some tales from *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* is… to inspire people to struggle against the "ghost people and ghost things" in real life. Right now, we especially need to see through and criticize the Gang of Four, and achieve total victory in this. The Gang of Four are ghosts and demons. They were ugly, evil, violent, and good at deceiving and confusing people. The extent of their weirdness and deceitfulness surpass all the ghosts from the tales.[107]

[107] People's Liberation Army Daily, May 5, 1978.

Similarly, in the remaining years of 1970s after Mao's death, almost all mentioning of the book and even the phrase "not being afraid of ghosts" in *People's Daily* are associated with the downfall of Gang of Four.

As the post-Mao regime placed its emphasize on the power of science and technology, instead of class struggle and political consciousness, it used the anti-superstitious rhetoric to relinquish its old enemies. In 1978, the *Chinese Youth*, the major journal of the Communist Youth League, published an article called "Destroy Superstition and Grasp the Science", which refers to the Cultural Revolution as the "modern superstition". The author writes,

> the Mao's little red book took the place of praying, and waving one's arms thrice took the place of crossing… while many other countries are modernizing by science and technology in 1960s and 70s, Lin Biao and the Gang of Four launched a modernized superstition for ten years in our country.

Instead of attacking popular religion, the Cultural Revolution, the idol of Mao, and the Gang of Four became the superstition of the new age.

Moreover, the book was also used to justify the presence of ghosts in traditional cultural productions. Ironically, the *People's Daily* published an article in June 1979 that cited *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* to promote the return of Meng Chao's *Li Huiniang* to the stage and the practice of using ghosts to talk about politics of the living.[108] *Stories About Not Being*

[108] People's Daily (Renmin Ribao), June 3, 1979.

Afraid of Ghosts also became a venue of celebrating traditional cultural productions. The deleted stories of "Qing Feng" made a comeback in several versions of picture books. Like the original work, the picture books shifted the focus back to the romance between the vixen and the scholar. Viewed in this light, *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* became a collection that celebrates traditional Zhiguai and Chuanqi literature.

Conclusion

In 1999, the Institute of Literature of the Chinese Academy of Sciences compiled a book named *Stories About Not Believing in Gods*. The authors wanted the book to be a continuation of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*. The book adopted similar format to *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts*, and even adopted the same cover design. The compilation of the stories aimed to create an image of Chinese culture that is atheist and conforms to the Marxist materialist world view. For China, the late 1990s was a time of revived popular religion, such as the belief and practice in various Qi Gong and Feng Shui that became increasingly threatening in the eyes of the government. Under this circumstance, *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* was used as a weapon against superstition that is reminiscent to the anti-superstitious movements from late Qing to early PRC era.

As an important part of Mao's "strategy of fighting the ghosts", *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* sought to respond to the international and domestic political crises of the 1950s. Mao employs the ghosts to label the perceived enemies and construct an image socialist state and people that is fearless and upright. While its creation temporally coincided with other cultural creations about the ghosts such as Meng Chao's *Li Huiniang*, it provided language and ideology that were based on traditional Chinese literature for the Cultural Revolution. In the context of

Hundred Flowers Movement, *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* could be viewed as another cultural production about ghosts that echoes the sprit of free expression and creation of the time. However, while its creation temporally coincided with other cultural creations about the ghosts such as Meng Chao's *Li Huiniang*, it provided language and ideology to the denunciation of other cultural productions about ghosts that marked the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

Chapter 3: Confronting the Past: Rewriting Chinese History through "Confucian-Legalist Conflicts", 1973-1976

In 1973, Yang Rongguo, the head of the Philosophy Department at Sun Yat-sen University, was suffering from disease and starvation in the "May Seventh Cadre School". The "Cadre School" was a nation-wide program designed by Mao to reform intellectuals in China through harsh physical labor and ideological lessons. Like countless other intellectuals and veteran party cadres, the Red Guards viewed Yang a reactionary authority. As a result, Yang suffered public humiliation and beatings and his home was searched. His wife, Chen Huimin, committed suicide because of these persecutions.[109] However, Yang was suddenly brought back to his job at the university and became a central figure of Mao's new political movement: the Criticize Lin Biao and Criticize Confucius Campaign, which was a nation-wide program to condemn the disgraced vice chairman of China together with the sage philosopher from the State of Lu during the Spring and Autumn Period.

In English language scholarship, Wang Gungwu, in 1975, argued that the Criticize Lin Biao and Criticize Confucius Campaign signaled a further break away of the Chinese communist revolution from the orthodox Marxist tradition. Instead of presenting the Chinese revolution against the background of the recent semi-colonial and semi-feudal Chinese past and the global Marxist movement, the Criticize Lin Biao and Criticize Confucius Movement situates China in

[109] Xu, Qingquan. "Yang Rongguo Pi Lin Pi Kong Xunhui Yanjing" *Huyaobang Shiliao Xinxiwang.* Accessed 4 May 2020.

its own history. Chinese history from the distant past again became relevant and central to the development of Mao's revolution in 1970s.[110]

Confucius, as a highly symbolic figure of China's past, had been a target of criticism and attack since the May Fourth Movement. One can argue that the rise of China's left and later the communist movement was largely based on an anti-Confucius agenda. From Lu Xun's Madman's Diary that was published in 1918 to the Red Guards' destruction of the largest Confucius temple in Qu Fu in 1966, Confucianism was the enemy of the modernizers and revolutionaries for more than half a century. However, the PLPK campaign is remarkable because instead of only attacking Confucian philosophy, the movement upheld Legalism, a school of philosophy from Pre-Qin and Qin era that emphasized law, order, and control, as an alternative ideology in traditional China that was scientific and revolutionary. During the movement, Marxist scholars like Yang Rongguo created a series of histographies that were categorized as "Confucian-Legalist Conflicts (Ru Fa Douzheng)", which retold Chinese history since the Pre-Qin era as a continuous struggle between Confucianism and Legalism. Confucianism thus represented the oppression and the restoration of the past while Legalism signaled scientific governance and progress into the future.

The Danger of Restoration and Intellectual Roots of Confucian-Legalist Historiography

In 1946, Yang Rongguo published *The Thought of Confucianism and Moism*,[111] which later became the ideological blueprint for the PLPK's attack on Confucianism. The book narrated Confucius' life and thought and portrayed him as a disgraced opportunist aristocrat seeking

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[110] Wang Gungwu. "Juxtaposing Past and Present in China Today". *The China Quarterly*. No. 61, March 1975. 1-24

[111] Yang, Rongguo. *Kong Mo de Sixiang*. 孔墨的思想. Shenghuoshudian, 1946.

chances to influence leaders during the Spring and Autumn to restore the rules and rituals of aristocracy. Yang's criticism of Confucius was mainly focused on three aspects. First, Yang's account amount to a personal attack on Confucius that dethrones Confucius as a philosophical sage to a mediocre and vain political opportunist. Confucius, according to Yang, was only a disgraced noble person who attempted to restore his wealth and position through political and intellectual influence. Secondly, Yang emphasized the reactionary nature of the Confucian ideology. Such as the belief in fate of heaven, the denial of free will, and the reinforcement of social hierarchies. Yang argued that "kindness" (*ren*) as the central idea of Confucianism is unevenly applied to different classes of people. Instead of being a universally applicable principle, the Confucian quality of kindness could only be found in "superior person" (*junzi*) and is fundamentally lacking in "petty person" (*xiaoren*). Citing Confucius, Yang argued that the categories of "superior person" and "petty person" are exclusively decided by class status and, instead of individual disposition. This was evident from Confucius's writings.

> The importance of kindness to commoners is like fire and water. I have seen those who strive and die for fire and water, but not those who strive and die for kindness.[112]

Yang argues that Confucius's words about the "superior person" and "petty person" may seem tautological. Using "kindness" as the defining feature of "superior person" and exclude commoners from such quality, the Confucian ideal only existed in the ruling class. Yang further summarized several major traits of Confucian philosophy: the obsession with the past, the belief in hierarchy, and the despise on the morality and intellect of the lower class.[113]

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

In the 1930s context, Yang's criticism of Confucianism did not offer any new theoretical insights. It had been widely acknowledged the Confucian philosophy originated from the advice to rulers, and intellectuals in the Republican era of various ideological backgrounds, such as Zhang Taiyan, Hu Shi, had frequently wrote about their grievances against the elite nature and the dominant status of Confucianism in Chinese History. Instead, the significance of Yang's work lies in its popularization of philosophical debate that was previously only accessible only to an active but small intellectual circle. Yang's book, written in simple Chinese, were aimed for a broader readership.

The second part of Yang's analysis is a praise for Mozi, who was also from the state of Lu during the Spring and Autumn period and was born nine years after Confucius' death. Using records of Mozi's life and his writings, Yang argues that Mozi's philosophy embodied a scientific and egalitarian worldview that was ahead of his time. Mozi refused to adhere to a pre-existing ideology and insists that philosophical matters should reach to conclusions only through observations and experiments. For Yang, this epistemological attitude of Mozi was causally connected with his class origin of a former slave. As a member of the masses, Mozi was depicted as a renaissance man who mastered both philosophical deliberation and practical skills such as engineering and crafting. Yang further praised Mozi on the basis of pragmatic scientism and the philosophy of peace and egalitarianism.[114]

Yang's theoretical fixation with Mozi was not unique either. Zhang Taiyan had been the staunchest and prominent advocate of Mozi's philosophy in modern China. Zhang connected Mozi's idea of "impartial love" with Zhuangzi's the equality of all things and argued for a radical egalitarianism that could constitute the ethos for the republican revolution that he

[114] Ibid.

envisioned. However, unlike previous intellectuals who theorized the connection between Mozi and the revolutions in the 20th century, Yang popularized and "detheorized" Confucius and Mozi into simple anecdotes and rhetoric about class origin and political behaviors, which were accessible to the readers who were mostly soldiers and peasants in Yan-an.

The advent of the Confucian-Legalist struggle histography not only involves the retelling of Chinese history, but also the construction of a Legalist tradition that radically expands from its previous scholarly boundary. While the total wars pitted each state against each other in a struggle for survival, the wars had entered a stalemate that allowed each state the time and energy to engage in political experiments. What were later known as Legalist philosophies mainly shared the tendency to suppress the aristocratic lineages in politics and commercial influence in economics in favor of a strong and effective bureaucracy that operates under a relatively universal penal code and focuses on the development of military strength.[115] The Legalist approach inevitably contradicted the Confucian philosophy that promoted a political structure with aristocratic order. The Legalist vision of the aggressive ruler with centralized power also clashed with the Confucian and Daoist political ideal of minimalist state intervention.

While Legalism emphasizes the central role of law, the Legalist vision of law is radically different from the modern concept of rule of law. According to Dingxin Zhao's analysis of the Shangyang, one of the most important Legalist philosophers who was credited with Qin's success, the Legalist law consisted primarily of penal codes and a bureaucratic government. The penal codes were designed for regulating the population by rewarding behaviors that were good for the king and the state, such as increased production and valor in war, and punishing behaviors

[115] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and Their Art of Ruling*. Routledge, 1996.

that were negative for the king and the state, such as excessive commerce and disloyalty.[116] Furthermore, while the Legalist laws applied to aristocrats and commoners alike, the king was exempt from it.[117] Instead of a social contract as in the modern Western vision of law, the Legalist law served as a model and tool for the king to forge effective government to maintain loyalty, forge effective bureaucracy, and strengthen military might.

However, the boundaries of Legalist category remained vague in Chinese intellectual history before the creation of Confucian-Legalist Conflict historiography. Hu Shi, in his *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*, doubted the authenticity of most Legalist philosophers' writings during the Spring and Autumn and Waring States periods and argued that Legalism as a philosophy was largely a construction from Han Dynasty and most important Legalist philosophical writings, such as those of Han Fei, were written in later dynasties with political agendas.[118] Moreover, the consensus of the late Qing and Republican era Chinese philosophers, such as Hu Shi and Feng Youlan, was that Legalism did not exist as a school of philosophy independent from Confucianism. Hu Shi argued, despite their differences, the line between Legalism, Confucianism, and Daoism was blurry. In particular, the Legalist emphasis on non-action and the rectification of names were directly derived from Confucian and Daoist doctrines. However, Hu Shi did acknowledge the egalitarian, subjectivist, and utilitarian aspects of Legalism that depart from Confucian principles. Hu Shi argued that while the Confucian

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[116] Zhao, Dingxing. The Confucian-legalist state: a new theory of Chinese history. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2015

[117] Ibid. 185

[118] Hu, Shi. *Zhongguo Zhexueshi Dagang*. 中国哲学史大纲. Shangwu Yinshiguan. 2011.

rituals apply only to superior men, the legalist law applies to all subjects, which is a form of egalitarian philosophy.[119]

Guo Moruo, Project 571, and the Beginning of Confucian-Legalist Historiography

In July 1973, Mao had expressed his growing interests in Legalism as a progressive historical force in Chinese history through a series of literary creations and conversations with notable figures in the Cultural Revolution Small Group. Through different venues, Mao voiced his discontent with Guo Moruo's book *Ten Criticisms*, which was published back in 1945, and articulated his defense of Qin-style centralized politics. In August, Mao wrote a poem titled "After Reading 'On Feudalism'; To Old Guo", in which he wrote,

> I ask you not to criticize The First Emperor of Qin too much, The project of burning the books and killing the scholars should still be discussed.
>
> The First Dragon had died, but its spirit exists, Confucianism has high reputation but is indeed hollow like empty gran and bran.
>
> Qin's political rules had been followed for hundreds of generations, *Ten Criticisms* is not a good work.
>
> Read carefully on Feudalism from Tang, but do not return to the era of King Wen of Zhou from Liu Zongyuan's work.[120]

Guo had renounced his position on Confucianism and Legalism expressed in *Ten Criticisms* multiple times at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, both publicly and personally to Mao. Given the political environment of the Cultural Revolution, Mao's rebuke of

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Mao, Zedong. *Mao Zedong Shizhuan*, 毛泽东诗传 edited by Weixiong Hu. Beijing: Zhongyangdangxiao chubanshe. 2014

Ten Criticisms in 1973 was therefore a deliberate measure to push for another ideological movement. Mao's defense and praise for the First Emperor was not new and he had clashed with Guo on the assessment of the First Emperor before. Most notably, during the Eighth National Congress, while echoing Chen Boda's "Intellectual Great Leap", Mao praised The First Emperor as a ruler who exemplified the ideal of the "Intellectual Great Leap" by defying established intellectual authorities and had the determination to use relentless force to suppress reactionary intellectual forces. When Lin Biao briefly countered Mao's point by mentioning the First Emperor's infamous killings of the scholars, Mao replied that the CCP should only surpass The First Emperor in his violence against intellectual foes.[121]

Moreover, the controversy regarding Lin Biao and the First Emperor had a close connection to Lin Biao's alleged failed coup in 1971. In the "Project 571 Outline", which was a call-to-arms document against Mao's leadership commonly believed to be authored by Lin Liguo or Lin Biao, the organizer of the coup listed a series of accusations against Mao that culminated with the conclusion that Mao had become the "The First Emperor of the Modern Day". The celebration of the Legalist philosophies and the regime of the First Emperor had thus taken a renewed political relevancy in 1970s.

However, Mao's emphasis on The First Emperor cannot be viewed as mere reaction to the accusations. Mao, faced with mounting chaos from the mass movements of the Cultural Revolution and the urgent need to strengthen state control of the society, saw the Legalist philosophies and the legacies of First Emperor as a convenient way to centralize political power while not yielding to the moderates within the CCP.

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[121] Mao, Zedong. *Mao Zedong Sixiang Wansui*. 毛泽东思想万岁. Wuhan. 1968

Centered around writing groups based in Fudan University who directly answered to Yao Wenyuan and Jiang Qing, historians, philosophers, and graduate students started to publish a series of politicized commentaries on the Legalist philosophies that framed the Confucian-Legalist conflict as the engine of historical progress in Chinese history since the Pre-Qin era.

The Creation of the First Legalist Martyr: The Murder of Shaozheng Mao

The Spring and Autumn and Warring States period had long provided political inspiration from left-wing and communist intellectuals since the May Fourth Movement. Marxist intellectuals such as Hou Wailu and Guo Moruo had debated extensively about the revolutionary potentials among Pre-Qin philosophers in early 1940s. Contrary to the usual anti-Confucian narrative of the May Fourth Movement, in 1940, Guo saw Confucius as a progressive philosopher that embodied many elements of the New Democratic Revolution that the Communist was fighting at the time. For Guo, the Confucian emphasis on the educability of men and the creation of the literati-official class were decisive in the disintegration of aristocratic and slave society of the Spring and Autumn period. Confucianism had the potential to realize true equality and a political system centered around people. However, for Guo, such potential was hijacked by Qin Shihuang and the Legalists, and the direct oppression of the aristocrats was transformed into an indirect oppression of the literati-official class that was dominated by power and rich.[122]

Guo's interpretation of Confucius and Confucianism received multiple rebuffs from Mao and was a major ideological pretext for Mao to start Confucian-Legalist philosophy in the 1970s. In the Confucian-Legalist historiography, the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period was depicted as China's socialist national origin myth. The rise of Confucianism and the contention

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[122] Wang, Pu. *The Translatability of Revolution: Guo Moruo and Twentieth-Century Chinese Cultture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.

from Legalism were presented as the original oppression and the first instance of resistance. This origin myth was more specially embodied in the killing of Shaozheng Mao by Confucius.

According to historical writings from Xunzi and Sima Qian's *Shiji* (Grand Scribe's Records) had made connections between Shaozheng Mao's execution and Confucius. Shaozheng Mao, as an advisor in the Lu state, was lecturing at the same time as Confucius in the Lu State. At times, many Confucius' students were attracted by Shaozheng Mao and abandoned Confucius. Seven days after Confucius rose to the Minister of Crime in the Lu State, he ordered the execution of Shaozheng Mao. Confucius accused Shaozheng Mao to be a potentially dangerous demagogue that embodies the "Five Evil": ambitious but secretive, radical in thoughts but steady in action, mediocre but persuasive, perverse in knowledge but eclectic in learnings, and defending and benefiting people who commits evil.[123]

For the Confucian-Legalist Historiography, Shaozheng Mao's killing marked the beginning of the Confucian-Legalist struggle. In a widely reprinted book titled Introduction to Legalist Figures" that was originally written by Jilin University Writing Group, the authors concluded that the execution of Shaozheng Mao was due to Confucius's resentment and envy. The killing also cleared path for Confucius's plan to seize power in the State of Lu. Confucius's accusations of "Five Evils" reflected that Shaozheng Mao was a progressive and disruptive force to the status quo of the slave society.[124]

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[123] Sima, Qian. "Kongzi Shijia" 孔子世家. Title: *Shiji.* 史记 *Chinese Text Project*. https://ctext.org/shiji/kong-zi-shi-jia/zh Accessed Apr. 2021

[124] Jilindaxue fajiarenwujianjie bianxiezuo. *Fajia Renwu Jianjie*. 法家人物简介. Zhongguorenminjiefangjun zhanshichunbanshe, 1975. 2-4

The story of Shaozheng Mao, though scantly recorded in history, constitutes a powerful origin myth for the Confucian-Legalist struggle. There existed no other historical writings about Shaozheng Mao except for the events surrounding his execution. The act of extreme violence was perpetrated by Confucius himself, which spoke not only against Confucianism as a philosophy, but also dethroned Confucius as a moral sage. The killing created a martyr for the imagined tradition of Legalist resistance that closely mirrored the court politics in 1970s China. As the Writing Group claimed,

> Kong Laoer had murdered Shaozheng Mao, but he could smother the revolutionary theory that Shaozheng Mao was advocating. The Legalists were becoming ever more powerful and mature in their fierce struggle against the Confucian school. Every kind of revolution has a price. After Shaozheng Mao was murdered, there were some other Legalists were murdered as well, but the progression of history could not be resisted. Feudal system replacing slave system was determined by historical progression, and such progression was realized after many turn of events by Qin Shihuang's unification of China.[125]

Intellectual Foundation of the Confucian-Legalist Conflict: Shang Yang and Han Fei

While the Writing Group contrived to fit the story of Shaozheng Mao into a Legalist narrative, philosophers such as Shang Yang and Han Fei, who were traditionally known as the most significant Legalist thinkers, provided the legalist ideological framework for this new historiography. While the First Emperor of Qin was the central figure of the Confucian-Legalist historiography that bears close historical comparability with Mao, Shang Yang and the reforms he conducted in the Qin state was believed to be the major cause for Qin's success.

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[125] Ibid. 4

Shang Yang, or Lord Shang, was originally a junior official in the State of Wei who was attracted to Legalist theories at a very young age. While his talent and learnings in statecraft was recognized by the Prime Minister, he was ignored by the King. Shang Yang later moved to the State of Qin and was able to impress the King of Qin who had the ambition to become militarily dominant.[126] According to the Grand History of Sima Qian, Shang Yang was able to impress the King with the "Hegemonic Way",[127] a Legalist approach to rule the state that promoted the strengthening of military and political power, which stood in sharp contrast to the "Kingly Way", the benevolent government and moral politics promoted by the Confucian school.

Shang Yang's reform focused on the creation of strict penal codes and the centralization of power. Shang Yang introduced the harsh penal code known as "collective guilt" (lianzuo), in which the entire neighborhood of ten households would be punished if one person from the neighborhood committed a crime. The law rewarded informants with the compensations of war heroes and punished those who does not report crimes to the government with extreme harshness. A similar system of "collective guilt" was introduced to the military, which granted generous collective rewards to units that fought with valor and carried out brutal collective punishments to the units that showed cowardice. Shang Yang also promoted reforms that severely weakened aristocratic families. He abolished heredity of political titles. Aristocratic titles could only be passed on if the family members had achieved distinctive service in the military, which essentially replaced noble houses and commercial elites with military elites in the State of Qin. Economically, Shang Yang implemented policies that encouraged agricultural

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[126] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and Their Art of Ruling*. Routledge, 1996. 18

[127] Ibid. 20

production while restricted or even punished commercial activities. Overproduction in agriculture could potentially reduce or exempt one's prison sentence, bankruptcies and commercial failures were deemed a crime.[128]

Shang Yang was able to achieve considerable success with his reform with the support of Duke Xiaogong of Qin. The reform provided a solid military and economic base that enabled the Qin to unify China. However, Shang Yang became a target of the aristocracy in the Qin because his reform had seriously undermined their interests. After the death of the Duke, members of the aristocratic families had violently executed Shang Yang.[129]

Shang Yang's theories provided several convenient parallels to Mao's effort to reinvigorate the Cultural Revolution in 1972. Shang Yang's reform program that was largely centered around undermining aristocracy not only spoke to the class politics in People's China, but also highlighted Mao's effort to centralize political power through attacking political elites. The Fudan Writing Group valorized Shang Yang's political violence, which they argued provided the basis for Qin's successful reform.

> Shang Yang was relentless. He utilized the regime of the landlord class to eliminate the remaining aristocratic forces. He expelled those "disruptive people" to borderlands. Moreover, Shang Yang firmly struck against those reactive Confucian scholars who claimed that "the present day could not compare to the past" and ordered the burning of *Book of Songs* and *Book of Documents* … Shang Yang used revolutionary violence against counter-revolutionary violence. He emphasized "using warfare to remove warfare and using penalty to remove penalty"… Therefore he was deeply resented by the slave-

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

> owning aristocrats… Unfortunately, Shang Yang was arrested and publicly dismembered. This bloody history proves to us that Confucian-Legalist conflicts were never just conflicts in scholarship. It was a grand class struggle of life and death.[130]

Like Shaozheng Mao, the Confucian-Legalist historiography had placed Shang Yang in the lineage of progressive Chinese philosophers that spearheaded the historical transition from slave society to feudal society, one that paralleled the progression of modern China. The writing group also placed a strong emphasis on the violence in Shang Yang's case. Both the violence Shang Yang perpetrated and the ones he suffered were depicted as unavoidable and historically determined. Revolution and revolutionary violence were thus no longer a Marxist and modern subject, but a pattern that existed throughout Chinese history.[131]

Nearly a century after Shang Yang's reform in the State of Qin, Han Fei, a descendent of an aristocratic family in the State of Han, was another thinker that aimed to transform Qin through Legalist reform. Though his did not have much impact of the actual policies, Han Fei's writings came to regarded by historians as one of the most complete and comprehensive body of Legalist thought.[132] Towards the end of the Warring States, the State of Han was at the brink of annihilation by an impending Qin invasion, Han Fei attempted to strengthen the State of Han with potential reforms, but his advice was largely ignored by the Han court. When Han Fei was sent to the Qin on a diplomatic mission, the Qin Prince, who later became the First Emperor, was impressed by him and intended to offer him a position. However, Li Si, another important

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[130] *Du yidian fajia zhuzuo.*读一点法家著作 Shanghai: Wenhuibaobianjibu, 1974. 37, 38

[131] Ibid.

[132] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and Their Art of Ruling*. Routledge, 1996.

Legalist thinker and former schoolmate of Han Fei, persuaded the Qin Prince that Han Fei was a grave threat to Qin and had him put to death through forced suicide.

While Han Fei wrote eclectically on statecraft, his theories on historical time and bureaucracy were most relevant to the Confucian-Legalist historiography in 1970s. In his book *The Five Vermin*, Han Fei directly attacked the Confucian ideal of kindness and its fixation on the mythical ancient sage rulers Yao and Shun, who reportedly lived ordinary lives among people and voluntarily gave up power after their reign. Han Fei wrote that the ancient rulers gave up their power because in their societies the privileges were little and the stake low, but in the political climate of Han Fei's time, too much power and too many privileges were embedded in the ruler that the ancient example of self-abdication could no longer apply. While the Confucians likened the relationship between ruler and subjects as father and son, Han Fei wrote that the father-son relationship was overromanticized, as there were unruly sons that could not be controlled by parental love, and if love could not even make children behave, it could never serve as the basis of governance.[133]

The true sagely way of ruling, Han Fei argued, was to establish laws and codes that were not swayed by human moral sentiments. Morality was often vague and open to interpretation, but law needed to have clarity and simplicity so people can follow. For Han Fei, morality and kindness were the opposite of law, and could only gave rise to confusion in law and distraction from real work. Based on this rational, Han Fei argued that there ertr five kinds of vermin that disrupts the law and regime, the Confucian scholars, the lobbyists, the vigilantes, the deserters, and the merchants.[134]

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[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid.

Han Fei's writing represented a more direct confrontation with the Confucianism. While Shang Yang aimed for direct and specific interventions in statecrafts, Han Fei's *Five Vermin* embodied a realist worldview that directly confronted Confucian moral ideology. While the Confucian order rested on the innate kindness of humans and the extension of father-son relationship to larger social hierarchy, Han Fei's theory presumed the unreliability and relativity of human virtue and organize the society through rewards and punishments.

Han Fei's worldview as expressed in Five Vermin resonates with the Marxist view on historical progress on multiple levels. Han Fei attributed morality of the sage kings and utopian society of antiquity as product of their historical circumstances, in which the society had little surplus to enrich its leaders and create class difference. The theory of a classless past closely resembled Marxist characterizations of primitive communism. The Confucian-Legalist historiography had praised Han Fei for exhibiting a scientific view on historical progression that could be considered as an early prototype of historical materialism.[135]

Moreover, Han Fei's writings contain the most direct and radical anti-Confucian sentiment among all Pre-Qin philosophers. His depiction of Confucian scholars as the first of five kinds of vermin that must be destroyed for the state's survival was often cited by the Confucian-Legalist historiography as proof that a real "struggle" existed between the Confucian and Legalist schools that set stage for the feudal society to replace slave society in China. As members of the writing group published in the journal *Xuexi yu Pipan*, one of the most important outlets of Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan,

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[135] Zhao, Qing. "Du Hanfei de Wudupian" 读韩非五蠹篇 *Xuexiyupipan* 读韩非五蠹篇 Volume 5. 1974. 4

> Han Fei had listed Confucian scholars as the first one of the "five vermin". This at once captured the essence the issue. He points out, with contempt, that "Confucian scholars uses letters to disrupt the law" and uncovered the Confucian scholar's harms to the dictatorship of the landlord class… They spread reactionary fundamentalism. They were against progress and advocated restoration and retrogression… They were the most dangerous enemies of the rising landlord class. The dictatorship of the landlord class could never be established and strengthened without attacking the reactionary theories of Confucianism. Han Fei represents the harshest attacks on Confucianism.[136]

The term "dictatorship" (zhuan zheng) was previously exclusively used in "the dictatorship of the proletariat". While the term refers to the regime governed by the proletariat, "dictatorship" was often used to denote the use of violence against enemies of the proletarian. The Writing Group thus created a mirror image of the proletarian revolution in modern China in Han Fei's time and elevated Han Fei as the most progressive thinker in ancient China.

Furthermore, the difference between Han Fei and Shang Yang lies not only in the comprehensiveness of Han Fei's theory, but also in Han Fei's pronounced antagonism with bureaucracy. In Five Vermin, a key strategy to strengthen the state is to weaken the power and independence of officials. Borrowing the Confucian concept of "correcting the names" (zheng ming) and the Daoist concept of "inaction" (wu wei), Han Fei argued that the proper position of the ruler is one of absolute authority and power attained through harsh and clear legal codes, and thus the ideal ruler could achieve a state of inaction through reward and punishment. The ruler

[136] Ibid. 12

must not rely on trust and morality of his ministers, but use laws to restrain and deter them.[137] The law regulates rewards and punishments and establishes a meritocracy that select officials based on ability instead of morality and trust. However, the law, for Han Fei, must not exist independently. The law could only exist as techniques (shu) of the ruler. Han Fei wrote,

> The tiger dominates the dog because of his claws and fangs. If one were to make the tiger relinquish his claws and fangs, and allow the dog to use them, the tiger would be dominated by the dog. The ruler uses punishments and rewards to control his ministers, but if the ruler were to relinquish his punishments and rewards, and allow his ministers to apply them, the ruler would be controlled by the ministers.[138]

Han Fei's hostility towards bureaucracy proved to be useful for the Confucian-Legalist Historiography in 1974. The Fudan Writing Group attributed one of the main strengths of Han Fei on restraining the bureaucracy. Han Fei's depiction of ministers and officials as the most dangerous enemies to the ruler suggested the need to further centralize power in the hands of the ruler. It closely mirrored Mao's growing long-lasting of the bureaucracy in the CCP and the cohort of top officials, especially after the Lin Biao Incident.

The First Emperor and the Politics of Burning the Books

At the center of the Confucian-Legalist Historiography was the evaluation of the First Emperor of China, Qin Shihuang. The position and political implications of Qin Shihuang had been fiercely contested since the beginning of 1950s. Defiant of the long Chinese intellectual

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[137] Fu, Zhengyuan. *China's Legalists: The Earliest Totalitarians and Their Art of Ruling*. Routledge, 1996.

[138] Han, Fei. "Erbing". 二柄 *Chinese Text Project*. https://ctext.org/hanfeizi/er-bing/zhs Accessed Apr. 2021

tradition that viewed the First Emperor's rule as the prototypical tyrant, whose name had become synonymous to ruthless absolutism and suppression of speech and culture, Mao had often compared himself to the First Emperor and extolled his absolutism and political violence.

The brief rule of the First Emperor was the epitome of the Legalist philosophies in practice. The Qin State and later the Qin Dynasty's policies had been heavily informed by Legalist advisors, such as Shang Yang and Li Si. After the unification of China in 221 BC, as the prime minister of the new empire, Li Si had advised the First Emperor on important events such as the annexation of feudal states and the burning of books and execution of scholars.[139] Partly because of these Legalist policies, The Qin Dynasty had subdued and unified the previously fragmented regions in China and brought it under a central government. It waged successful warfare against nomadic Xiongnu people and bult the Great Wall that became a symbol of China's imperial strength. The strength of the Qin Dynasty was also matched by its brutality. In Chinese historical consciousness, the First Emperor became the prototypical image of tyrants. The human cost of constructing the Great Wall and the burning of books and execution of scholars had become symbols of imperial excess in the Confucian tradition. One of the most important examples was from Jia Yi's The Fault of Qin,

> The First Emperor had a despicable heart and only believed in his own wisdom. He does not trust his decorated ministers and does not approach scholars. He abandoned the Kingly Way and founded authority of himself. He burned books and established brutal

[139] De Bary, Theodore. Lufrano, Theodore. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press. 206

penal laws. He embraced cunningness and force and turned his back on kindness and righteousness. Brutality was the basis of his rule.[140]

From 1972 to 1974, the People's Press in Shanghai had compiled and distributed large numbers of pamphlets, booklets, and children's books of different versions about the First Emperor. For the Confucian Legalist Historiography, the First Emperor embodied all the progressive virtues of Legalist rulers. In particular, the Writing Group focused on the Burning of Books and Execution of Scholars as the flashpoint that represent the most important success of Legalist in history before the Communist Revolution.

In 213 BC., eight years after Qin's unification of China, there was a major debate between scholar official Chun Yuyue and Prime Minister Li Si. Chun suggests that the emperor should retore the powers of the nobility so that they could aid the emperor in times of crisis. facing mounting challenges to the First Emperor's centralization of power from Confucian scholars, Li Si had advised the First Emperor to destroy a series of books that he deemed could subvert the First Emperor's rules, which included all the history books from the former states except those of the Qin, The Book of Odes, and The Book of Documents. Moreover, the First Emperor had introduced a law that could execute people who held these banned books.[141]

According to the *Grand History*, a year after the burning of the books, unfavorable rumors against the First Emperor was widespread. The First Emperor had ordered those that were involved executed in the City of Xianyang. Conflicting accounts existed regarding who

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[140] Jia, Yi. "Guo qin lun". 过秦论 Chinese Text Project. https://ctext.org/xin-shu/guo-qin-zhong/zhs Accessed May 2022

[141] De Bary, Theodore. Lufrano, Theodore. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

were executed and how they were executed. According to a conversation recorded in the Grand Historical Record between The First Emperor and his son, Fu Su, who pleaded The First Emperor to think to abandon the execution, most of the people that were to be executed were Confucian scholars. However, another part of *The Grand History* indicates that most of the executed were Daoist alchemists.[142] Despite such disputes, in popular consciousness, the term "burning the books and executing the scholars" had become an idiom that denotes the First Emperor's brutal absolutism. While the Qin Dynasty only lasted fifteen years, in Confucian scholarships, it became a cautionary tale of excessive brutality and justification for the Confucian moral politics.

Mao's willingness to praise the First Emperor had an intellectual lineage that could be traced back to Lu Xun and Zhang Taiyan. While Kang Youwei disputed the existence and effectiveness of the Burning of Books and Execution of Scholars, Zhang Taiyan argued that the First Emperor had indeed ordered the destruction of all Confucian classics, and this act was necessary and justified, because "without burning the Confucian Classics, the new ruler cannot be established."[143] However, the burning of the books was not effective because the Qin Dynasty collapsed too soon.

Lu Xun, a student of Zhang Taiyan, had taken a step further and depicted the First Emperor as a progressive leader. In 1933, as the new Nazi regime in Germany started a

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Zhang, Taiyan. Zhang Taiyan *Qin zhengji, Qin xianji pingzhu*. 章太炎秦政记，秦献记注译 Edited by Beijing Shifan Daxue Zhang Taiyan Zhuzuo Yizhu Xiaozu. 北京师范大学章太炎著作译注小组 Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1974.

campaign to burn books of "un-German spirit", intellectuals in China and Japan were quick to compare it to the act of the First Emperor. Lun Xun, however, found it offensive to compare Hitler with the First Emperor. In his article "The Differences and Similarities Between China and Germany in Burning Books",[144] Lu Xun argued that Hitler and the First Emperor could not be compared. The Qin Dynasty burned books "for the purpose of unifying thoughts" but remained tolerant and progressive. The First Emperor had burned the Confucian classics that dominated China's intellectual stage, but was open to different schools of thoughts from other states, as reflected in the tradition of "Guest Officials" (ke qing). Citing passages from the Grand Historical Records, Lu Xun further argued that the Qin Dynasty had a feminist tendency. For Lu Xun, the First Emperor burnt the classics in order to create the space for a diverse intellectual environment, while Hitler destroyed the diverse intellectual environment in order to uphold the dominance of the classics.

> He (the First Emperor) had recruited many "Guest Officials" from other states. He did not exclusively emphasize the "Qin spirit", but explores a diverse array of intellectual trends… Those gentlemen who are following Hitler are different. First, the books they burnt are "un-German spirits". They do not have the spirit of "Guest Officials". Then they burnt the books about sex and tried to destroy the cause of sex liberation through science. This will certainly make the positions of women and children regress to the dark past. They could never match the great deeds of the First Emperor, such as the standardization of roads and writing system.[145]

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[144] Lu, Xun. "Huade fenshu yitong lun". 华德焚书异同论 *Luxun Quanji*. Vol. 5. Renminwenxuechubanshe. 2005

[145] Ibid.

Lu Xun's article, though brief, shared important ideological elements to Mao's interpretation of Legalist political philosophies. Unlike Liang Qichao, who downplayed the severity of the First Emperor's violence and the extent of his censorship, Lu Xun admitted such violence, and argued that such violence was not only justified, but also constituted a form a resistance to a repressive and dominant ideology and created space for a more progressive society. Moreover, Lu Xun found the basis of Legalist progressivism in its "Guest Officials" policy, which referred to a system of appointing foreigners as officials and advisors in State of Qin. Historically, officials and scholars of non-Qin origin often occupied important positions in Qin's bureaucracy.

Despite the scholarships that either downplayed or praised its violence, the First Emperor and his violence against Confucian scholars remained a symbol of excessive totalitarianism, even among the rising Communist forces. During WWII and the Civil War, the Communist controlled newspapers, such as *The People's Daily*, frequently compared Chiang Kai-shek's censorship and violence against left-wing intellectuals with the Burning of Books and the Killing of Scholars. Most notably, Guo Moruo, who was based in Chongqing during WWII, wrote extensively about the violence of the First Emperor. Guo viewed the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period as an age of intellectual freedom in China the Qin Dynasty that followed marked a dark age of China's intellectual history. Guo's attack on the First Emperor in the 1940s, was much inspired by the totalitarian regime of Chiang Kai-shek that was inching towards fascism. However, after the establishment of the PRC, Guo's attitude on the First Emperor had repeatedly been questioned by Mao and became an intellectual trigger for Mao to initiate the new discourse on the First Emperor and Legalist philosophies.[146]

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[146] Wang, Pu. *The Translatability of Revolution: Guo Moruo and Twentieth-Century Chinese Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center.

Among the materials about the First Emperor in 1974 and 1975, the Writing Group placed strong emphasis on the burning of the books and the killing of the scholars. Similar to Lu Xun, the Confucian-Legalist historiography praised the violence as an act of progress. Using rhetoric typical to the Cultural Revolution, the Writing Group labeled the Confucian scholars as "remaining reactionary elements from slave-holding class that sought restoration".[147] The First Emperor's alleged violence against the Confucian scholars were thus comparable to Mao's persecution of intellectuals and political enemies in PRC.

However, Lu Xun's point about a tolerant Legalist society through the Guest Official program was lost in Confucian-Legalist Historiography. While Lu Xun praised the First Emperor in creating a diverse and proto-feminist cultural environment, the writing groups in 1970s interpreted the Guest Official system merely as a utilitarian and meritocratic method to select officials and undermine the aristocratic influence in politics. According to *The First Emperor* booklet, written by Yang Kuan, a renowned expert in Qin Dynasty who was only recently released from the May Seventh Cadre School, the Confucian scholars were disrupting the centralization of power essential to the newly established feudal system. By burning the Confucian classics and killing the Confucian scholars, the First Emperor stopped the restoration of the reactionary forces.[148] Thus, in 1970s, the First Emperor violence was viewed only as a necessary measure of factional struggle. It was praised because it ensured the victory of a new system.

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[147] *Feshukengrubian.* 焚书坑儒辩 Guangdongrenminchubanshe, 1973

[148] *Qin Shihuang*. 秦始皇 Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1972.

Moreover, contrary to Lu Xun's celebration of Qin's tolerance of diverse views, the writing groups further argued that the threat of Confucian restoration existed in Qin Dynasty because the unification of China had incorporated many non-Qin officials and scholars into the Qin system, who had questionable backgrounds and became potential disruptive forces for the Qin Dynasty. Then narrative closely resembled the discourse of the Cultural Revolution that emphasized finding enemies from within. The 1974 narrative, therefore, left no room for cultural diversity in the First Emperor that Lu Xun had celebrated in 1933. The goal of violence was the centralization of power. Progressiveness was defined as one new ruling class overcoming the older one.

Legalism in Imperial China

As the Confucian-Legalist Historiography deemed the conflict between the two schools as the driving force behind Chinese serious??????, this inevitably led to a major problem of periodization. While the Legalist reforms had culminated in the rule of the First Emperor, the Qin Dynasty only lasted for fifteen years. Since the Han Dynasty, the Legalist philosophy became marginalized throughout China's imperial era. Modern scholars like Hu Shi even argued that Legalism never existed as a school of philosophy and most of its essential writings were forgeries created during and after the Han Dynasty.[149] The Confucian-Legalist Historiography in 1970s, in contrast, argued that the conflict between Legalism and Confucianism was the main contradiction throughout Chinese history. Therefore, a Legalist tradition beyond the Qin had to be constructed in order to fulfill this new discourse.

[149] Hu, Shi. *Zhongguo Zhexueshi Dagang*. 中国哲学史大纲. Shangwu Yinshiguan. 2011.

As a result, the Confucian-Legalist Historiography expanded the definition of Legalism which enabled them to include many scholars and statesmen from imperial era as Legalists. In most cases, the writing groups designated historical figures that were in favor of centralization of power and state strengthening as representatives of Legalism in imperial China, such as Wu Zetian, the female ruler, Liu Zong Yuan, and Wang Anshi.

As the only formal female sovereign in Chinese history, Wu Zetian's left a complex legacy that proved politically convenient in 1974. Wu was initially a concubine of Emperor Tang Taizong but married his son Emperor Tang Gaozong after the older emperor's death. Through a series of court politics, Wu was made empress consort and became the de facto ruler after the emperor was debilitated by a stroke. After the Emperor Tang Gaozong's death, she maintained the ruling position by expelling her son, who was the new Emperor Tang Zhongzong and fended off a major coup that aimed at restoring the young emperor. In 690, Wu Zetian made herself the formal emperor and stayed on the throne until 705, when an armed rebellion forced her to abduct and restore his son as the emperor.[150]

Wu Zetian's rule was known for a high degree of economic and cultural prosperity as well as brutal court politics.[151] She enacted a series of policies that favor small to medium landlords over large-scale land-holding aristocrats and expanded the meritocratic civil service exams and made it more accessible. These policies contributed to economic and social stability during her reign. Politically, Wu Zentian's reign was famous for its brutal suppression of

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[150] De Bary, Theodore. Lufrano, Theodore. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press. 206

[151] Han, Lin. *Wuzetian xingxiang de wenhua jiangou ji chanshi*. 武则天形象的文化建构及阐释 Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.

suspected dissidents. She had endorsed policies that rewards informants and empowered numerous officials to use arbitrary and brutal forces to suppress potential dissidents.[152]

The Confucian-Legalist Historiography argued that Wu Zetian embodied the Legalist spirit because of her femininity and her policies of strengthening of state apparatus. The Writing Group of Peking University and Tsinghua University, under the name "Liangxiao", published an article titled "Wu Zetian, an Accomplished Female Politician".[153] The article interpreted Early Tang Dynasty as a time of heightened conflict between Confucianism and Legalism. The landlord class had become the de facto aristocracy. This "nobility landlord class" (shizu dizhu) were able to amass economic and political powers and create political dynasties that dominated the politics in Tang court. Liangxiao argued that the nobility landlord class had degenerated into social parasites and sought to revive classical Confucian ideology to justify its existence.[154]

On the other hand, the early Tang Dynasty has a rising "commoner landlord" (shuzu dizhu) class that had the potential to challenge the dominance of Confucianism. Wu Zetian, as a Legalist ruler, empowered the commoner landlord class and undermined the nobility landlord class through a series of agricultural reforms. Moreover, she attacked the nobility through the establishment of a harsh and brutal informant system and the creation of a police corps to suppress resistance and dissidents. Similar to the analysis of the Pre-Qin Legalist philosophers, the Confucian-Legalist Historiography emphasized the importance of violence in Wu Zetian as forces of historical progress.

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Liang, Xiao. "Youzuowei de nvzhengzhijia wuzetian". 有作为的女政治家武则天 *Renminjiaoyu.* Volume 8, 1974.

[154] Ibid.

Furthermore, the Confucian-Legalist Historiography praised Wu Zetian for her struggle as a female ruler. The Liangxiao writing group had notoriously praised her as "the Legalist Queen". They argued that many criticisms about Wu Zetian in Chinese history focused on her gender and viewed her rise to power as a grave transgression in Confucian moral hierarchy[155]. The gender of Wu Zetian became further contentious because of Wu Zetian's possible allusion to Jiang Qing. Both were female rulers who had the potential to rise to the highest power through the death of their husbands and both faced political challenges from male political elites who had helped founding the regime.

The equation between Wu Zetian and Jiang Qing received significant attention in the court politics before Mao's death as numerous articles were published shortly after Mao's death condemning Liangxiao's essay on Wu Zetian and accused Jiang Qing as the mastermind behind the political comments about Wu Zetian in order to create the parallel that could pave the way for her own succession to power.[156]

Moreover, the Confucian-Legalist Writing Group sought to locate Legalist tendencies in the mid-Tang politician and writer Liu Zongyuan, who was famous for proposals for political reforms and experiments in literary compositions. Liu Zongyuan was active in the aftermath of the Rebellion of An Lushan of 755, which brought the powerful and prosperous Tang into economic and political crisis. For his political activism, Liu was marginalized and demoted to remote areas. The marginalization in politics created space for literary and scholarly creations

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[155] Ibid.

[156] *People's Daily*, Beijingshifanxueyuan lilunzu, 北京师范学院理论组 "Ping liangxiao bixia de wuzetian". 评梁效笔下的武则天 Feb. 8, 1977

and Liu's most important works were those that were written during his post as an inspector in the remote town of Liuzhou.[157]

Liu's most influential political composition is "On Enfeoffment", in which Liu attacks the enfeoffment as an idealized vision of governance and voiced his support for more centralization of power. Responding to China's cultural and political fixation on the utopian enfeoffment system of the early sage kings, such as Yao, Shun, and Yu, Liu argued that such system was not an idealized form of government, but only a product of historical forces. Liu reviewed the rules of the early sages, the Qin, the Han, and the Tang, and argued that the enfeoffment system only gave rise to conflict and chaos, and the prefecture system, in which the central government ruled the prefectures directly, is the way to ensure long-lasting stability. Liu praised the Qin Dynasty for breaking up the enfeoffed forces and establish the prefectures and but criticized the dynasty for excessive violence and taxation.[158]

In 1974, the Confucian-Legalist Historiography had made Liu Zongyuan and his "Essay on Enfeoffment" the most prominent representation of Legalism in China's imperial history. This was partly due to Mao's personal fixation on Liu Zongyuan. Even before the Lin Biao incident, Mao had insulated Zhang Shizhen from the Cultural Revolution and endorsed research and publications about Liu Zongyuan.[159] In August 1974, Mao's poem "Reading 'On Enfeoffment', to Guo" was a major trigger for the Confucian-Legalist Historiography movement. Since 1974, the writing groups published numerous editorial essays and booklets introducing Liu

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[157] De Bary, Theodore. Lufrano, Theodore. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Zhang Shizhao, *Liuwenzhiyao*.柳文指要 Beijing: Zhonghuashuju. 1971.

Zongyuan's life and his political thoughts. The writing groups argued that Liu was the greatest Legalist in Tang Dynasty because of his "materialist worldview" and his attack on Confucian moral orders. For example, Liu wrote, the enfeoffment system of the early sage kings were "not due to the will of the sages, but due to situations and forces". Liu further explained that the enfeoffment system was a product of "primitive stage" of humans, in which the creation of aristocracy and hereditary succession of feudal power was a result of technological constraints. For the Confucian-Legalist historiography, Liu's historical analysis followed a pattern of stages and evolvement that resembled the modern Marxist view of history as a linear progress and treat historical changes as result of material conditions, instead of moralities and philosophies of the people.[160]

The emphasis on Liu Zongyuan cannot be explained by Mao's preference alone. Although Liu Zongyuan never appealed to the pre-Qin Legalist philosophers, his effort to undermine the myth of sage kings and attributed their rules to natural forces harkened to the writings of Han Fei. This sentence is unclear The call for centralization of power, praise for the Qin, and his warnings against the fragmentation of political powers under the powerful aristocrats all could be construed as Liu's Legalist footprints.

Although both Wu Zetian and Liu Zongyuan's policies and political philosophies include centralization of power and hostility towards aristocracy, which the Confucian-Legalist Historiography interpreted as the continuation of pre-Qin Legalism in imperial China, the Confucian-Legalist Historiography ignored the fact that both Wu Zetian and Liu Zongyuan's

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[160] Zhou, Yiliang: "Du Liuzongyuan Fengjianlun". in *Duyidian fajia zhuzuo*. 读一点法家著作

June, 1974. 84-95

arguments were under a Confucian ideological framework. While Liu Zongyuan attacked some aspects of Confucian philosophy, such as Dong Zhongshu and his theory of Heaven-Human Interaction (tianrenganying), Liu identified himself as a Confucian scholar who sought reform. Liu emphasized the human aspect of Confucianism that advocated for peace and prosperity among commoners.[161] Such belief was in sharp contrast with Pre-Qin philosopher's easiness with harsh penal codes, fixation on warfare, and the CCP's interpretation of revolutionary violence.

Moreover, the Confucian-Legalist historiography reified the dichotomy between Confucianism and Legalism, which marginalized influences from other belief systems such as Buddhism and contradicted with the hybrid nature of ideologies in Tang China. Although Confucianism constituted to be the basis of Tang's educational system, its influence in society is attenuated and Buddhism, which remained the primary ideological identity of the Tang.[162] For example, instead of Legalism or Confucianism, Wu Zetian heavily adopted Buddhism and used it as a justification for her reign.

Zhang Taiyan and the End of Confucian-Legalist Historiography

In the grand narrative of Confucian-Legalist conflict, the presence of Legalist philosophies continued through late imperial China and beyond the 1911 revolution. Though the writing groups did not claim CCP to be an officially Legalist party, they asserted Mao and other

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[161] Chen, Ruoshui. *Liuzongyuan yu Tangdai Sixiang Bianqian*. 柳宗元与唐代思想变迁 Jiansujiaoyu chubanshe, 2010.

[162] De Bary, Theodore. Lufrano, Theodore. Sources of Chinese Tradition. New York: Columbia University Press 540, 541

progressive elements in the CCP were “upholding Legalism and against Confucianism” (zun ru fan fa). Therefore, for the Confucian-Legalist Historiography, the Confucian-Legalist struggle was not only a conflict in China’s past. It persisted into modern China in fuller force and manifested in various rebellion, revolutions, and political philosophies.

The only political thinker in modern China that the Confucian-Legalist historiography identified as Legalist was Zhang Taiyan. As the teacher of Lu Xun, Zhang Taiyan had long occupied an ambiguous position in the PRC. While his radical call for revolution in earlier writings was praised by the CCP, Zhang’s stance against the Northern Expedition and his interests in Confucian classics in his later writings made him a target of ridicule and an example of bourgeois weakness in CCP’s historical narrative. Zhang’s tomb was destroyed by the Red Guards in 1966 at the height of the Cultural Revolution. In 1973, however, Zhang Taiyan’s writings about Legalism and the influence of Legalism on his political philosophy were ostensibly rediscovered. In August 1974, Mao ordered the translation, commentary, and reprinting of Zhang Taiyan’s “On the Contributions of Qin” (Qinxianji), “On the Politics of Qin” (Qinzhengji), and “Rebuking Kang Youwei’s ‘On Revolution’”. Mao had instructed that Zhang’s work was important not only because of his evaluation of The First Emperor, but also about his understanding understand the political system of the Qin Dynasty.[163]

The Confucian-Legalist Historiography had reinterpreted the debate between reform and revolution of late Qing as a conflict between Confucianism and Legalism. “Defending the throne is defending Confucianism”, as a Writing Group of Fudan wrote. This had put reformers like

[163] Chen’ Chuang: “Xueshushi shiyexia de ‘pingrupifa’ yundong yanjiu”. 学术史视野下的“评儒批法”运动研究 in *Kongziyanjiu*. Vol. 5, 2020.

Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao as Confucian followers. Citing examples from Zhang Taiyan's "Preface to the Revolutionary Army" (gemingjun xu), the writing group argues that Zhang Taiyan's advocacy for revolution against the Qing Dynasty originated from Legalist philosophical belief against the Confucian concept of "mandate of heaven".[164]

Furthermore, the writing group also focused on Zhang Taiyan's post-1911 commentaries on the Qin Dynasty and the First Emperor. In his "On the Contributions of Qin" and "On the Politics of Qin", which was published in 1913, he systematically defended the Legalist philosophers and the Qin system that were often derided in the Confucian scholarships. Zhang argues that the centralization of power in the hands of the ruler was the only way to ensure a more egalitarian society in imperial China. The fragmentation of political powers, on the other hand, would result in the rise of aristocrats and social hierarchies. The Qin Dynasty, because of its adoption of Legalism, was exceptional in this aspect, and was able to create a system in which the emperor ruled with law, as most other Chinese Dynasties were heavily influenced by powerful bureaucratic families that became de facto aristocrats. The Writing Group praised Zhang Taiyan's writings about the Qin Dynasty and the First Emperor as brave resistance against Yuan Shikai's "Confucian restoration".[165]

Zhang Taiyan's political philosophy also became an important way for the writing group to connect the Confucian-Legalist conflict to the recent struggle of the Cultural Revolution. Zhang Taiyan's writings about the Qin became a weapon against Yuan Shikai, who was staging a restoration that effectively negated the progress of the 1911 Revolution. This narrative creates

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[164] Jilindaxue fajiarenwujianjie bianxiezuo. *Fajia Renwu Jianjie*. 法家人物简介. Zhongguorenminjiefangjun zhanshichunbanshe, 1975.

[165] Ibid.

a strong parallel between Yuan Shikai and Lin Biao. As Weigelin-Schwiedrzik argues, the Lin Biao incident had led to Mao's fear of restoration (fu bi), which embodied the possibility that China's past could become overwhelming again. By highlighting Zhang Taiyan's indirect criticism of Yuan Shikai, the writing group made the Confucian-Legalist historiography closely relevant to the ongoing politics in 1970s.

Although Zhang Taiyan's earlier works were indeed highly anti-Confucian, the Confucian-Legalist Histeriography account of Zhang Taiyan ignored the complexity of his political philosophy that drew resources from multiple schools of Chinese philosophy. While Zhang Taiyan was against Kang Youwei's proposal to create a Confucian state religion, Legalism remained marginal to the influence of Buddhism and Daoism in Zhang's political philosophy. Zhang's political philosophy discredits the concepts of universal truth or law, which differ drastically from Legalist philosophies that upholds the state apparatus and individual's responsibility to the state.

As the last Legalist philosopher in the Confucian-Legalist Historiography, the Writing Group used Zhang Taiyan as a way to introduce the CCP as the only successor of the Legalist's anti-Confucian heritage. Zhang's embrace of Confucianism after the 1911 Revolution was characterized as an example of bourgeois inherent weakness by the writing groups. The Fudan Writing Group wrote, "because of the limitation of his class and the time, it was impossible for him (Zhang) to analyze Confucianism from a historical materialist perspective and to give a truly scientific evaluation of Legalism." The Writing Group argued that Zhang Taiyan's turn to Confucianism meant that the bourgeois intellectuals could not overcome the burden of

Confucianism, and only the proletarian class, led by Mao Zedong, could fulfill this historical duty.[166]

The writing group's comment on Zhang Taiyan and the end of the Confucian-Legalist Historiography stroke a familiar note: the bourgeois intellectuals and proponents of "old democratic revolutions" were a progressive force in overthrowing the Qing, but soon became reactionary or disillusioned because of their class limitations. However, the case of Zhang Taiyan is peculiar because it linked the Confucian-Legalist conflict to China's modernity. For the writing groups, Confucianism and Legalism were no longer historical relics that alluded modern politics, but became actual ideologies for which revolutions and counter-revolutions happened and culminated in 1970s with the Lin Biao incident and the subsequent campaign.

Conclusion: Replacing Marxist Linear Temporality with the Confucian-Legalist Conflict

In multiple aspects, the rewriting of Chinese history through the Confucian-Legalist conflict signaled a conservative turn in the Maoist ideology. First, one of the most important themes of the Legalist philosophy is state-strengthening. While state-strengthening was a recurring theme in late Qing and Republican period, it never appeared so strongly within China's socialist context. This was a stark departure from Marx's emphasis of the withering away of the state and Mao's earlier focus on mass politics. While praising the First Emperor and defending the burning of books and killing of scholars, the Writing Group wrote that creating an effective and relentless state apparatus is essential to "stabilizing and strengthening" the dictatorship of the

[166] Ibid.

landlord class, who was the more progressive class of the era.[167] The emphasis on "state apparatus" here is particularly striking, as "state apparatus" was most of time associated with "bourgeoise privileged class". In various speeches and documents, such as "On the Dictatorship of People's Democracy" in 1949 and "On the Correct Handling of Contradistinctions within the People" 1957, Mao repeatedly emphasized the necessity to eliminate the state apparatus and the PRC's supposed "weak state" as compared to that of the Soviet Union. In reality, the Cultural Revolution Mao started practically paralyzed various aspects of the Chinese state in 1966 and 1967.

By upholding the Legalist philosophes of Shang Yang and Han Fei, as well as the political system of the Qin, the Confucian-Legalist Historiography advocated Machiavellian rulers with centralized power, strategic violence carried out by state apparatus, and strict control of academic production, and popular information consumption. They envisioned a strong and centralized state with the goal of maintaining a stable society, which left no room for the popular participation and chaotic mass movements that Mao advanced in 1960s. The emphasis on the centralization of power coincided with the ending of the Red Guard Movement and Mao's attempt to gradually rehabilitate the state's power and tame the mass movements that he had started. Turning his back on the youth student movements, Mao installed military and paramilitary organizations in the universities in an attempt to restore order.[168] This emphasis on state apparatus also mirrored Mao's attempt to contain the unintended ideological consequence of the mass movements in 1966 and 1967. While many youths, energized by the mass

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[167] *Rufadouzhenggushi*. 儒法斗争故事. Beijing: Zhonghuashuju. 1975.

[168] See Walder, Andrew. Fractured Rebellion: The Beijing Red Guard Movement. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

movements, started to independently interpret Marxism and questioned the policies of the Cultural Revolution, China had witnessed a significant increase in the use of police and legal system, as opposed to mass struggle sessions, to suppress political dissent. Mao and the CCP started the so-called One-Strike-Three-Anti movement, which was characterized by mass arrests and frequent executions of people with alleged political dissent.[169]

Moreover, the Confucius-legalist histography further departed from China's existing revolutionary ideology with its downplay of class. The upending of class politics in Confucian-Legalist Historiography clashed with another tradition that the CCP claimed to inherit: the continuous peasant uprisings and resistance that date back to the Da Zexiang uprising of Chen Sheng and Wu Guang in 209 BC against the Qin Dynasty. The CCP had long celebrated these peasant uprisings as engines of history. The mostly celebrated uprising leaders were Chen Sheng and Wu Guang of Qin, Li Zicheng of late Ming, and Hong Xiuquan of the Taiping Rebellion. In Mao's early writings he equated the peasant uprisings with revolutions. According to Mao, these uprisings contain the spirit of resistance that usually had the desire and potential to create a more egalitarian society, but always fail because of the lack of a true revolutionary ideology.[170]

However, the history of Confucian-Legalist conflict upheld the emperors and the stability of their dynasties over peasant uprisings. Most Legalist philosophers and rulers, according to the Writing Groups, were advancing policies that were in favor of the peasants through programs of land redistribution, such as Shang Yang's Jing-tian system and Wu Zetian's policy of breaking up large land-holding noble houses. However, the Confucian-Legalist Historiography reduces the

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[169] MacFarquhar, Roderick. Schoenhals, Michael . Mao's Last Revolution, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006 p. 301-307

[170] Mao, Zedong. Maozedong Xuanji. 毛泽东选集 Vol. 2. Beijing: Renminchubanshe, 1991.

narrative of class conflict and suggests that class issues could be resolved through administrative means within the imperial system.

The Writing Groups had perceived this apparent discrepancy between class politics and Confucian-Legalist Historiography and attempted to address it. In a widely circulated article originally published in *Red Flag* titled "Is Confucian-Legalist Conflict Dog-Bite-Dog" (Ru Fa Douzheng Shi Gouyaogou Ma),[171] the writing groups acknowledged that a prevalent understanding of Confucian-Legalist Conflict was that it is the in-fighting between different factions of oppressive ruling class. The article argued that such opinion belongs to "historical nihilism". As the article explains,

> The so-called "dog-bite-dog" understanding of Confucian-Legalist Historiography belongs to "historical nihilism". If one believes in this understanding, there is absolutely no need for researching and studying the history of Confucian-Legalist Historiography. Chairman Mao had pointed out that it is an important task to use Marxist method to critically study historical heritage and use it to guide the great movement that is taking place right now.[172]

The writing group therefore failed to offer a real solution to the problem of class in Confucian-Legalist Historiography. Instead, it engaged in a tautology and used Mao as the only justification. The class was not a problem because the problem of class would render the Confucian-Legalist Historiography useless, and this was not permissible because the movement was under the instruction of Mao.

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[171] *People's Daily*. Di Ping: "Rufadouzheng shi gouyaogou ma". 儒法斗争是狗咬狗吗 Aug. 15, 1974.

[172] Ibid.

The Confucian-Legalist Historiography also furthered the nationalist turn of Chinese socialist ideology that began with the Hundred Flowers Movement in 1956. It created a distinctive Chinese-Socialist worldview and subsumed Maoist revolutionary politics under a meta-narrative of Chinese history. The meta-narrative starts with the murder of Shaozheng Mao by Confucius in 500 BC and persists until 1970s. While the writing groups claimed that Legalism and its followers were the progressive forces in the history, the history as such only repeated itself through different iterations, which rendered progress impossible. The killing of Shaozheng Mao as the original counter-revolutionary violence was replicated through Jin Ke's failed assassination of the First Emperor and Lin Biao's alleged attempted assassination of Mao. In a widely reprinted article originally published by the Peking University Writing Group, the authors wrote,

> To Confucian-Legalist struggle is to understand that the reactionary faction in each era… always promotes Confucianism and suppress legalism. This was the case in the history, this is also the case for today. All the reactionary factions and leaders of opportunism in the future will always promote Confucianism and suppress legalism.[173]

The Confucian-Legalist Historiography thus used a distinctively Chinese ideological system to distinguish friends and foes. In other articles published on *Red Flag* and *People's Daily*, the Confucian-Legalist Conflict was used as a lens to analyze recent histories and ongoing situations in both China and abroad. In these analyses, Confucianism was used to designate Chiang Kai-

[173] *Guangmingribao*. Liang Xiao: "Yanjiu Rufadouzheng de Lishijingyan". 研究儒法斗争的历史经验 Oct. 13, 1974.

shek, Imperial Japan, Soviet Union, and the United States, though the author only offered scant evidence on the said enemy's alleged devotion to Confucianism.

Though the Confucian-Legalist Historiography was a result of court struggle, Mao's attempt to create the image absolute ruler indeed signaled an ideological turn in socialist China, one that favors a wise ruler and replaces the Marxist linear temporality. The struggle between Confucianism and Legalism replaced the struggle between imperialists and socialists and between bourgeois and proletarian.

With Mao's death in 1976, the Confucian Legalist Histeriography ended abruptly. Shortly after Mao's death, the various Party organs launched a counter-offensive to discredit the movement, labelling it a "ridiculous attempt" by Jiang Qing and her allies to grab power. Unsurprisingly, while insulating Mao, these reports ostensibly revealed the writing groups were closely connected to Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan and the creation of Confucian-legalist Historiography was directly under their command. The real target of the movement, they suggested, was the "Big Confucians within the Party"[174] - Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and the "old cadres" who were attempting to prevent another chaos like 1966.[175]

While the Confucian-Legalist Historiography was indeed closely associated with factional struggle in late-socialist China, attributing the movement solely to court politics obscured the important transformation of Maoist ideology it embodied. Mao's interest in Legalism and his effort to rectify the First Emperor's name long preceded the Cultural Revolution. The Legalist worldview points to an ideal society led by a wise emperor with

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[175] *People's Daily*: Shen, Taosheng: "Lun Luosiding" 论罗思鼎 Aug. 15 1977.

absolute authority, centralized control through empowered state apparatus, and a weakened bureaucracy that only serve instrumental ends. The juxtaposition of this Legalist vision with China's socialist modernity reveals the discursive ways in which traditional Chinese worldviews co-existed, challenged, and even replaced the Marxist linear temporality.

Chapter 4: Closing the Revolution: The Criticize Water Margin Campaign and the Surrender of Mao's China

During the Chinese People Political Consultant Conference in March 2014, one committee member named Li Haibin proposed that the Chinese government should ban the airing of the popular TV drama, *Water Margin* (Shuihuzhuan), to maintain the nation's stability. This TV drama, which was made in 1998 and based on the late imperial Chinese novel *Water Margin*, has been hailed as one of the four most important classic novels in traditional Chinese literature. The novel and its TV drama incarnation tell the story of the common men's rebellion against the imperial government's corruption during the Song Dynasty. At the conference, Li argued that *Water Margin* does not fit the ethos of "our era" since it supports rebellion and violence. Li's proposal was met with uproar on the Chinese internet. Netizens criticized the proposal since it revealed the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) betrayal of the proletarian class politics.[176] State news outlets later made a statement that the government would not heed such a suggestion. The fact that a suggestion from a previously unknown committee member could cause a deep public crisis for the CCP and force it to make a concession through public announcement was extraordinary. It revealed a mired history of censorship and celebration surrounding *Water Margin* since its creation. While emperors and Confucian elites banned the novel for its violent and rebellious content, the challengers of the Confucian order, from Taiping rebels to Communist revolutionaries, honored it for the same reason. However, like many communist revolutionary veterans who were denounced by the regime they fought for during the Cultural Revolution, *Water Margin* could not escape the fate of disgrace.

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[176] Zhao, Yong. "Jinbo *Shuihuzhuan* shi bu 'shanyan' de jianyan." Reminwang. Last modified March 13, 2014. http://media.people.com.cn/n/2014/0313/c40606-24629915.html

In the waning years of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's life, China initiated a renewed campaign to criticize the novel *Water Margin,* one of the most famous Chinese vernacular fictions from the late imperial times. Once the symbol of the peasant resistance and revolution, the novel was later attacked as an example of a failed revolution and used as a weapon against "revisionist" reformers like Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. The campaign began shortly after the alleged defection and death of Lin Biao, radicalized after the funeral of Zhou Enlai, and abruptly ended with Mao's death. Although massive, it was overshadowed by the deaths of these political giants of modern China. In the past, historians of the Cultural Revolution, such as Jonathan Spence and Roderick MacFarquhar, tended to overlook the campaign or regarded it as a mere extension of the Criticize Lin and Criticize Confucian movement. Shortly after Deng Xiaoping took power in China, Merle Goldman briefly examined the factional conflicts behind the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign.[177] John Fitzgerald situated the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign in the background of the *Water Margin* myth and its history of transformation.[178] While their papers provide valuable insights into the political operation of the campaign and the literary history of the novel, they tend to treat *Water Margin* as an isolated literary work that was incidentally caught up in the factional conflicts and utilized for a political campaign. Bridging the gap between the literary and the political, this chapter explores the internal ideological attraction and possibility of subversion of *Water Margin* to China's socialist project. Looking

[177] Goldman, Merle. "The Media Campaign as a Weapon in Political Struggle: The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and *Water Margin* Campaigns," in *Moving a Mountain: Cultural Change in China*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979.

[178] John Fitzgerald, "Continuity within Discontinuity: The Case of Water Margin Mythology," Modern China 12, no. 3 (1986): 361-400

beyond the court struggles and elite realpolitik of the Cultural Revolution, this chapter investigates the ideology of the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign by situating it in the global decline of leftism in the mid-1970s and the dynamic literary tradition of *Water Margin*. I argue that the dramatic shift of the narrative of *Water Margin* in 1975 and 1976 manifested the deeply embedded paradox between rebellion and normalization in the Communist revolutionary project. Such a paradox of revolution is not only the product of the infringement of the coming neoliberal world order, but it also suggests the continued impact of China's literary and popular religious paradigm of integrating rebellions and heresies into imperial political order. By rejecting and denouncing fictional amnesty (Zhaoan), Mao sought to push his revolution beyond the cycle of rebellion and normalization that characterized most peasant uprisings in China's past.

A History of Censorship and Celebration

Water Margin tells the story of an epic rebellion during the late Northern Song Dynasty (early 12th century). Corruption, poverty, and social injustice forced the poor and rich alike to go against the government and become rebels. The novel tells the different stories of 108 outlaws from all walks of society and how their paths eventually merged at Mount Liang, an upland area surrounded by a complex river system in modern day Shandong Province. Together, they waged a formidable rebellion against the imperial court. The rebels came from drastically different backgrounds: peasants, thieves, military officers, literati officials, Daoist hermits, and others. Led by Song Jiang, a petite literary clerk reluctantly turned rebel, the outlaws not only defended several waves of imperial extermination campaigns, but also threatened the throne through a series of assault on the major cities of Northern Song. As their military might grew, the emperor offered imperial amnesty to the rebellious force. The offer created a division among the ranks of

the rebels, with Song Jiang strongly in favor of the amnesty and many others who disagreed. The Mount Liang rebels who reluctantly accepted the amnesty were incorporated into the imperial force. Following court orders, they crushed several other rebellions in China, defended the northern border against the Khitan Liao Dynasty, and were dissolved after sustaining heavy losses in these battles. Their sacrifice was neither recognized by the court nor known by the emperor. Cornered by the corrupted officials, Song Jiang eventually committed forced suicide. In an act of loyalty and solidarity, many of his fellow followers committed suicide by his grave while others entered into self-exile and seclusion.[179]

Like other chapter-novels (*zhanghui xiaoshuo*) of late imperial China, *Water Margin* was born from unstable oral and theatrical traditions. Throughout late Ming to mid-Qing, *Water Margin* was subject to different degrees of censorship. The imperial courts of Ming and Qing believed in a strong connection between *Water Margin* and peasant uprisings as there were numerous evidences that rebels and bandits emulated the actions from *Water Margin* or used it as an inspiration for their action.[180] However, the book and various theatrical plays based on certain chapters from the book were still well-circulated in spite of its censorship.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, China's modernizers saw *Water Margin* both as a source of national perversion and potential for progress. Living under a declining Qing Dynasty and the infringement of western and Japanese powers, many intellectuals sought to modernize China's literature as part of a larger reform project. One of the most prominent critics of *Water Margin* from this era is the reformer turned revolutionary Liang Qichao . In his famous

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[179] Shi, Naian, et al. *Shuihu Zhuan*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009.

[180] Xu, Yongqiang, and Xinqin Li. *Shuihuzhuan yanjiushi.* Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2017.

essay, "On the Relationship Between Novel and Governing" (Xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi), Liang wrote:

> Now the outlaws and strongmen extend to every corner of our nation…everywhere there are the assemblies of the Mount-Liang. Thoughts such as "drink wine in big bowls and eat meat in big chunks; divide the gold and silver in steelyard balance and wear cloths that are of a set" stuff the brains of our society. These thoughts agitate the secret societies such as Elders Brothers Society and Big Swords Society. Even the Boxer Rebellion that resulted in the fall of capital to the foreign militaries could be blamed on this... So today for those who want to reform the politics, you need to start with a revolution of the novels. Those who want to create a new people, most do it by creating new novels.[181]

"Drink wine in big bowls and eat meat in big chunks" is a famous motif from *Water Margin*. It tells the physical joy and freedom of banditry. While Liang blamed *Water Margin* for the chaotic and backward condition of modern China, it is worth noting that his criticism of *Water Margin* is essentially the same as the condemnation from the imperial court from the previous centuries: *Water Margin* corrupts the mind and encourages rebellion.

At the turn of the century, a new discourse on *Water Margin* started to form and gain popularity. Intellectuals started to see *Water Margin* as a source of progressivism. In response to Liang's call for a revolution in the Chinese novel, the literary critic and novel writer Wang Zhongqi wrote in 1907:

> (Shi Naian) loathes the darkness of the society and the ruthlessness of the government. So he created this book according to his own ideal. He created people of great valor and

[181] Liang, Qichao. "Xiaoshuo yu qunzhi zhi guanxi", in Shuihu ziliao huibian, edited by Zhu Yixuan and Liu Minchen. Tianjin: Baihua Wenyi Chubanshe, 1981.

> generosity... Since the birth of the society, there are no instances of an organization of government constituted one hundred people that are equal to one another. *Water Margin* is the only one. Had Shi Naian been born in the West, his work would be comparable to those of Plato, Bakunin, and Tolstoy. Looking at its egalitarianism, *Water Margin* is a work of socialism. Looking at its vengeance on the corrupted officials, it is a work of anarchism. All the organizations depicted in the *Water Margin* are complete in their functions. If we look at it this way, *Water Margin* is a political novel.[182]

In this new discourse, the rebellions from *Water Margin* are justified not only by the corrupted nature of the court, but also by the desire and effort to create a utopian society that is equal and democratic. This discourse mirrors the leftist thoughts that were just emerging in China at the turn of the century.

In a similar vein, *Water Margin* empowered the Chinese communist movement with its message of rebellion. While the rise of bandits traditionally signifies the downfall of a dynasty, with social turbulence and injustice, the image of the late Song society depicted in *Water Margin* easily compares with the corruption and social injustice under the rule of the Kuomintang. More importantly, *Water Margin* provided sources for the romanticization of the socialist movement as a continuation of the peasant rebellions since the Communist revolutionary forces see themselves in the image of the Mount Liang heroes. In particular, the military independence at Mount Liang in *Water Margin* resembles the CCP's situation in Yan-an, and the corruption and the imperial assault resemble the Nationalist Government's anti-bandits campaign. In a 1937 report, shortly

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[182] Wang, Zhongqi. "Zhongguo San Da Xiaoshuo Jia Lun Zan," in Shuihu ziliao huibian. Edited by Zhu Yixuan and Liu Minchen. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1981.

after the Communist forces settled from the Long March, Mao said to the audience in the Counter-Japanese Military and Political University:

> The valiant heroes in the *Water Margin* are all forced to go up to the Mount Liang. We are now forced as well, to go up to the mountains and fight a guerrilla war.[183]

The comparison was more apparent in a talk in 1938, in which Mao claimed:

> We were forced to go up to the "Mount Liang". There is a saying that the court forces the people to rebel (Guanbiminfan); that is what we are like. (We go to) Mount Jinggang, the mountain at the crossroad of Hubei, Heinan, and Anhui, the mountain in Northern Shannxi, and the mountain in Southern Sichuan; we formed guerrilla forces in those places.[184]

The mountains Mao mentioned were the places where the armed rebels who later formed the larger communist movement originated. Mao used "mountain" as a symbol of revolutionary romanticism. It imagined a communist revolution that was heavily linked to *Water Margin*. In *Water Margin*, Mount Liang is heavily defended from the outside world by water areas and military fortification. The rebels were able to establish laws and orders according to what they thought represented justice and happiness. They printed their own bank notes, divided the spoils from looting, and let everyone "drink wine in big bowl and eat meat in big bowl." In other words, they created and maintained a utopia separated from the outside world.

Similar to *Water Margin*, for Mao, the mountains were also a revolutionary space that is segregated from the outside world where revolutionary thinkers could engage in state-building in

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[183] Hubei Aacademy of Social Sciences. *Yi Donglao.* Hubei: Hubei Renmin Press, 1980.

[184] Mao, Zedong. *Mao Zedong Wenyi Lunji*. Edited by Zhonggong Zhongyang Wenxian Yanjiu Shi. Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2002.

miniature scale to achieve their utopian goals. Land redistribution, communist education, and the persecution of landlords and small business owners were widely implemented within these regions. Even in the 1950s, Mao still spoke of "going back to the mountains" as a romanticized last resort after a potential nuclear attack from the United States. *Water Margin* thus served as a venue for the communist leaders to imagine their relationship with China. They not only saw themselves as a vanguard of the Communist ideology, but also tapped into a long tradition of peasant rebellion and uprising throughout the imperial times.

Consequently, *Water Margin* became an important catalyst for the communist in Yan-an to spread revolutionary ideology among the peasants. In the 1930s, Mao directed a movement to create "New Operas" in Yan-an. The "New Operas" needed to be simple, accessible, and popular in order to attract the less literate peasants while promoting revolutionary ideals. Taking advantage of the rich theatrical tradition of *Water Margin*, artists in Yan-an created the play *Forced to Go Up to Mount Liang*. The play was based on a famous story of Lin Chong from *Water Margin*. Lin is initially a martial arts advisor from the imperial army who was later forced to join the Mount Liang rebels as he and his family was bullied and framed by corrupted officials. The son of the corrupt official Gao Qiu slandered and framed Lin for assassination of a higher official in order to make an advance move on Lin's wife. Lin narrowly escaped several attempts on his life but lost his family and position. With nowhere to turn, Lin escaped to Mount Liang and joined the rebellion. The play made some significant changes to the original plot. While the original story did not provide any historical context for Lin Chong's escape, the artists in Yan-an added the invasion from the northern barbarians as the background. Thus, the play created a particular image of the Song government: one that ignores the national crises due to its incompetency and corruption and spends most of its strength on suppressing domestic unrests.

This image of the Song Dynasty highly resembles the CCP's view of the KMT government – corrupt and incompetent in front of the Japanese invasion, yet ruthless to the Chinese masses and Communist revolutionaries.

1975: *Water Margin* and the Danger of Restoration

The celebration of the rebellion in *Water Margin* faded away as the CCP went out of the mountain and became the ruling power in China. However, amid the chaos and confusion of the Cultural Revolution during the last few years of Mao's life, *Water Margin* entered the center of the political struggle of the CCP leadership in 1975. While the physical violence and destruction were largely contained during the 1970s, the ideological and political struggle in the upper echelon of the CCP intensified. Old revolutionary leaders from the Long March sought to restore order in the CCP and China while Mao's protégées struggled to sustain the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. Moreover, Mao's health was deteriorating. His vision was almost lost and he required a Chinese instructor from Peking University to read to him the *Water Margin*.

In August 1975, Mao claimed from his sickbed, "*Water Margin* is a good book only because it tells a story of surrender". Mao's message was quickly received by Yao Wenyuan and Jiangqing. In a matter of days, the major mouthpiece media outlets, including the *People's Daily*, the *Red Flag*, and *The People's Liberation Army News*, initiated a full-fledged mass movement, calling for a "complete reevaluation" of *Water Margin*. People of all walks of society, from steel workers to intellectuals, were publishing their criticisms and interpretations of *Water Margin* based on the editorials from *People's Daily*. Different media, from newspaper to radio, and to big-character posters, were all flooded by criticisms of *Water Margin* and the danger of surrender.

For Mao, the pressing question for China's future and his legacy was the fate of the Cultural Revolution, which started and operated largely under his name. After years of chaos culminating with Lin Biao's downfall in 1971, the public was visibly exhausted from countless campaigns and struggles and it was clear that the Cultural Revolution had entered a dead end. Mao was torn between the failure of the Cultural Revolution and his hope for this "last revolution" to deliver China into the modern world.[185] During the last few years of his life, Mao's attitude towards the Cultural Revolution oscillated between the need to restore political and social order to avoid the complete collapse of society and his fear that the revolution would be compromised to revisionism, and China will "change color" after his death.

While the political struggles had staffed Mao's administration with younger newcomers, Mao now wanted the older generation of revolutionaries who were more trustworthy. In 1974, Mao summoned Deng Xiaoping back from the tractor factory where Deng was undergoing reform and appointed him the vice premier. In 1975, Mao again started to speak of "hundred flowers" and permitted Deng, though vaguely, to implement changes into the sphere of art and culture. Taking the initiative, Deng stressed the need for a return to normality and sober planning in industrial production. Deng was openly against the emphasis of political credential over expertise during the Cultural Revolution and called for the return of control back to the experts and technocrats in factories and universities

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[185] Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Susanne. "The Campaign to Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius and the Problem of 'Restoration' in Chinese Marxist Historiography," in The Challenge of Linear Time, Nationhood and Politics of History in East Asia. Edited by Viren Murthy and Axel Schneider. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

However, in November of 1975, Mao again felt threatened by Deng's reform measures. Deng and Zhou Enlai kept pushing for economic development and state cohesion at the Fourth National People's Congress. Zhou put forward his famous call for the "Four Modernization", which promoted recovery and development in agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. For Mao, the reform attempt had slid into the revisionist camp – one that sought to gradually transform the socialist system into a capitalist one from within. The economic growth that relied on a commodity-based market within a socialist political system empowered the bourgeois elements in China and eventually led to the de facto possession of means of productions by the bourgeois.[186] The threat was felt more acutely by Deng's political opponent – Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan.

For Mao, the Cultural Revolution experienced a similar fate as the rebellions of Mount Liang. The 1975 campaign against *Water Margin* mainly focused on Song Jiang's reconciliatory politics toward the Song court and relied on class backgrounds to explain the actions of different Mount Liang rebels. Contrary to criticisms from the previous regime that condemned the rebellion and violence in *Water Margin*, the movement in 1975 accused *Water Margin* for not being truly rebellious. The rhetoric of the movement started by celebrating Lu Xun's criticism of *Water Margin*. In 1930, Lu Xun wrote in his article "The Transformation of the Hooligans" (Liumang de bianqian):

> Their (the Mount-Liang rebels) flag is "Enforce Justice On Behalf of Heaven" (Titianxingdao) . They oppose corrupted officials, but not the emperor. They rob the average people, but not the generals and prime ministers. When Li Kui rescues Song Jiang from the

[186] Riskin, Carl. *China's Political Economy: The Quest for Development since 1949*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

> execution ground, he uses his axes to chop down people's head. Those that were chopped were only the audience of the execution. The message of *Water Margin* is clear: because they do not oppose the emperor, they receive the amnesties from the court. They fight other bandits for the court - those who do not "execute the way for the heaven". They are slaves, after all.[187]

This statement of Lu Xun was used as the central point to criticize *Water Margin* and reveal the danger of surrender. For Lu Xun, the rebellions in *Water Margin* were not real rebellions, but simply disruption of society for the purpose of bargaining with the more powerful political elites in China.

The Demonic Paradigm of Rebellion and Incorporation

The Criticize *Water Margin* campaign in 1975 and Lu Xun's criticism in 1930 cannot be fully understood without grasping the paradigm of rebellion, appeasement, and incorporation in Chinese cultural memory. Lu Xun's article questioned the long-standing cultural paradigm of *Zhao-an*, specifically, incorporating rebellions in China. When the imperial court does not have the power and resources to crush a rebellion, it seeks appeasement by pardoning the rebellious force and incorporating it into the imperial military system.

Zhao-an is much more than a political strategy; it also exists deeply in Chinese literary and religious traditions. Mark Meulenbeld's study of Daoist rituals points out that the Daoist exorcism practice largely relies on a "demonic warfare," which involves taming disruptive spirits and

[187] Lu, Xun. *San xian ji*. Hong Kong: Xinyi chubanshe, 1967.

enlisting them into armies of spirit soldiers commanded by higher divinities.[188] One of the most famous examples of the divine incorporation is from *Journey to the* West, in which the Jade Emperor gives the position of the protector of the horses to the monkey. Barend ter Haar's research on the "demonic paradigm" of Chinese popular religion locates the demonic roots of a large number of Chinese divinities.[189] This religious tradition manifests in the imperial court's policies and many uprisings throughout late imperial China, from the Ming emperor's attempt to incorporate the Japanese general Toyotomi Hideyoshi to the Qing Court's support of the Boxer Rebellion.[190]

For Lu Xun, this tradition of incorporating rebellions into imperial and divine hierarchy contributed to the lack of revolutionary spirit in Chinese history. He argued that there had not been real revolutions in Chinese history, but merely disruptions to the imperial order. Lu Xun traced such disruptions to Mohism and the tradition of *Xia* of the Warring States periods.[191] The concept of *Xia* may be loosely translated into "chivalry", which advocates strategic use of violence and strict self-discipline through the moral code of righteousness (Yi). *Xia* was most famously glorified

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[188] Meulenbeld, Mark. *Demonic Warfare: Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015.

[189] Haar, Barend J. ter. "China's Inner Demons: The Political Impact of the Demonological Paradigm," in China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Master Narrative and Post-Mao Counternarratives, edited by Woei Lien Chong. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002.

[190] Yu, Anthony. *State and Religion in China: Historical and Textual Perspectives*. Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 2005.

[191] Lu, Xun. "Liumang de bianqian." in *Lu Xun quanji*. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1973.

by Sima Qian's "Biographies of Assassins" (Cikeliezhuan) from *Records of the Grand Historian.* While *Xia* and Mohism rapidly declined after the Warring States Period, the romanticized ideal of *Xia* was active in China's literary imagination.

Lu Xun argued that *Xia's* violence did not seek to overthrow the imperial power, but to eradicate the corrupted forces within the system and consequently receiving pardon and recognition for themselves from the state. In other words, rebellion became a strategy for the political elites to serve and affirm the imperial order when conventional venues were unavailable. Lu Xun further pointed out that *Water Margin* best illustrates the ideal of *Xia* and the lack of real resistance. The ideal of "Enforcing Justice On Behalf of the Heaven" for *Water Margin* is a strategy to serve the emperor by skipping the corrupted bureaucratic system.

Water Margin **as Class Struggle**

On August 31st, 1975, Lu Xun's comments from 1930 were printed on the front page of the *People's Daily*, marking the beginning of the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign. It was followed by an editorial from the *Red Flag*, condemning the actions of Song Jiang and calling for the eradication of the "poisons in *Water Margin* study".[192] Within days, state-controlled media were covered with various ministries and work units claiming their support for the campaign and loyalty to the Cultural Revolution. The campaign accused *Water Margin* of promoting the "theory of snuffing the class struggle". As the editorial argued, *Water Margin* intends to conceal the real reason for peasant uprisings. It depicts the corrupted emperor as "craving for the virtuous", "loving the subjects", and the purpose of the uprising was to eliminate the corrupted officials for the Song

[192] *Hongqi*, no. 9 (1975).

court. The real ethos of *Water Margin*, according to the editorials, was not about rebellion, but a "capitulationism" that helps to protect the feudal rulers.[193]

However, instead of viewing the failure of the rebellion in *Water Margin* through the paradigm of rebellion and incorporation, the campaign in 1975 emphasized the role of class. It divided the Mount Liang rebels into the revolutionary camp and reactionary camp. The failure of the rebellion, according to the 1975 narrative, was due to the inability of the revolutionary camp to accurately recognize the true nature of the reactionary camp led by Song Jiang. The reason behind Song Jiang's capitulationism, the *People's Daily* article explained, is his class background. While *Water Margin* depicts Song Jiang as a person of generosity who always helps the needy, the *People's Daily* pointed out that Song was able to financially help others only because he was a landlord who exploits the working masses. The real reason for his generosity is to "downplay the class tension".[194] Although Song Jiang joined the Mount Liang heroes to participate in the peasant uprising, the tension between Song Jiang and the corrupted Song officials that he fought against was not class tension, but tensions among different factions of the landlord class. The real reason for his rebellion was to eliminate the corrupt officials for the emperor, thus protecting the oppressive feudal system of the Song Dynasty. Song's decision to seek reconciliation with the imperial court was, thus, determined by his class background.

On the other hand, the Mount Liang rebels who opposed surrender did so because they came from the suffering masses. They were fishermen, peasants, hooligans, and foot soldiers before they joined the uprising. The purpose for their participation in the rebellion was to

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[193] Beijingdaxue, Qinghuadaxue Pipanzu, "Yibu Xuanchuan Touxiangzhuyi De Fanmianjiaocai," *Hong Qi*, no. 9 (1975): 13.

[194] *People's Daily*. "Ping *Shuihu*." August 31, 1975.

decisively overthrow the emperor. However, they were fooled by Song Jiang and forced to accommodate his agenda. The Mount Liang rebels thus paved the way for their own demise by letting a person of questionable class background to join their rank and degrade their cause. As one article from the *People's Daily* stated:

> Song Jiang's slogan of "Enforce Justice On Behalf of Heaven" represents his loyalty to the emperor, which is his political ideology… This slogan is a "revision" to the nature and direction of the peasant uprising… it does not represent the revolutionary ideal of the peasants. On the contrary, it reveals Song Jiang's nature as a member of the landlord class.[195]

The class narrative overturns the previous discussion of *Water Margin* from the PRC era, which situates the failure of the Mount Liang uprising to the lack of class consciousness and party leadership. The articles published on major mouth-piece newspapers argued that Mount Liang rebels were originally led by a group of true revolutionaries who were from the poor masses – the Ruan brothers, Wu Song, Li Kui, and others. The goal of their military separatism was to overthrow the Song Dynasty and establish an order that was friendly to the suffering masses. Song Jiang, a government clerk from a landlord family and a worshipper of the way of Confucius and Mencius, joined the ranks of the true revolutionaries and started to push the Mount-Liang towards his own agenda: selling Mount-Liang to the Song court for his government title. Song Jiang not only spread his revisionist ideology among the Mount Liang rebels, but also changed the class outlook of the Mount Liang rebels by recruiting new members who were of questionable class backgrounds and placing them into important positions. Even though the true revolutionaries of Mount Liang resisted, Song managed to surrender the Mount Liang rebels to

[195] *People's Daily*, "Zhongshi Dui Shuihu De Pinglun" August 31, 1975

the government. Song then led the remaining Mount Liang forces to join the Song court to suppress other peasant uprisings.

While the criticisms from 1975 still followed the demonic paradigm of rebellion and incorporation as pointed out by Lu Xun, there existed hopes and forces to break this paradigm and create something entirely new among the suffering masses. Such hopes were led astray and eventually destroyed by the class enemies from within.

Using tactics and rhetoric honed during the previous years of the Cultural Revolution, the renewed attack on *Water Margin* depends on the class background of the Mount Liang rebels to explain their actions and determine their positions. While *Water Margin* tells a complex story of 108 rebel leaders, it was difficult for people other than literary historians of *Water Margin* to keep track of each rebel leader's class background. To solve this issue, in September 1975, literary historians from Fudan University compiled a booklet titled *Biographical Accounts from Water Margin.* The booklet concisely summarizes each rebel leader's "class backgrounds, hometowns, reasons for joining Mount Liang, and attitudes towards imperial pardon"[196]. This class interpretation is strikingly similar to the struggle session tactics that aimed to denounce established political figures during the Cultural Revolution.

Chivalric Romance and Bandit's Violence

Apart from the class difference among the Mount-Liang leaders, the 1975 critics of *Water Margin* also linked the class analysis with the division between the chivalry (侠, Xia) and banditry (Dao) in Chinese literary tradition. This division between the chivalry and banditry in

[196] Fudan University. Shuihu renwu zhi. Hangjiang shiyou baoshe. 1976.

Water Margin was coined earlier by Lu Xun in his article. Based on Lu Xun's reading, the critics of *Water Margin* emphasized the unstable distinction between *Xia* and *Dao* in China.

Contrary to the traditionally positive and romanticized view of *Xia*, socialist politics contended that Xia's commitment to social justice is hypocritical because it only served the interests of China's political elites. This was further illustrated in a commentary written by the Propaganda Group of Fudan University on the chapter titled "Major Lu Da Assaults Butcher Zheng" from *Water Margin*. The chapter tells the story of Lu Da, a military officer, rescuing a young woman from a forced marriage. Lu Da meets the young woman, Jin Cuilian, and her father at a hostel. The father and daughter were bullied by Butcher Zheng. Zheng demanded Jin become his concubine in exchange for three thousand strings of cash, to which Jin agreed. However, Zheng never paid the amount, and Jin was driven out of Zheng's home by Zheng's legal wife. Zheng then demanded Jin and her father to return the money, which the father and daughter had actually never received. The father and daughter were unable to come up with the money, and Zheng confined them at a hostel until they could pay him. Lu Da, after hearing the story, freed them from the hostel and picked a fight with Zheng at Zheng's meat shop. He violently beat Zheng to death. As a result, he had to flee the city and later became a monk in order to evade arrest.[197]

The story was widely praised due to its *Xia* message from the previous era. Jin Shengtan wrote that the depiction of Lu Da in this chapter is so passionate that it made the readers feel shameful that they had never fought for other people's justice and lived in this world in vain.[198] However, for the critics in 1975, Lu Da's act, like all acts of *Xia*, conforms to the Confucian

[197] Shi, et al., *Shuihuzhuan*. 20.

[198] Shi, et al., *Shuihuzhuan*. 23

social hierarchy and only serves the interests of the elites. The Fudan Propaganda Group pointed to the later development of this story. After Lu Da fled the city, he came across the father and daughter again. Lu was delighted to learn that Jin Cuilian met the wealthy Esquire Zhao and married him as a concubine. The father and daughter introduced Lu to Zhao, and Zhao arranged for Lu to become a monk in a monastery.[199] The Fudan Propaganda Group pointed out that for both Butcher Zheng and Esquire Zhao, Jin Cuilian was to become a concubine who would be oppressed by males. However, the oppression from butcher Zheng was explicit, so Lu killed him. On the other hand, the oppression from Esquire Zhao conformed to the Confucian morality, so Lu respected him. Lu's morality of *Xia* only serves the social elites such as Zhao. In the end, the Fudan Propaganda Team wrote:

> Th author was trying to create an illusion. He wanted to make people believe that all the injustices under heaven were created by people like butcher Zheng who do not speak of kindness and morality… If you ever suffered from any injustice, just wait for someone like Esquire Zhao to help you, or wait for someone like Lu to fight against the injustice you suffered. There is no need for revolution and rebellion.[200]

By blurring the distinction between *Xia* and Confucian morality, the critics of *Water Margin* emphasized the limitation of its message on social justice and moral character.

The critique on *Xia* in *Water Margin* is not only a critique of Confucian ideology, but also an affirmation of a socialist morality that is consistent with class politics. Contrary to the chivalric righteousness, which promotes drastic measures for social justice, the campaign argued

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[199] Shi et al., *Shuihuzhuan*. 31

[200]Fudan Xuanchuanzu*, Shuihu Pinglunji*. Shanghai: Shanghai remmin chubanshe, 1976. 125

for a righteousness of the outlaws. The Chinese term for rebellion 起义 refers to a class specific moral code that is revolutionary and anti-oppression. The socialist critics played on the two names of the main hall of the Mount-Liang. Under Chao Gai's leadership, the name of the hall was "*Juyiting*", which means "The Hall that Unites Righteousness", whereas under Song Jiang, the name was changed to "*Zhongyitang*", which translates as "The Hall of Loyal Righteousness"[201]. While both names contain the character "*Yi*", which stands for righteousness, the former represents the rebellious morality of the outlaws that Mao viewed as the predecessor of the communist revolution and the latter represents the reactionary morality of *Xia* that contributes to the oppression of the peasant uprising.

1976: Deng Xiaoping as the Modern-Day Song Jiang

In 1976, towards the end of the Cultural Revolution, it was apparent that the campaign was little about *Water Margin* itself. Mao and China's major newspapers made no secret that the real targets of the campaign were the perceived revisionists in the party. The campaign warned about the enemies from within, who wanted to surrender the communist revolution to the capitalist way of life.

Up until the April 5th Incident, in which Beijing residents defiantly mourned the death of Zhou Enlai on the Tiananmen Sqaure, Deng had not yet been revealed as the real target of the attack. The articles in the *People's Daily* and *Red Flag* called for the readers to think about Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao while reading *Water Margin*. As one article from the *People's Daily* stated:

[201] Fudan Xuanchuanzu. *Shuihu Pinglunji*. 114.

> The counter-revolutionary career of Song Jiang proves that those who follow revisionism are destined to become capitulationists and sell out the revolution and become the walking dogs of the reactionary forces. This is the characteristic shared by all revisionists. Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao promoted revisionism. This implies that they promote class capitulationism to our countrymen and promote national capitulationism in front of foreigners.[202]

However, Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao were public political enemies who had been long removed from the political theater. In a dramatic turn of events, Lin Biao died from a plane crash when he was allegedly defecting to the Soviet Union after a failed coup against Mao. After that, his name became a frequent target of the campaign against the revisionist. The fact that Liu Shaoqi was mentioned is more telling of the real enemy of the criticizing *Water Margin* campaign. Liu, as the "number one capitalist roader of China", was arrested in 1967 and vilified repeatedly and struggled against before his death in 1969. Deng was also criticized alongside Liu at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, although he was never subjected to the same harshness. The campaign was thus manifestly aimed at the two most prominent living "revisionists" in the CCP, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping.

Although the campaign initially did not directly undermine Deng's name, Deng's power and reputation suffered severely from Mao's growing distrust and Zhou Enlai's death in 1976. While Mao wanted to downplay Zhou's death, mourners from all walks of society in Beijing gathered on the Tiananmen Square and along the Chang-an Road. The mourning also became a venue to demonstrate political solidarity with Zhou and express dissatisfaction of the Jiang Qing

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[202] *People's Daily,* Zhu Fanglan: "Pingshuihu" August 31, 1975.

clique that largely dominated the Chinese political theater.[203] As a close political ally of Zhou, Deng also received support from the mass demonstration, which implicated him as the potential mastermind behind the protest. Zhou's death in January further weakened the reformative power in the Central Committee, which relieved Deng from his position of vice premier shortly after. The campaign of Criticizing *Water Margin* started to overtly target Deng shortly after the public mourning of Zhou Enlai on Tiananmen Square.

The criticisms linked Deng's advocacy of technocracy and economic development to Song Jiang's surrender to the imperial court. The *People's Daily* claimed that Deng is the "modern day Song Jiang". As one article from the *PLA Daily* (解放军报, Jiefangjunbao) stated:

> As for today, the biggest unrepentant capitalist roader Deng Xiaoping also wants to overthrow the proletarian dictatorship of our party. Although these two people (Deng and Song Jiang) live in different historical times and have different class origin, they are both the enemy element within the revolutionary force.[204]

Meanwhile, the campaign against *Water Margin* also focused on the relationship between Song Jiang and Chao Gai, who was the leader of the Mount Liang before Song Jiang's arrival. In *Water Margin*, Chao Gai was born into a wealthy landlord family and famous for his courage and strength. After receiving information containing treasuries for a high official's birthday, Chao Gai recruited his friends from and around the village and created a daring plan to rob the

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[203] Vogel, Ezra F. *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011.

[204] *Jie Fang Jun Bao*. "Cong Songjiang gao touxiang kan zouzipai shi zuida de weixian", July 13, 1976.

convoy. After the success of their scheme, Chao Gai and his followers were pursued by a detachment of Song soldiers. He was able to escape to the Mount Liang after Song Jiang, then a government clerk in a small town, alerted him of the soldiers' arrival.

After Chao Gai took power, he managed to successfully lead the Mount Liang soldiers to victory against several major attacks from the imperial army. However, after Song Jiang's arrival, Chao Gai stayed behind the line most of the time and let Song Jiang lead most of the operations in the field. Nevertheless, after skirmishing with another rebel group, Chao Gai decided to lead the Mount Liang force to attack its stronghold in person. During the battle, Chao Gai was hit by an arrow coated with poison. He died shortly after the injury, leaving Song Jiang in command of the rebels.[205] When Shi Naian wrote about the grand assembly of 108 Mount-Liang heroes, Chao Gai was excluded because of his early death.

Chao Gai's death and Song Jiang's succession to power represent a turning point in the discourse of the rebellion. Chao Gai and his followers, the Ruan Brothers, were frustrated by the mundane everyday life and admired the realm of the heroes, where one's ability could be recognized despite the social hierarchy. When they took arm against the government convoy carrying gifts for an official, they justified the act as taking away the "unrighteous wealth" from the corrupted officials. While they entertained the possibility of overthrowing the emperor, they remained ordinary bandits who fought for wealth, vengeance, and pleasure in sheer violence.

In contrast to Chao Gai, Song Jiang was never determined to join the rebellion, and only agreed to join Mount Liang with great reluctance. After Chao Gai became the leader of Mount Liang, he sent 300 taels of gold to Song Jiang in order to repay Song for tipping him off when the government sent out troops to arrest him. Song Jiang refused the gold, but the gold was

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[205] Shi, Naian, et al. *Shuihuzhuan*.

discovered by Song's concubine. Song killed the concubine in an attempt to cover up the incident. After Song was arrested by the government, Chao Gai led the Mount-Liang troops to rescue Song. However, Song was reluctant to join Mount-Liang, and even refused to let others open up the cangue for him. Song saw the rebellion and his rescue as a crime against the court, and in extension, against heaven. Only when Song was sent to the execution ground and rescued again by the Mount-Liang forces before he was to be beheaded did he agree to join the rebellion.

The campaign against *Water Margin* greatly exploited this relation between Song Jiang and Chao Gai by making it parallel to Deng and Mao. According to the 1975 and 1976 narratives, Song Jiang, since the first day he joined Mount Liang, was constantly attempting to take power away from Chao Gai in order to establish his own leadership. Song Jiang assumed command of important battles, and left Chao Gai on the mountain as the figurative authority. By doing so, Song Jiang established his own authority and chain of command despite Chao Gai's position as the commander in name. By hypocritically paying respect to Chao Gai as the leader of Mount-Liang, Song Jiang made all the important decisions for the rebellion and gradually assumed de facto command of Mount-Liang's military operation. This paved the road for him to assume command of Mount-Liang after Chao Gai's death.[206]

The reason for highlighting the relation between Chao Gai and Song Jiang is apparent. Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan argued that Deng's proposals for economic, industrial, and educational development were an attempt to hollowing out power from Mao, just like what Song Jiang did to Chao Gai. For Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan, the relation between Song Jiang and Chao Gai indicates that even those who claimed to be loyal to Mao and the party could betray the revolution.

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[206] *People's Daily.* "'Fang' yu 'ping' he 'fan' yu 'bai' shuoming le shenme?" December 25, 1975.

In 1975, Deng Xiaoping largely framed his reformative politics as a continuation of Mao's will. Specifically, Deng rallied support for his reform under the slogan "Follow the Three Directives (of Mao)". The "Three Directives" of Mao refers to "studying theories to guard and fight against revisionism", "enhance national unity", and "improve national economy".[207] Deng creatively combined Mao's expression from 1974 and 1975 to justify his own agenda.[208] The directive to struggle against revisionism assures the public that Deng would still carry on the main task of Cultural Revolution. The other two directives reflect Deng's own reform agenda that aimed to stabilize the society from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. However, by stressing Mao's desire for national unity and economic growth, Deng made it difficult for his enemies to attack his policies.

Deng's reformative policies included a series of "rectifications (整顿, Zhengdun)" of different branches of the party regime, including the military, industry, and education. In each area, Deng sought to combat factionalism created by the Cultural Revolution and emphasized the need to return to normalcy. He justified the rectifications by tracing them back to the Yan-an Rectification Movement of 1942, and claimed that party unity is essential to Maoism and the survival of the Communist Party.[209] Deng stressed that the "three directives" should be viewed as a whole, and none of them should be undertaken in expense of the others, suggesting that class struggle should not hinder the everyday operation of the society.

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[207] Deng, Xiaoping. *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan.* Vol. 2. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983. 1-3

[208] Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. 95.

[209] Deng, *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan*. 12-14

For Deng's political opponents, the call for unity and return to normalcy under Mao's directives echoed Song Jiang's pretense of following Chao Gai while taking command of Mount-Liang. As one article from *People's Daily* stated:

> Song Jiang ostensibly pays respect to Chao Gai while secretly pushing him aside. Step by step he assumes actual command of the rebellious army… He first steals military command from Chao Gai, took the power of administrating the Mount Liang and appointing leaders from Chao Gai. In the end, he would not even allow Chao Gai to inquire about important decisions on policies and politics. Behind Chairman Mao and the party's backs, Deng Xiaoping created the revisionist policy of "Follow the Three Directives". This is a political lie that aimed to divide the party under Mao's leadership.[210]

While Deng used Mao as a cover to downplay class struggle with the "three directives", his opponents also cited Mao to argue that other social strengthening can take place only when class struggle is successful.

The Surrender of Mao's China

While the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign largely addresses the power struggle against Deng in court politics before Mao's death, it also represents Maoist China's attempt to push the Communist Revolution beyond the rebellion-appeasement paradigm in the Chinese literary tradition. Weigelin-Schwiedrzik argued that the Criticize Lin Biao Criticize Confucius Movement signaled the Chinese Marxist historians' attempt to overcome the dynastic cycle of revolution and decay in China's past and reconcile Marxism with traditional Chinese

[210] *People's Daily*. "Shuihu Ping Chaogai Yu Yibailingba Ren Zhiwai." July 20, 1976.

historiography.[211] Viewed in this light, I argue that the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign represents the attempt to reconcile Marxism with China's literary and popular religious tradition of rebellion and ghost appeasement and incorporation.

The surrender of rebellion that Mao feared is common in late imperial Chinese literary history. While Mao in his earlier life spoke fondly of *Water Margin* and *Journey to the West* for their rebellious message, both fictions depict the process of the rebel being tamed, atoned, and incorporated into the existing imperial and religious order. Mark Meulenbeld noted that the Daoist exorcism both in literature and in practice relies on a "demonic warfare" that involves taming the disruptive spirits and enlisting them into armies of spirit soldiers commanded by higher divinities.[212] This process significantly influences the exorcist practices in Chinese religious and political activities. According to Barend ter Haar, such influence continued into the Cultural Revolution. Violent political struggle sessions during the Cultural Revolution could be explained by the exorcist practices of enlisting tamed demons to fight the still disruptive demons.[213]

The story of the *Water Margin* can largely be explained under this demonic paradigm framework. The fiction *Water Margin* begins with the 108 star demons that were sealed in a

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[211] Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, Susanne. "The Campaign to Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius and the Problem of 'Restoration' in Chinese Marxist Historiography," in *The Challenge of Linear Time, Nationhood and Politics of History in East Asia*. Edited by Viren Murthy and Axel Schneider. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

[212] Meulenbeld, *Demonic Warfare: Daoism, Territorial Networks, and the History of a Ming Novel*. 103.

[213] Haar, "China's Inner Demons: The Political Impact of the Demonological Paradigm," 27-69.

temple's well and later freed by an arrogant bureaucrat. The 108 star demons later incarnated in the 108 Mount-Liang heroes and caused tremendous disruption for all under heaven. The rebellion was finally appeased with an imperial pardon and the Mount-Liang forces were incorporated into the imperial army to fight off other disruptions for the Song Dynasty. The process of incorporation was further completed towards the end of the novel when Song Jiang became a god after committing forced suicide by drinking the poisoned wine offered by the court.

By undermining the fictional appeasement, the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign attempted to overcome the literary and religious tradition of such incorporation. The incorporation took a much more realistic light in the 1970s as China began negotiating with the Western world for China's potential incorporation into the would-be neoliberal world order.

Conclusion: Confusion, Responsibility, and Unintended Consequences

In the face of attacks, Deng remained silent until Mao's death. On September 9th 1976, Mao passed away in Beijing, leaving behind the political fray of the Cultural Revolution and a weak leader. The Criticize *Water Margin* campaign was soon labeled as a political conspiracy of Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four. According to the new narrative, Mao called for a reevaluation of *Water Margin*, which was distorted by Jiang to use as a weapon against Deng. In December, an editorial in the People's Daily titled "Reread Chairman Mao's Command to Criticize *Water Margin*", argued that Jiangqing and the Gang of Four were the real revisionists that Mao's campaign should have targeted.[214] The new narrative struggled to create the distinction between

[214] *People's Daily*. "'Sirenbang' Shi Huozhenjiashide Touxiang Pai – Chongdu Maozhuxi Guanyu Pingshuihu De Zhishi". December 12, 1976.

Mao's campaign and Jiang's anti-Deng movement, leaving out the questions of Mao's legacy. The narrative further shifted in 1978 when the *People's Daily* published an editorial titled "What Exactly Happened During the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign." The editorial thoroughly denounced the campaign and admitted that the *People's Daily* was under the control of the Gang of Four during the campaign. It also claimed that Mao's criticism of *Water Margin*, which Jiang Qing manipulated into a political conspiracy against Deng, was only "academic" and even "entertaining" in nature.[215]

All walks of society participated in the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign, but not all of the people were equally affected. For most people, the Criticize *Water Margin* in 1975 and 1976 was yet another mass movement of the Cultural Revolution with an apparent political agenda and questionable impact. While all of the people claimed the tremendous importance of recognizing Song Jiang's capitulationism, the essays and big character posters they produced were mostly repeating the *People's Daily*'s editorial.

However, scholars and students of traditional Chinese literature and history participated in the campaign with actual research on literary history and text analysis. Through this research, they even discovered new texts about *Water Margin*. These scholars and students included prominent historians, librarians, and young students who later became active writers and professors during the post-Mao years. While many of them participated due to political interests and pressure, the campaign sparked passion in traditional literature for many young scholars and students. Yu Yunguo, a professor from Shanghai Normal University who also participated in the campaign, wrote in 2013:

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[215] *People's Daily*. "Ping *Shuihu* yundong daodi shi zenme yi hui shi?" August 11, 1978.

> We could not find any book to read at an age that we want to read the most… The Criticize *Water Margin* campaign opened a crack on the cultural embargo of Cultural Revolution, and met many people's want for knowledge. Paradoxically, this nation-wide political movement in an academic disguise actually helped to create the third-generation scholars that now dominate the academia in China.[216]

Because the campaign targeted only high-ranking political officials like Deng and Zhou, ordinary Chinese were spared from the more violent aspect of the Cultural Revolution and, therefore, felt rather safe. As MacFarquhar and Schoenhals noted, the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign was a relatively relaxed one in which people were offered thick volumes of popular classical fictions to discuss in political study sessions.[217] The more relaxed nature of the campaign made the unintended consequence possible.

Towards the very end of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's life, the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign attempted to carry on the class struggle project while anticipating the ultimate defeat and surrender of socialist China. Not only did the campaign speak of the deeply embedded fear of the enemy from within that is typical from the logic of class struggle, but it also represented the attempt to resist depoliticization at the end of the Cultural Revolution. While Wang Hui and Karl defined depoliticization as the reduction of political parties into government functions,[218] the Criticize *Water Margin* campaign linked depoliticization to the cycle of

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[216] Yunguo, Yu. *Fang Yan You Ji*. Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2014.

[217] MacFarquhar, Roderick. *Mao's Last Revolution*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008. 404.

[218] Wang, Hui. *The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity*. London: Verso, 2009.

rebellion and appeasement in Chinese history and literary tradition. The campaign, on the other hand, revealed the continued relevance of traditional literature in socialist ideology. With its layered meanings of rebellion, violence, disruption, and appeasement, *Water Margin* continued to exert its influence into the post-Mao China under the neoliberal world order.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the ideological sources in Maoist politics from traditional Chinese philosophies, literature, and popular religion. From 1956 to 1976, intellectuals, CCP, and Mao had repeatedly utilized traditional worldviews for the service of socialist politics. The persistence of traditional world views in China had created a unique form of socialist ideology that stresses China's particularity and its innate progressiveness. It made China's revolutionary project ideologically less dependent on the Soviet Union and orthodox Marxism, which was still a foreign import.

While this dissertation focused on the internal campaigns in socialist China, they were also intimately connected with larger international politics of Cold War détente. Jeremi Suri, in his book *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente*, points out an international wave of unrest in both capitalist and socialist world in 1960s that resulted in a more static and inward-looking consolidating process in the U.S., France, the Soviet Union, and PRC. While popular protests rocked the foundations of capitalist liberal democracies in the west, the rebellion took a decisively literary and cultural form in China. Suri had used the crisis around Wu Han's "Hairui Dismissed from Office" as an example of rebellions in China. Suri further argues that the uniqueness of China's case lies in Mao's ability to "kidnap dissent language for his own purposes" as manifested in the Cultural Revolution that followed.[219]

As discussed in Chapter 2, Wu Han's literary creation was less stemmed from an impulse of dissent, but was carrying on a long-standing leftist tradition of using ghosts to haunt corrupted

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[219] Suri, Jeremi. Power and Protest: *Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005.

politics. While the line between official politics and dissent was usually shifting and unpredictable in socialist China, the case does reveal the threat of the past to Mao. In part, the movements surrounding traditional Chinese literatures and philosophies after 1960 could be interpreted as attempts to take control of pre-modern ideologies that could easily spill out of control under the heightened Cold War conflicts.

Moreover, the increasingly hostile confrontation between the Soviet Union and China also contributed to the discursive politics of traditional literature and philosophy. Wang Gungwu, in his article from 1975, had attributed the Criticize Lin Biao and Criticize Confucius campaign as Mao's attempt to distance from the Soviet Union.[220] While tension between PRC and the Soviet Union could not explain the cultural movements that happened before the Sino-Soviet Split, it did create a sense of isolation and an urgency to revise the socialist ideology into a more nationalistic one. In the Criticize Lin Biao and Criticize Confucius campaign, Lin Biao was accused of promoting the strategy of the Soviet "nuclear umbrella" and giving up China's military strength and national sovereignty, which contrasted with Wang Anshi and Liu Zongyuan's supposed Legalist militarism in the Confucian-Legalist Historiography that was compiled around the same time.

As I have pointed out in chapter 3, the Soviet Union not only became a military threat, but also represented an ideological danger that was difficult to eradicate in PRC. Unlike liberal democracy from the west, which was stigmatized and unfamiliar to ordinary Chinese people under socialism, the Soviet literature and political theories were once praised and widely circulated in PRC. In early 1970s, post-Khrushchev Soviet political writings and literature, such

[220] Wang Gungwu, "Juxtaposing Past and Present in China Today," in China Quarterly, 1975: 1-24

as Ilya Ehrenberg's memoir *People, Years, Life* and Vasily Aksyonov's novel *A Ticket to the Stars*, which was translated and published for a limited "internal readership", became widely circulated and celebrated in Beijing's underground youths reading groups and became inspirations for ideological non-conformity in China. Therefore, the campaigns in 1970s centered around Chinese cultural traditions echoed the ideological shift from Marxist internationalism to more defensive and conventional nationalism.

Although all four movements this dissertation has examined express aspects of Chinese particularity, they had different intellectual implications that reflect the Mao and CCP's ideological oscillations. While I have argued that *The Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* and the Confucian-Legalist Historiography signaled important conservative moments in socialist China in which Mao turned to state apparatus, centralization of power, and militarization to quell political uncertainties, the debates about Springs and Autumns' materialism and the Criticize *Water Margin* Campaign signaled an opposite direction. The spontaneous mobilization of Chinese historians and philosophers during the Hundred Flowers Movement had created the possibility of the reconciliation between China's past and the communist revolutionary project. The Criticize *Water Margin* campaign, though carried out largely by former members of the Cultural Revolution Small Group and explicitly targeted Deng Xiaoping, promoted a more spontaneous revolutions and lamented on the depoliticization and alienation of the Cultural Revolution.

The analysis of this dissertation also demonstrates the various limitations on Mao's project of reviving traditional worldviews in socialist politics. Mao attempted to energize and mobilize soldiers, workers, and peasants through traditional Chinese literature and philosophies, but their participation remained mechanical and superficial. While plays about *Water Margin*

and ghosts in the Yan-an era attained popularity among the masses, the movements surrounding traditional Chinese worldviews in PRC often failed to achieve Mao's intended ideological effects. Many post-Mao editorials and memoirs often highlight the feeling of confusion and alienation created by these movements, such as people mistaken *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* as "Stories About Not Being Afraid of Rabbits" or Criticize *Water Margin* as Criticize Water Kettle due to similarities in character structures and pronunciations.

However, the unintended consequences of these movements were profound. The fluidity and diversity of traditional Chinese literary and philosophical works often defied Mao's attempts to give them fixed political meanings. Despite the ostensible anti-tradition message from the New Culture Movement to the Cultural Revolution, Mao's campaigns not only facilitated the popularity of traditional literature and philosophies, but also institutionalized traditional knowledge in official discourse and educational materials. The legacy of these campaigns regarding traditional worldviews in post-Mao China are multifaceted. In many cases, the cultural productions of movements survived but its political messages were hallowed out or revised. For example, different versions of *Stories About Not Being Afraid of Ghosts* were published in post-Mao China. However, He Qifang and Mao's preface was revised and omitted. In some versions that were published in 1980s, the editors indicates that the Gang of Four and the perpetrators of violence in the Cultural Revolution were ghosts that needed to be defeated. While the class struggle and court politics fade into history and may be forgotten by the younger generations, Mao's movements tap into the long-existing tension in Chinese history that could be easily applied to new environments and new conflicts.

At the present, the politics of traditional worldviews became more complicated as Xi Jinping's regime intensified the effort to revive different aspects of the traditional past in an

authoritarian and neo-liberal China. Many of these measures convey the opposite ideological implications to Mao's campaigns. Cultural productions featuring ghosts after 1949 were banned. Chapters featuring violence and overtly rebellious messages from *Water Margin* were removed from Chinese textbooks. Schools organized children to participate in Confucian rituals and ceremonies. On one hand, traditional worldviews were depoliticized in Xi's China and were reduced as mere national cultural heritages that needed to be celebrated under an increasingly nationalistic discourse that sought to contend with western liberal values. On the other hand, the Confucian emphasis on family, obedience, and duty helped benefits the regime that increasingly ruled like an imperial dynasty. In this new context, Mao's campaigns and traditional sources such as the Hundred Flowers of Springs and Autumns, ghost stories, Legalism, and *Water Margin* still have the potential to exert disruptive forces in this strange new world.

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