FIIA REPORT 27

Tradition in Chinese politics

The Party-state's reinvention of the past and the critical response from public intellectuals

Jyrki Kallio

ULKOPOLIITTINEN INSTITUUTTI
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A variant of the character *rén* (忎),
used in the Confucian texts unearthed in Guodian.

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FIIA REPORT 2011 27

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Language editing: Lynn Nikkanen
Graphic design: Nordenswan & Siirilä Oy
Layout: Mari Pakarinen / Juvenes Print
Printed by: Tampereen Yliopistopaino Oy –
Juvenes Print, Tampere 2011

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ISBN 978-951-769-294-6
ISSN 1458-994X

Summary

This study discusses the role of history and tradition in the legitimization of the state in the People's Republic of China. In Chinese political debate, history has traditionally been the most important source of argumentation. Today, the Party-state is reinventing history and tradition to bolster its legitimacy, but the project has met with opposition. This study introduces and analyzes the related debate, ongoing among various actors in different public fora in China, and engaged in both by those affiliated with the Party-state and those outside the establishment.

This discussion is particularly relevant because of wide agreement that there is a spiritual vacuum in China today. Communism no longer provides the foundation for values as China has, in effect, become a wholly capitalist economy. This weakens the legitimacy of the ruling party and even endangers unity, which is the central concept in the Chinese political creed.

To remedy this, the Party-state has started promoting so-called Traditional Learning, values embedded deep in Chinese culture, in order to repair the chinks in their rusting spiritual-ideological armour. Confucianism is often seen as synonymous with Chinese traditional culture and ethics, and therefore Confucianism plays a central role in the related discussion. It is unfortunate for the Party-state, however, that depending on its interpretation, Confucianism can be used both to support and oppose unity.

What we understand by 'China' today—a unified state with an area equal to Europe and inhabited by the Chinese—is a recent construct dating back no more than two centuries. The Party-state has a greater need to anchor its role in history than any other preceding 'dynasty', which could all be seen as parts of the same continuum of imperial China. Therefore, the Party-state is particularly keen to present itself as the torch-bearer of Traditional Learning.

The concept of 'political religion' aptly describes the role that the Communist Party ideology used to play. It seems that the Party-state is striving to establish such an ideology once again. This study discusses the feasibility of that quest, especially in light of the many strikingly different voices which may be heard in the debate related to the revival of Traditional Learning and, in particular, Confucianism.

Acknowledgements

This paper is the product of a twelve-month-long secondment from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland to the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, from September 2009 till August 2010. I wish to thank Dr Teija Tiilikainen, Director of the Institute, and Dr Matti Nojonen, Director of the Transformation of the World Order research programme, as well as my colleagues in the TWO research programme, for their valuable comments and kind support.

Jyrki Kallio, LicPhil, MSocSc

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Introduction

China's rise to become a true superpower is overshadowed by tough internal challenges. Although the economy is growing at a record pace and the living standards of the population as a whole are rising, the adverse effects of the rapid growth, such as inequality, unemployment, working conditions and environmental degradation, have given rise to an alarming amount of unrest around the country.[1] Furthermore, the recent financial crisis has been a reminder of the uncertainties that beset the economy. Some new crisis, especially one related to food, water or energy, might severely affect the wellbeing of the population. With the country's stability at stake, the Communist Party has to anchor its right to rule to something more permanent than economic growth and to strengthen its position as the moral and spiritual leader of the nation. However, the Party leaders are certainly aware that in the light of today's realities, communism has long since dried up as the fountainhead of moral and spiritual inspiration. Instead, the Party seems to be tapping into history and tradition to revamp the basis for its leadership.

This study discusses the ways in which history and tradition are currently being used to legitimize the Party-state in China. Historical precedence and traditional conventions have always been politicized and have always held a key position in defining the basis of the ruler's power in China. This situation prevails today. China as we understand it today—a unified state with an area equal to Europe and inhabited by the Chinese—is no more ancient than the European nation states. Nation-building is still an ongoing process in China. To steer the process in the right direction, history is interpreted and even reinvented in such a way that makes the current realities—the established scope of the territory of the People's Republic of China and the official one-ness of the multi-ethnic Chinese nation—seem like the natural continuation of a 5,000-year-long history.

Furthermore, the Communist Party is in dire need of some ideological backing for its capitalist policies, which have resulted not only in great growth but also in a widening gap between rich and poor. The Party's ideology has already long been called

[1] See e.g. "Making sense of 'mass incidents'" by Wang Weilan, *Global Times*, 30 May 2009, at http://special.globaltimes.cn/2009-05/433271.html. Accessed 19 Aug 2010.

"socialism with Chinese characteristics". With socialism rusting away, the Chinese characteristics become even more central. The Party is looking for something to patch up and support its failing ideology, and has apparently turned to traditional, Chinese schools of thought as a source of suitable national essence. In the slogans of the future we will see much less socialism and many more Chinese characteristics. The Communist Party has begun propagating such values as harmony, communality, filiality, loyalty, unity and stability, which can be deduced from the traditional schools of thought. In particular, 'harmony', a term which is related to Confucianism, has gained a central position in today's political mantra. In effect, the Party seems to be moving towards "Chinese tradition with socialist characteristics".

In China today there is vigorous, widespread public debate about the bigger questions that the Communist Party's quest for tradition raises: What is tradition? What is Chinese? What is China? Who are the Chinese? The questions are difficult ones, because once history is made into a political tool, its interpretations tend to lose all connection to historical facts. For instance, when the Party defines the scope of China's territorial unity as "all of China", they are projecting an ancient ideal into the modern era in a most ahistorical manner. Conversely, there are ethnic-nationalist extremists who declare that many of the ethnic groups living in China are not Chinese at all. Different actors, including many who may be labelled 'public intellectuals', as well as ordinary netizens,[2] both those affiliated with the Party-state and those outside the establishment, take part in the debate, which is ongoing in various books and articles, and on websites. The debate is strikingly open, but not surprisingly so. The issues often revolve around historiography, philosophy or even

[2] Richard A. Posner defines a public intellectual as "someone who uses general ideas drawn from history, philosophy, political science, economics, law, literature, ideas that are part of the cultural intellectual tradition of the world, to address contemporary events, usually of a political or ideological flavor, and does so in the popular media, whether in the form of Op Ed pieces, television appearances, signing full-page advertisements, or writing magazine articles or books addressed to a general audience" (http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/transcripts/130.html, accessed 29 Oct 2010).

linguistics, which reduces the danger of attracting the attention of censorship officials.[3]

This study introduces and analyses the debate related to the content and interpretation of history, and provides the historical and philosophical basis necessary for understanding the phenomena related to defining the essence of Chinese tradition. Furthermore, it highlights the challenges of opening a discussion on tradition, which may turn out to be the proverbial Pandora's box—or to paraphrase a saying about fire, a good servant but a bad master. The Party-state will want to ensure that the discussion goes in the right direction, but it will not be easy in the increasingly plural society in China today. This study is primarily based on Chinese-language sources (books, articles and internet posts) originating from the People's Republic of China.

The outcome of the debate will be of no minor significance for the future of Chinese society, how tradition will be defined, and the kind of new ideological structure that is likely to emerge as a result. It will even have consequences for China's foreign policy. Domestic and foreign politics are strongly interrelated in every country, and China is no exception, not least because many difficult issues related to China's external image are considered internal (especially Taiwan and the border regions of Tibet and Xinjiang). Besides, China's foreign policy has never been devoid of ideology.[4]

The analysis in this study is, of necessity, focused on two subjects: Confucianism and unity. When defining tradition in China, it is impossible to overlook the importance of Confucianism, which holds a central position among the traditional schools of thought in China. Unity, in turn, has always been the main dogma in Chinese political philosophy. In the debate on history, the concept of unity and its different aspects are central.

Although Confucianism, which was the official ideology during the imperial era, has been condemned as feudal and reactionary by

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[3] This strategy of discussing issues with relevance to contemporary society is very traditional in China (as well as elsewhere in the world). My Licentiate Thesis introduces one example of using a compilation of classical literature to criticize the establishment during the early Qing dynasty (see Kallio 2009).

[4] "The evidence ... suggests that China's realpolitik behavior is ideationally rooted." (Johnston 1996, 221.)

both the nationalist revolutionaries in the early 20th century and the communists alike, it undeniably retains a pivotal position in Chinese thought. The Party-state's chosen ambassador of harmony both within and without China is Confucius. Today, not only is lip service paid to Confucian values, but Confucianism as a school of thought is still alive, especially in the form of so-called New Confucianism. Therefore, in order to draw the battle lines over the real or desirable character of Chinese tradition, it is necessary to pay attention to the ongoing debate concerning the true essence of Confucianism.

Confucius is well-known to all and sufficiently vague in his teachings for his message to be interpreted at will. During the imperial era, he was made something of a saint king. For the revolutionaries in the early 20th century, he was the embodiment of everything backward. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 70s, he became the scapegoat in the political campaigns targeting 'revisionism'. Those who explain the rise of the 'Asian Tigers' through cultural values like to say that Confucianism is about valuing education, selflessness and the common good. The Party-line 'Socialist Confucian' scholars today explain that Confucius taught stability, unity and harmony. In contrast, some contemporary New Confucians equate Confucianism with liberalism and democracy.

Although the contradictory interpretations of Confucianism pose a challenge to the Communist Party, Professor Li Xiangping (李向平) and Doctoral Candidate Shi Dajian (石大建) from Shanghai University argue that the Confucian revival movement and the efforts of the Party-state to strengthen its legitimacy are actually mutually beneficial processes. The rising interest in Confucian values has been manifested in the preservation of Confucian cultural relics and the promotion of academic research on Confucianism. These manifestations have, in turn, allocated and mobilized resources upon which Confucianism as a social movement has been building itself, Li and Shi maintain.[5]

Li and Shi sketch a circular process whereby the allocation of "Confucian resources", amplified by a spiritual crisis and the economic downturn, has given rise to the Confucian revival movement. The movement provides legitimization for national and local authorities, while the authorities, in turn, mobilize resources

[5] Li & Shi 2009, 79.

which enhance the revitalization of Confucianism. Thus the circle is closed. Li and Shi argue that Confucian values and customs, such as the ideal of the oneness of family and state, are so deeply embedded in Chinese culture that they serve the legitimization of the public authorities particularly well.[6]

Unity is today presented as the dominant historical trend. Traditionally, the importance of unity for the rulers' legitimacy derived from the belief, proven sound by actual and invented historical experiences alike, that unity equalled stability, and stability, in turn, meant peace and wellbeing. Were the state to become divided, it would mean war, suffering and chaos, and chaos was a sign as serious as natural calamities that Heaven had withdrawn its mandate from the ruler. An early developer of Confucianism, Mencius, proclaimed that the emperor had to be benevolent towards the population lest he lose the Mandate of Heaven and the people may exercise their right to overthrow him.

In imperial China, unity was the external manifestation of the Heavenly Mandate, the divine blessing of the emperors' power. The belief in Heaven and its mandate dates back to the earliest times of Chinese civilization.[7] Unity was an ideology in itself, known as the Grand Unity. After the ideal had become a reality with the first unification of China and the birth of the first empire in 221 BCE, unity retained its position as the creed of imperial China. It stood for unity of not only the concrete realm, the unity of the state, but also the spiritual realm, the unity of ideology. The Emperor was, after all, the Son of Heaven, an earthly ruler as well as a spiritual leader.

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[6] Ibid., 80.

[7] The divinity of Heaven was central to the belief-system of the *Huaxia* tribes whose state, Zhou, gained hegemony over the other states in ca. 1045 BCE. It is debatable whether the cult of Heaven of the Zhou should be classified as a religion or a political philosophy (Pines 2002, 58). The unity under the Zhou was based on pledges of allegiance of the other principalities and fiefs to the Zhou king. This system became wholly nominal in 771 BCE and broke down entirely in 476 BCE. The ensuing period of internal warfare lasted until 221 BCE when China was unified into one empire by the king of Qin state, known thereafter as the First Emperor, *Shi Huangdi*. Confucius, who lived around the turn of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, perceived the Zhou as a lost golden age. By then, Heaven had "transformed from a purposeful deity … into impersonal law" which, nevertheless, remained "an ultimate source of political and social order" (ibid., 62).

Tellingly, the Chinese word for 'legitimacy' (*zhengtong*, 正统) also stands for 'orthodoxy'. From the early imperial era, Confucianism was harnessed as the embodiment of ideological unity.

In pre-imperial China, the most valuable regalia included a set of nine three-legged bronze vessels called *ding* (鼎). It was said that as long as the Mandate of Heaven was strong, the *ding* were heavy and their ownership could not be transferred to another ruler.[8] Just as a *ding* has three legs, the legitimacy of the Communist Party of China today rests upon three pillars. All three are aspects of the Grand Unity, and none of the three is rock-solid.[9]

Figure 1. A bronze *ding* (鼎) from the late Shang dynasty
Source: Mountain/Wikimedia Commons

[8] One related story, recorded in *Zuo zhuan* and dated at 606 BCE, is translated into Finnish in Kallio 2005, 66–68. The nine *ding* were the property of the ruling clan of the Zhou state and were stolen by the Qin army in the middle of the 3rd century BCE.

[9] Referring to the late 1980s and the international collapse of communism, Wang Zheng (2008, 788) claims: "China's Communist rulers feared that, in the minds of ordinary Chinese citizens, they had already lost the 'mandate of heaven' to rule."

First is territorial integrity: China is one and there is only one China. The Communist Party was celebrated for its ability to unify the country and stabilize the economy after having won the civil war on the mainland. This put an end to a century-long era of chaos. However, the border regions of Tibet and Xinjiang continue to give cause for concern in regard to stability. Worse still, the main population, the Han Chinese, is also starting to question the preferability of a multi-ethnic state. The inability to put a final end to the civil war and make Taiwan an integral part of the People's Republic of China is a thorn in the Party's side. If China were to break up, or if Taiwan were to become an independent country totally separate from China, it would signal inexcusable weakness on the part of the communist regime.

Second is economic growth, which is both a result of and a prerequisite for stability. Having learned from the problems created by an overzealous planned economy, the strategy followed by the Chinese government since the late 1970s is to give free rein to capitalism and allow a part of the population to acquire wealth first. The rationale is that the spillover from the economic development will eventually reach the poorest regions and segments of the population as well. If the growth stagnates, however, the economic discrepancies will remain wide and have the potential to create major unrest. Li Xiangping and Shi Dajian argue that the legitimacy of the Chinese government has relied mainly on economic growth since the beginning of the reform era, but that is no longer the case.[10]

Third is a unifying ideology. It used to be communism, but in the wake of the chosen development strategy, precious little remains, except for one-party rule. The Communist Party has become the most sought-after network for Chinese entrepreneurs instead of the vanguard of revolution. At the same time, the people seem to have lost faith in communism, and China is therefore commonly perceived to be suffering from a spiritual and ideological vacuum. People are seeking to fill this vacuum by turning towards (quasi-) religious sects and cults, including the infamous Falungong, and other belief systems and ideologies. In a similar situation, many rulers across history have resorted to bolstering nationalism as the unifying idea, and contemporary China is no exception. Nationalism provides no final answer, however. Particularly in a multi-ethnic country such

[10] Li & Shi 2009, 79.

as China, nationalism can germinate dangerous side-effects, like ethnic chauvinism. Furthermore, strong anti-foreign tendencies among the population would harm China's reputation as an attractive investment destination.

Even the Communist Party media has called on the leadership to "re-instill a sense of moral values in society".[11] In order to do so, the Party is today resorting to neither communism nor nationalism. Instead, it relies upon history and tradition. Not wishing to identify any one school of thought with the true tradition, the Party-state is promoting 'Traditional Learning' (or 'National Learning') as the eternal and indigenous soul of China's culture. As the concept is based on culture and philosophy, it is nationalistically-flavoured and thus has the appeal of nationalism but not the risks—or so the Party would appear to hope.

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter I shows how the Party-state has reinvented history, particularly in relation to the dogma of unity, for nation-building purposes. Chapter II focuses on the attempts to reinvent tradition by the Party-state and how selected elements of tradition have consequently been turned into Traditional Learning. Chapter III takes a closer look at Confucianism and how it has been reinterpreted and even reinvented by different actors.

Chapter I summarizes the discussion related to the interpretation of China's history regarding ethnic relations and territory. It demonstrates the hollowness of the Communist Party's apparent belief that 'whoever controls history, controls China', by showing the real fragility of the officially-endorsed myth of China's territorial unity.

Chapter II shows how Traditional Learning fits in with the government-endorsed drive for harmony and patriotism. It also discusses the problematic nature of Confucianism in relation to Traditional Learning and Chinese communism, and illustrates how Confucianism is deeply intertwined with both.

Chapter III analyzes the historical roots of contemporary Confucianism in China and provides an introduction to the ongoing debate on the character of Confucianism. It highlights the difficulties in constructing such interpretations of Confucianism or Traditional Learning which cannot be contested. It demonstrates how different

[11] "Worshipping money, China won't gain trust", *Global Times*, 26 February 2010, at http://opinion.globaltimes.cn/editorial/2010-02/508158.html. Accessed 26 Feb 2010.

actors are able to find justification for widely differing views even when they are supposedly based on the very same 'roots'.

Finally, the Conclusions return to the question of the relevance of tradition, and Confucianism in particular, to Chinese society today. They touch upon the compatibility of Confucianism with modernization, the relation between Confucianism and the dogma of unity, and the question of the religious nature of Confucianism. The last point is related to the desire by certain dissident Confucians to turn Confucianism into a 'state religion' of China on the one hand, and the possibility that Traditional Learning with Confucian values at its core may become the new 'national doctrine' of the Communist Party on the other. Curiously enough, there is no difference between 'national religion' and 'national doctrine' in the Chinese language.

I believe that the proponents of a state religion are unlikely to succeed, but that it is at least a theoretical possibility that Traditional Learning may replace communism one day. If this proves to be the case, the phenomenon this study examines may be what, from a politological point of view, may be seen as the birth of a new political religion in China. Whether that would make the Party's *ding* heavy enough to remain in situ, or on the contrary, force the Party to renounce its position, is a question for the futurologists. This paper will start by peering into the past.

Chapter I
Historical myths behind Chinese nationalism

Introduction to Chapter I

This chapter illustrates how the Party-state has reinvented history for its own nation-building purposes. It also discusses the politicization of history by other actors. The focus is on the dogma of unity—also grandly called the Grand Unity (*Da yitong*, 大一统)—which stipulates that wellbeing and prosperity can only exist in a unified China. Unity refers both to the concrete and the abstract: unity of the territory, unity of the nation, and unity of the ideology. One could say that the dogma of unity is an ideology in itself as it is the single most important prerequisite for the rulers' legitimacy in Chinese political tradition.

Historically, the ruling dynasty was to be considered legitimate only if it was able to rule the whole of China. Chairman Mao was strongly influenced by this traditional view, and the legitimacy of the Communist Party has always relied on its ability to safeguard peace and prosperity through the maintenance of unity. Moreover, the idea that periods of unity have been more customary than periods of division in China has become the prevailing view even among Western scholars.

A concrete example of the linkage between unity and legitimacy is the Taiwan issue. Viewing unity as the basis for legitimacy is the main reason why the Taiwan issue is so politically sensitive. As long as Taiwan is not an integral part of China, the Communist Party may be seen as having failed to rule the whole of China, and the legitimacy of such a ruler is incomplete.

The centrality of the discourse of unity is interrelated with the orthodox historiography in the People's Republic of China. The periods of division are shown as divisions *within* China, not *of* China. Similarly, the various 'minority' tribes that used to inhabit the bordering areas of imperial China are presented as primordial

members of the Chinese nation. In this way, the government aims to promote belief in one Chinese nation and, subsequently, patriotism.

In this chapter, I also introduce some of the few Chinese thinkers who call into question the conventional historical 'truths'. They call for a more nuanced view of Chinese history, such as differentiating between 'China Proper' (the Chinese heartland) and 'greater China' (the territory within the borders of the People's Republic), as well as between the 'Chinese' (the Han and their ancestors) and the 'non-Chinese' (the non-Han peoples) in history. Hence it becomes evident that the claims by the Chinese government that its border areas have always been parts of China are ahistorical, and that China was a unified, 'Chinese-ruled' state for much less time than people usually assume.

Officially, China is a multi-ethnic nation, consisting of the dominant Han nationality and fifty-five minority nationalities. The events in the troubled border areas of Tibet and Xinjiang indicate that the Chinese nation is not as harmonious as the central government would like it to be. The attempts to emphasize national unity are also backfiring among the dominant Han Chinese population, whose patriotism is turning into ethnic nationalism. Many young Han Chinese see themselves as the standard-bearers of Chinese civilization, based on the cultural achievements conceived by their ancestry, which has always been the dominant population of the Chinese heartland. Han nationalism has become an issue which the central government has to address, in addition to the ethnic insurgencies in the minority areas.

In order to understand the depth of Han nationalism, it is necessary to acknowledge that the discourse on race is a permanent undercurrent in China. Many Han nationalists are no longer content with an identity as just one of the ethnic groups, but perceive themselves rather as representatives of a superior race. Therefore, racism plays a role in the conflicts between the nationalities. The reason why Han nationalists call into question the legitimacy of the non-Han ruling houses, such as the Qing dynasty of the Manchu, is their foreignness.

To negate the 'Chineseness' of the Manchu dynasty is to call into question the multi-ethnic character of today's China. To deem the Manchu rule illegitimate is to undermine the claim of the People's Republic to Tibet and Xinjiang. To realize that the unity of 'greater

China' is a relatively new and short-term phenomenon is to query the territorial integrity of the People's Republic. To conclude that even the unity of 'China Proper' is just a by-plot in Chinese history is to shake the very foundations of the legitimacy of the Communist Party.

Several critical Chinese thinkers caution against the use of excessive practices to gain and maintain unity and centralized rule. Some note that a pluralist, liberalistic tradition of unity is not foreign to China but can be found in classical Confucianism. Some even state that commerce and science have flourished in China especially during periods of disunity, and speculate whether unity may actually be detrimental to pluralism, and thus to progress.

It is possible, and even necessary, for the Chinese to learn a lesson from history that is different from what is taught in Chinese schools. As Wang Zheng from Seton Hall University has written:

> Much of the recent discussion regarding China revolves around the government's national strategy for "peaceful rise". However, what China should modernize in this process is not only its financial system and highway network, but also its historical education and propaganda apparatus. Many say China can rise peacefully only after it has changed from a Communist dictatorship to a multiparty democracy. However, without liberation from the compelling complex of historical myth and trauma, even a multiparty democracy could lead China toward a dangerous development. A nationalist leader could easily use history and memory issues as tools of mobilization …. … China's genuine democratization may only start with the disclosure of historical truths.[12]

The Chinese creed

Today, China's history is taught in Chinese schools and presented in Chinese museums in a way which emphasizes unity as an underlying common thread. The dogma of unity is the result of a long historical process. Even before the beginning of the imperial era (221 BCE–1911), it became necessary to establish criteria which could be used to justify a ruler's right to the throne.

[12] Wang Zheng 2008, 804.

For the rulers of the many states before the first unification of China in 221 BCE, it was a matter of life and death to know who was the true inheritor of the Heavenly Mandate. "The true mandate, it was believed, would protect them like a spiritual barrier against their northern adversaries ...."[13] For the historians, charged with the task of providing justification for the inheritance of the Heavenly Mandate, determining what constitutes legitimate succession was a formidable challenge.

For centuries, many (especially Confucian) scholars perceived the first unification by the kingdom of Qin, which subjugated the other contesting states under its rule, as an immoral victory.[14] However, since the dynasty was short-lived and was soon followed by the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220), which placed Confucianism on a pedestal as the state ideology of sorts, the Qin conquest was accepted as a *fait accompli*.

What then became the predominant issue in the discussion among historians was the legitimate succession following the demise of the Han dynasty. This issue was debated throughout the entire imperial era. The Han empire had begun to disintegrate in the late second century. In 220 CE, Emperor Xian of Han abdicated in favour of Cao Pi, ruler of the Wei Kingdom. Liu Bei, a descendant of the imperial family and ruler of the Shu Kingdom, declared himself emperor in 221. The Wu Kingdom ruled yet another third of the former empire. The period of division lasted for three centuries until the Sui dynasty was able to reunify the empire in 589.

For historians, the hardest choice to make was between Cao Pi and Liu Bei. The most influential interpretation was made by Sima Guang (司马光, 1019–1086), who authored the massive dynastic history entitled *Zizhi tongjian*, "The Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government", which has remained popular ever since. It was a favourite read of Chairman Mao.[15] Sima Guang ruled that Cao Pi's Wei had been the legitimate successor of Han. Sima Guang also "developed a theory in which the unity of the empire was seen as the prerequisite of the true mandate".[16]

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[13] Beck 1986, 373.

[14] See, for instance, "Guo Qin lun", Part I, by Jia Yi (贾谊, 200–168 BCE) and "Liu guo lun" by Su Che (苏辙, 1039–1112), translated respectively in Kallio 2007, 27–32, and Kallio 2008, 121–124.

[15] Salisbury 1992, 9.

[16] Beck 1986, 374.

Sima Guang's contemporary Ouyang Xiu (欧阳修, 1007–1072) argued that all the three post-Han kingdoms were equally illegitimate and that the mandate was discontinued altogether in 220. The influential Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) opined that Liu Bei's Shu had been the legitimate successor.[17] Opinions about the legitimate successors following the fall of all three kingdoms were equally varied.

During the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the legitimacy debate between Shu and Wei surfaced once more. In the 1520s the dynasty was shaken by what became known as the Great Rites Controversy. The power struggle between the Jiajing Emperor and the officialdom culminated in the question of the proper ritual treatment of the emperor's deceased parents; the issue was tricky because the Jiajing Emperor was not the son of the former emperor. The opponents of the emperor, who formed the majority among the officialdom, used precedence from the Wei Kingdom to bolster their arguments. The supporters of the emperor challenged the precedence because they claimed that the Wei Kingdom had not been legitimate. The Jiajing Emperor got his way in the end by severely punishing the two hundred officials who had opposed him.[18]

Sima Guang's legitimacy theory has influenced the established view even among modern Chinese and Western historians. "The idea that a unified China is in some way more normal than a divided China has taken firm root in Western sinology", writes B. J. Mansvelt Beck.[19]

The criterion which has been used in modern times to establish a dynasty's legitimacy is also the same as the one used by Sima Guang: whether the dynasty was able to rule 'the whole of China' or not.[20] Using this criterion has also made it possible to present the periods of rule by 'non-Chinese' conquerors, such as the Yuan of the Mongols (1271–1368) and the Qing of the Manchu (1644–1911), as legitimate

[17] Ibid., 374–375.

[18] Ibid., 375, fn. 145. Mote 2003, 663–666.

[19] Beck 1986, 375.

[20] Beck 1986, 375–376.

'Chinese' dynasties.[21] Nevertheless, the transitional periods have always been difficult. Anti-Mongol sentiments were strong during the early Yuan dynasty, as were anti-Manchu sentiments in early Qing, and again on the eve of the republican revolution.

When the Republic of China defined its borders at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was perhaps natural that it should take the borders under the preceding imperial dynasty, the Qing dynasty, as the basis. The leader of the nationalists during the civil war, Chiang Kai-shek, was very clear about the character of the areas around the Chinese heartland, 'China Proper': they were not parts of China as such but crucial buffer zones. He called Manchuria, Inner and Outer Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan and the Ryūkyū Islands "each a fortress essential for the nation's defence and security".[22] The communists followed Chiang's lead. China's claim to the South China Sea is also based on similar thinking.[23]

The legitimacy of the Communist Party derived from its ability to restore peace and unity after the period of chaos and warfare which had prevailed since 1850. Unity had to apply to all China, 'China Proper' as well as the surrounding buffer zones. Otherwise it would have been difficult to justify the claim to the 'fortresses' and to maintain harmony within the newly formed, multi-ethnic nation. This necessitated downplaying the fact that the Qing was the royal house of the Manchu, who had been designated the hated target of republican nationalism. Qing and, in its wake, all the other 'non-Chinese' dynasties, had to be presented as legitimate, albeit feudalistic and reactionary, predecessors of the communist regime.

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[21] In this paper, I use the term 'Chinese' (in single quotation marks) to refer to the dominant ethnic-cultural group populating 'China Proper', usually called *Huaxia* (华夏) when referring to the pre-imperial era and Han when referring to modern times. 'China Proper' refers to the fertile heartland on and around the Central Plain (today called North China Plain) which was the core region of all the 'Chinese' dynasties (see Figure 2). *The Huaxia*-Chinese and 'China Proper' are inseparable and interlinked concepts, as exemplified by the words *Zhongxia* (中夏) or *Zhonghua* (中华), used during the imperial era. They combine the Central Plain (*zhong*,中, means 'centre') with the *Huaxia* people and their culture and were used to refer interchangeably to both 'China Proper' and its population. Since the republican era, *Zhonghua* has been used to refer to all of China and the whole Chinese nation (including all ethnic groups).

[22] Chiang Kai-shek 1947, 36.

[23] See Kallio 1999, 11–12.

Thus there was no departure from the logic which had prevailed during the imperial era in regard to defining legitimacy.

Today, China's history is taught in Chinese schools and presented in Chinese museums in a way which emphasizes unity as an underlying common thread. The various 'non-Chinese' tribes and even states that have existed around the land inhabited by the 'Chinese' are depicted as members of the Chinese cultural sphere, thus making them 'minority nationalities' from the start. Academician Tan Qixiang (谭其骧, 1911–1992) wrote in the authoritative *Zhongguo lishi dituji* (中国历史地图集, 1982), "Historical Atlas of China":

> When the Qing dynasty had succeeded in unifying the country by the 1750s ... the historical development of several millennia towards establishing China's territorial extent had been completed. All those nationalities which have lived within that territory are historically Chinese nationalities, and all the political entities established by these nationalities are historical parts of China.[24]

> Readers will thus be able to see, in the form of plane maps, the formation and growth a great, unified multi-ethnic nation has experienced, and to see how our ancestors of different nationalities lived as neighbours in human communities and, though there had been separations and unification of political jurisdiction, fared along a long and arduous course through mutual attraction, gradual interchange and amalgamation to finally solidify into the substantiality of a country that has a well-defined territory and fixed boundaries.[25]

This approach makes it possible to draw the historical outer boundaries of 'China' around all the contesting kingdoms, while encompassing many of the bordering 'non-Chinese' nations as well. Similarly, the periods of division are presented as divisions *within* China, not *of* China. All of this leads the Chinese population to believe that unity truly is the basis for the ruler's legitimacy.

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[24] *Zhongguo lishi dituji, diyice* (Vol. 1), "General Compiling Principles". See also Ge Jianxiong 2008, 240. – All translations from the Chinese are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

[25] *Zhongguo lishi dituji, diyice* (Vol. 1), "Foreword". Translation by the publisher.

Finding 'China Proper'

The prevailing Chinese historiographic interpretation can be justified by the traditionalist view, according to which China is a cultural formation. Ideally, the Chinese empire was considered to include all areas which acknowledged the superiority of the Chinese civilization and were subjected to paying ritualistic tribute to the one and only Emperor. Culturalistic China was not a state but 'All-Under-Heaven' (*Tianxia*, 天下). Several states would sometimes co-exist under the Heaven, but such 'power-regimes' were temporary, whereas the 'value-regime' of All-Under-Heaven was permanent.[26] Even during the periods of division it was the goal of every kingdom to become the next unified empire by subjugating all the others.[27] According to this traditionalist view, the culturalistic era lasted through the entire imperial period, whereas today China is faced with the challenge of trying to combine culturalism with nationalism. Lucien Pye has argued that China is a civilization trying to squeeze itself into the form of a nation-state.[28]

Admittedly, the ideal of a unified All-Under-Heaven and its moralistic connotations are primeval. However, we must ask, which is the cause and which is the consequence? Isn't it possible that the traditionalist view of an inherently culturalistic China has remained strong due to the historiographical tradition, and not the other way around? As Alistair Iain Johnston has demonstrated, even the foreign

[26] Levenson 1965, vol. I, 98–103. Gu Yanwu (顾炎武, 1613–1682), a staunch Ming loyalist, criticized the Manchu rule precisely from a value-based position, saying that the Manchu were not legitimate holders of the Heavenly Mandate because of the harshness of their rule: "To change the ruling family and alter the name of the dynasty brings the kingdom to its end, but abandoning humanness and righteousness so that men begin hunting and devouring each other brings the Empire (and its Heavenly Mandate) to its end." (*Rizhilu* XVII, Zheng shi.)

[27] That Chinese strategic literature gives preference to deception over force (see Nojonen 2008) may perhaps be partially explained by culturalism. Ideally, All-Under-Heaven belongs to the ruler who is the strongest morally. Therefore, it is better to subjugate other states by such means that create as little suffering and destruction as possible and thus win over the hearts of the conquered populations. From *Mencius* (Jin Xin 11, 14.13): "There are those who have gained the possession of kingdoms without possessing the virtue of humanness, but such people have never been able to gain possession of All-Under-Heaven."

[28] Pye 1992, 235–236.

relations of the Ming dynasty, conventionally seen as an embodiment of peaceful, culturalistic, Confucian foreign politics, were marked by constant warfare.[29]

Few in China have questioned the prevailing historiographical tradition. However, there are some notable exceptions. Ge Jianxiong (葛剑雄), professor at Fudan University and member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, has published the book *Tongyi yu fenlie* (统一与分裂, 1998, revised edition 2008, reprint 2009), "Unity and Division", which paints a very controversial picture of China's history. While Ge accepts, as a working hypothesis, that the unity of the whole of China forms the basis for legitimacy, he then asks how this 'unity' should be defined. Obviously, 'the whole of China' is too vague a concept. Ge proposes that unity should be defined by the dynasty's ability to pacify the area of the former Qin dynasty with the North China Plain as the core. In practice, this area is the 'historical China': the area of all major 'Chinese' dynasties (Han, Tang, Song, and Ming), as well as the real extent of the rule of the Republic of China after the nominal reunification in 1928.[30] In Western literature, that same area is usually called 'China Proper'. **Figure 2** shows the geographical area of 'China Proper' and the macro regions within it.

Ge does not explicitly refer to 'China Proper'. The concept is heavily contested in China and linked to the Western colonialists' or the Japanese aggressors' desire to carve up China, starting with the territories outside 'China Proper'.[31] However, for the sake of simplicity, I use the term in this paper even when referring to Ge's text.

Ge questions the view that the different nationalities that have lived outside 'China Proper' must be considered Chinese if they have ever lived within the Chinese cultural sphere (or simply within the

[29] Johnston 1998, 236–242.

[30] On Chinese maps, the areas of the dynasties mentioned are commonly drawn far larger than what they effectively ruled. The Republic was plagued by warlordism and civil war practically from the outset, and the reunification in 1928 was both short-lived and nominal. As to the regions outside 'China Proper', Tibet proclaimed independence in 1912 and Mongolia in 1921, Xinjiang slipped into the Russian (Soviet) sphere of influence in the late 1920s, while Japan occupied Taiwan in 1895 and Manchuria in 1931.

[31] See e.g. Zhang Zhirong 2006, 235, 246, and Ma Rong 2009. Apparently, there is no widely accepted corresponding term to 'China Proper' in the Mainland Chinese vocabulary.

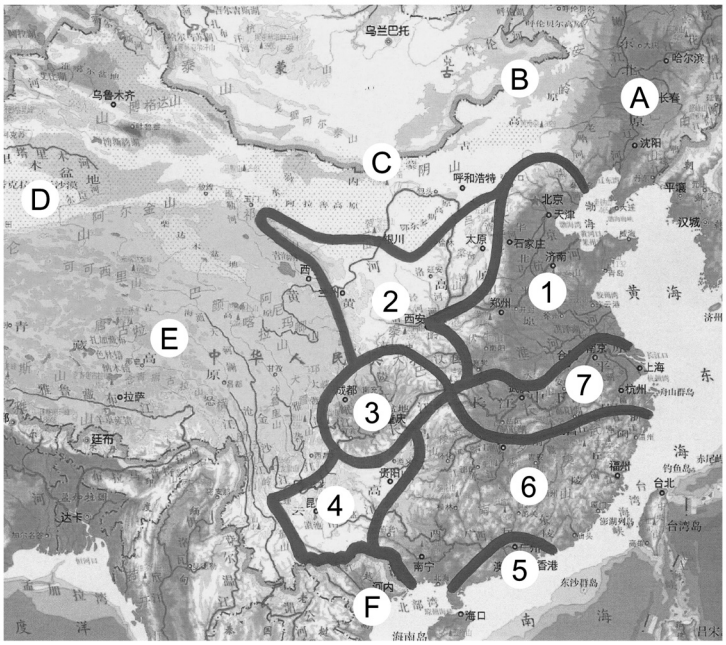

Figure 2. China Proper

'China Proper' refers to the fertile heartland which was the core region of all Chinese dynasties, bordered by deserts, steppes, mountains and sea, and consisting of the (1) North China Plain in the north-east, (2) the Loess Plateau in the north-west, (3) the Sichuan Basin in the west, (4) the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau in the south-west, (5) the Pearl River Delta Plain in the south, (6) the rainy hills and river plains in the south and south-east and (7) the Yangzi Plain in the east. Its surrounding areas include: (A) The Manchurian Plain, (B) the Mongolian-Manchurian Steppe, (C) the Gobi Desert, (D) the Taklamakan Desert, (E) the vast Tibetan Plateau and (F) the Red River Delta.

borders of contemporary China). According to Ge, such a view is ahistorical. He takes Tibet, Taiwan, Mongolia and Xinjiang as examples of territories which are customarily claimed to have been parts of China 'since time immemorial'. Ge opposes that interpretation and notes that the same logic would dictate opposing the independence of North Korea or Vietnam, territories that at one time or another used to be integral parts of the Chinese empire.[32]

[32] Ge Jianxiong 2009, 241–243.

Furthermore, Ge Jianxiong demonstrates that from the first unification in 221 BCE until the end of imperial rule in 1911, 'China Proper' was united for only 950 years. This accounts for 45% of China's imperial era. Ge presents the following list of the periods of unity during China's imperial era: [33]

221–209 BCE (during the Qin dynasty)	12 years
108 BCE–22 (during the Western Han dynasty)	130 years
50–184 (during the Eastern Han dynasty)	134 years
280–301 (during the Western Jin dynasty)	21 years
589–616 (during the Sui dynasty)	27 years
630–755 (during the Tang dynasty)	125 years
1279–1351 (during the Yuan dynasty)	72 years
1382–1644 (during the Ming dynasty)	262 years
1683–1850 (during the Qing dynasty)	167 years
Altogether	950 years

Ge further notes that greater China (the area encompassing not only 'China Proper' but also Tibet, Sinkiang and other border areas) became unified as late as 1759, and this period of unity lasted for only 81 years. Ge reminds his readers that much of this unity was achieved through coercion and that unification has never been a wholly peaceful process.[34]

Ge's analysis demonstrates that the prevailing view of unity as the main trend in Chinese history is nothing more than a myth—in other words, pure politics. The dynastic history is conventionally presented in a manner whereby one dynasty is immediately followed by another without many lapses or overlaps. In reality, there were many periods of overlapping rule. Furthermore, as Ge shows, almost every dynasty had to struggle to gain unity at the beginning of their rule, and many had lost it towards the end of their rule. In addition,

[33] Ibid., 217–218. Ge's calculation is much more detailed and analytical than the more conventional ones, e.g. by Diana Lary. Lary views the dynasties as indivisible blocks and then differentiates between the united, partly united ("dynasties which ruled at least half of the land mass of China") and divided dynasties. The results of Lary's calculation is that China was united for 1,074 years, partly united for 626 years, and disunited for 432 years during the Imperial Era. (Lary 1997, 182.)

[34] Ibid., 217–218, 229–230, 234.

Table 1. Periods of unity of China Proper under 'Chinese' and 'non-Chinese' dynasties

#	Periods of unity	Reign (Era)	Dynasty		
19	***1683–1850***	1644–1911	***Qing (Manchu)***		
17	**1382–1644**	1368–1644	**Ming**		
15	***1279–1351***	1271–1368	***Yuan (Mongol)***		
		(1234–79)	*era of Mongol conquest*		Southern Song (1127–1279)
		1115–1234	*Jīn 金 (Jürchen)*	**Northern Song***** (960–1127)	
13	**979–1127**	960–1279	Song		*Liao (Khitan, 916–1125)*
		907–960	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (Chinese and *non-Chinese*)		
11	**630–755**	618–907	**Tang**** (incl. Zhou interregnum 690–705)		
9	***589–616***	581–618	***Sui* (Tangut)***		
		420–581	*Northern* and Southern Dynasties		Six Dynasties (Southern Dynasties, Eastern Jin, Wu of the Three Kingdoms; 222–589)
		265–420	Jin 晉	*Sixteen Kingdoms (mostly non-Chinese, 304–439)*	
7	**280–301**			**Western Jin** (265–315)	
		220–280	Three Kingdoms		
5	**50–184**	206 BCE–220	Han	**Eastern Han** (25–220)	
3	**108 BCE–22**			**Western Han** (206 BCE–9 and Xin interregnum 9–23)	
1	***221–209 BCE***	221–207 BCE	***Qin (culturally non-Chinese, ethnic origin unclear)***		

KEY

Chinese rule
Chinese dynasties during periods of unity
Non-Chinese rule
Non-Chinese dynasties during periods of unity

Numbers in the # column refer to the numbers in Figure 3.

'Chinese' here refers to the dominant ethnic-cultural group populating China Proper, usually called *Huaxia* when referring to the pre-imperial era and Han when referring to modern times.

The years of unity are based on Ge Jianxiong 2008, 218 (with the exception of Northern Song which is not included on his list).

The interpretations regarding the Sui (listed as non-Chinese), the Tang (listed as Chinese) and the Northern Song (listed as a dynasty which achieved unity) in this table are debatable.
* The Sui emperors were Tangut. However, the second emperor (ruled 605–618) lost the support of the nomads due to his cultural Sinification initiatives.
** The mothers of the first, second and third Tang emperor (ruled successively 618–683) were all non-Chinese (Tangut). Also many members of the aristocracy were non-Chinese.
*** Northern Song failed to rule the northern-most parts of China Proper.

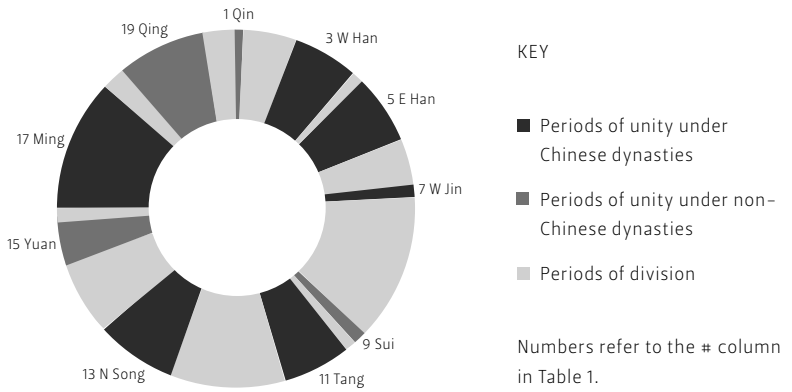

Figure 3. Periods of unity and division of China Proper under 'Chinese' and 'non-Chinese' dynasties

the Chinese empire struggled to keep the (mostly northern, nomadic or semi-nomadic) neighbouring powers at bay for most of its history, and at least parts of its territory repeatedly fell under foreign rule. From a European perspective, it is only natural to differentiate between the 'Chinese' and 'non-Chinese' dynasties. Mongols were conquerors in Europe; why should one consider them differently in China?[35] Building on Ge's analysis, I have further differentiated between the periods of unity under 'Chinese' and 'non-Chinese' dynasties (I have also added Northern Song, which is not on Ge's list). The result is shown in **Table 1** (which also names some of the reigns during periods of division) and as a graph in **Figure 3**.

According to my interpretation, the total number of years of unity during the imperial era is 1,098, accounting for 52% of the imperial era. The total number of years of unity under 'Chinese' dynasties is

[35] One could argue that this is a question of perception. Foreign royal houses have been common enough in Europe, and it is often impossible to differentiate between the 'European' and 'non-European' state-formations (the Ottoman Empire is a case in point). However, religion provided a handy tool for dividing the world into the Christian 'us' and the non-Christian 'others'. Thus Europe (as Christendom) was able to achieve considerable unity in the face of the Ottoman or Mongol threat, for instance.

832 (39%). To put it plainly, China was a unified, 'Chinese-ruled' state for only two-fifths of the imperial era.

Both China's borders today and the idea of unity as the basis for legitimacy are, in fact, based on the rule of the Manchu Qing dynasty. As Ge Jianxiong has shown, the unity within the Qing dynasty borders lasted for less than a century. Whether such a weak precedent can withstand the pressures of the re-emerging Han nationalism or not is a crucial question.

Conspicuously, the Chinese government is investing large sums in support of the Qing History Project, which aims to compile and publish a new, authoritative history of the Qing dynasty. The huge project is slated for completion in 2012. While Norman Ho writes that "it is too much to say that the Chinese government is looking at the Qing History Project as an instrument to reinforce its political legitimacy"[36] it is in my opinion safe to say that the 'correct' interpretation of history, in particular in regard to the territory of the Qing dynasty, is far from insignificant for the government.

A case in point: The Taiwan issue

The biggest remaining obstacle for greater China's complete unity or 'China's reunification' is the so-called Taiwan issue. Taiwan, under the rule of the government of the Republic of China, has been a separate entity from the People's Republic of China ever since 1949, and the state of civil war between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait has not officially ceased. In practice, the economic, cultural and people-to-people relations between the two parties are thriving, but politically the two sides show little signs of détente.

The main reason why the Taiwan issue is so politically sensitive for the communist regime on the Mainland is the belief that unity is the basis of the ruler's legitimacy. As long as Taiwan is not an integral part of China, the legitimacy of the Communist Party is incomplete. Fortunately, rationality overrules the use of military means to reunite Taiwan with the Mainland. Unfortunately, the Taiwan issue is one where rationality may cease to prevail if the legitimacy of the Communist Party were to be put at stake. Some hawkish scholars even

[36] Ho 2009.

state that China's inability to solve the Taiwan issue, which is due to foreign interference, stands in the way of China's modernization.[37]

According to official Chinese history writing, Taiwan has been an integral part of China "since time immemorial". It is conventionally held that the first recorded landing in Taiwan was made during the Three Kingdoms period, in 230. New expeditions supposedly took place during the Sui dynasty in the seventh century. In the mid-12th century, the Song dynasty may have established a garrison on the Penghu Islands off the west coast of Taiwan, followed by the Yuan and Ming dynasties.[38] In reality, however, Taiwan remained outside imperial Chinese jurisdiction until the Qing dynasty, even though Chinese people from the mainland started to immigrate to the island in large numbers in the 1600s. During the same time, the Dutch established extensive colonies on the island. It was not until 1683 that parts of Taiwan were annexed into Fujian Province of the Great Qing Empire as a prefecture.

In regard to the Taiwan issue, Ge Jianxiong again represents unorthodox views. He acknowledges that Taiwan cannot be considered to have been under the rule of any Chinese central government prior to 1683. Ge writes: "To regard [the expeditions during the Three Kingdoms period and the Sui Dynasty] as proof of 'Taiwan being a part of China since time immemorial' is not only ludicrous but ignorant, and actually [the expeditions] prove quite the opposite." If Taiwan had been an integral part of China, what would have been the use of such military operations, asks Ge rhetorically.[39]

Ge maintains that reunification can be achieved only when the two parties view each other as equally legitimate heirs of One China.[40] This is clearly not the case today. Ge further warns that time may not be on the side of the reunificationists: history teaches us that what was once one nation and one culture may split into two as time passes and people gradually grow apart.[41]

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[37] See e.g. Liu Dongchao 2008, 83.

[38] See e.g. *Taiwan wenti yu Zhongguo tongyi – baipishu* ("White Paper on the Taiwan Issue and the Chinese Reunification"), Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, 1993 (http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/bps/bps_zgty.htm, accessed 23 Apr 2010).

[39] Ge Jianxiong 2008, 243.

[40] Ibid., 251.

[41] Ibid.

The Taiwan issue is just one of the challenges related to achieving, maintaining and defining unity in China. It is perhaps the most explosive one, taking into account that the feud between Taiwan and the Mainland has the potential to escalate into an international military conflict between the major powers.

Defining 'Chinese' through the others

The question that the leadership of the People's Republic need to ask themselves is whether the ongoing work to promote nation-building is actually bringing about the desired results. To an outside observer, the answer is clearly negative. The events in the troubled border areas of Tibet and Xinjiang indicate that the Chinese nation is not as harmonious as the central government would like it to be. Especially in regard to the Han, the attempts to emphasize national unity are backfiring, and patriotism is turning into ethnic nationalism.

According to the official rhetoric in the People's Republic of China, China is home to the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*, 中华民族), a multi-ethnic family consisting of the dominant Han nationality and fifty-five minority nationalities. Both the invention of the *Zhonghua* nation and the classification of the Han as a distinct ethnic group are modern constructs, dating back to the revolutionaries of the late 19th century.[42]

Once established in 1912, the Republic recognized five ethnic groups within China: the Han, Hui (i.e. Muslims), Mongols, Manchus, and Tibetans. In the People's Republic, exemplified by the Soviet-inspired ethnic classifications and ethnicity-based administrative divisions, the number was expanded to fifty-six.[43] According to its constitution (Preamble), "[t]he People's Republic of China is a unitary multi-national state built up jointly by the people of all its nationalities." Although this formulation implies equality of the nationalities, all the non-Han nationalities are customarily called 'minority nationalities' in semi-official parlance.

[42] Zhang Haiyang 1997, PE74. The term *Zhonghua minzu* was coined by Liang Qichao (梁启超) in 1902. He used the term to refer to all the nationalities within China. (Li Xisuo, "Liang Qichao shi tichu 'Zhonghua minzu' chengwei de di'yi ren", *Renmin wang*, 9 Feb 2006, at http://theory.people.com.cn/BIG5/49157/49163/4089792.html#. Accessed 7 Apr 2010.)

[43] See Leibold 2010a, 5.

Professor Ma Rong (马戎, Department of Sociology, Peking University) states that "the 'institutionalization of ethnic groups' under Mao Zedong (毛泽东) promoted ethnic stratification and tension, and the preferential policies of the last three decades have created 'tribal collectives' (*buzu jiheti* 部族集合体), which form new barriers and obstacles to genuine equality and unity".[44] He warns that unless China can find a better way of dealing with the ethnic issues, the fate that befell Yugoslavia awaits China, and the enemies of the rise of China will be able to use the ethnic issues as a tool for criticizing the country.[45]

As the official interpretation of history projects the current borders of the People's Republic into history and calls all those living within those borders members of the *Zhonghua* nation, it simultaneously also projects the existence of the *Zhonghua* nation into antiquity. Of course, this is a falsification, and no such 'meta-identity' has arguably ever existed. At most, 'non-Chinese' tribes submitted to the hegemony of the 'Chinese' state from time to time and became 'politically Chinese'.

Historically, the legitimacy of the 'non-Chinese' dynasties has usually been recognized by their successors. For instance, a dynastic history of the Yuan dynasty was written during the Ming dynasty, thus linking Yuan in the chain of legitimate ruling houses of China. This has been necessary in order to secure the basis for the legitimacy of the successors. In modern China, the 'non-Chinese' dynasties are presented with the 'Chinese' dynasties as equal components in making up China's imperial heritage. Naturally, taking into account the multi-ethnic character of the People's Republic, it would have been unwise to do otherwise.

Lately, critique towards the legitimacy of the 'non-Chinese' dynasties has flared up at grassroots level. Voices have emerged that wish to make a distinction between the 'Chinese' and 'non-Chinese' dynasties in Chinese historiography.[46] In particular, the 'Chineseness' of the Mongol and Manchu dynasties is called into question in numerous internet debates. As one commentator put it:

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[44] Leibold 2010a, 19.

[45] Ibid., 20. Ma Rong 2009.

[46] Often, 'non-Chinese' are referred to as *yizu* (异族) or 'foreign race' and 'Chinese' as *bentu* (本土) or 'our country(men)'. The term *bentu* is also used to connote 'China Proper'.

> During the era of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, China was enslaved and colonized by the Mongol Empire together with Persia, Koryo, the Rus' and others. ... Yet this kind of a regime is propagated to have been a "united, multi-ethnic state" by the official education system, misleading many Chinese to even think that Genghis Khan was Chinese. How tragic![47]

This discourse is closely related to the search for 'Chineseness' as a new cultural identity. While the government is promoting 'Traditional Learning' (*Guoxue*, 国学, sometimes translated more literally as 'national learning'; see Chapter II) and hoping to make it the spiritual foundation of the 'Chinese nation', an average Han Chinese youth views Traditional Learning exclusively as his/her own heritage, and has found in its promotion a way to discover his/her own cultural identity.[48] Many minority nationalities have their distinctive, traditional costumes and festivals, but not the Han, whose culture and heroes have become indistinguishable from the all-encompassing *Zhonghua* culture and heroes. Thus it is understandable how the government-promoted *Zhonghua* patriotism would have been transformed into Han nationalism as a counter-reaction or why the Han Chinese would have started searching for their identity in an attempt to acquire one of their own.[49]

A prime example of this identity search is the movement to revitalize traditional Chinese clothing, dubbed *hanfu* (汉服) or Han clothing, and to give the pre-Qing-era clothing status as the Chinese national costume. The movement reached its heyday before the Beijing Olympics when one hundred scholars jointly suggested that *hanfu* should be designated the official costume of the Chinese athletes in the Games.[50] The movement still appears to be popular among younger generations especially in the cities in southern China, as well as in overseas Chinese communities.

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[47] "Guanyu yizu zhengquan", by an unidentified writer on 17 Jan 2008, at http://hi.baidu.com/chosan/blog/item/afa785d1b524fd3c9b502734.html. Accessed 7 Apr 2010.

[48] See Zhang Min 2007, 166, and Ma Rong 2009.

[49] Mikael Mattlin calls the phenomenon where a cultural group is mobilized to defend their identity against the threat of homogenization, 'cultural fetishism'. (Mattlin 2001, 174.)

[50] "Baiming xuezhe changyi hanfu wei Aoyunhui liyi fuzhuang", at http://news.ifeng.com/mainland/200704/0405_17_97909.shtml. Accessed 10 Aug 2009. The *hanfu* movement is well presented in Zhang Min 2007. See also Leibold 2010a, 11–14.

The movement, and other similar examples of identity-building, are often associated with ethnicity-based Han nationalism or even its more extreme form, called Han chauvinism (*da Hanzu zhuyi*, 大汉族主义) in Chinese parlance, which are by no means new phenomena.[51] In 1953, Chairman Mao warned of the dangers of Han chauvinism, in an internal party directive. According to the directive, Han chauvinism was lurking almost everywhere and was creating conflicts in many minority regions. Mao labelled Han chauvinism as reactionary and reflective of the Guomindang (Nationalist Party) way of thinking.[52] Mao's warning, however, seems to have gone largely unheeded. Han chauvinism has continued to be an undercurrent in the communist way of thinking as well.

Among the Han Chinese population, the reasons for the rise of ethnic Han nationalism range from envy towards the special rights given to ethnic minorities with regard to university intake or birth control to racial mistrust fuelled, among other things, by the 'war against terrorism' targeting Muslim extremists, which also affects China's Xinjiang.[53]

As is to be expected in today's world, the main forum for grassroots nationalism is the internet. In China, the nationalist flagship website

[51] The compilers of a famous prose anthology, *Guwen guanzhi*, produced at the beginning of the Qing dynasty, omitted all texts written during 'non-Chinese' dynasties. This may have subtly expressed their dissent towards the legitimacy of the Manchu rulers. (Kallio 2009.)

[52] Mao Zedong 1977, 75–76. The rallying slogan of the founding fathers of Guomindang was "to expel the Tartar fiends (*Dalu*, 鞑虏) and to revive the *Zhonghua* nation". Chiang Kai-shek wanted to downplay that idea, choosing instead to propagate the notion that the Manchu are just one 'clan' of the Chinese nation. (Chiang Kai-shek 1947, 30, 50).

[53] Common racist themes, such as the demise of 'our race', can also be found. A writer on www.sciencenet.cn calculates that by 2039, the number of minority nationality youth will exceed the number of Han youth, which as a consequence will turn the Han into a minority. (Wang Luoke, "Jihua shengyu zhengce dui weilai Zhongguo renkou minzu yu zongzu goucheng de yingxiang," at www.sciencenet.cn/m/user_content.aspx?id=30596. Accessed 26 Mar 2010.)

is Hanwang.[54] Hanwang's goal is defined as the rejuvenation of the Han civilization.[55] According to Hanwang, the site aims to help the growth of an individual's self-awareness and knowledge about the Han culture so that s/he may realize his/her 'Hanishness' (*hanbenwei*, 汉本位). That is the "pure bloodline" and cultural heritage of the *Huaxia* ancestors.[56]

One indicator of the rising Han nationalism is the discussion related to the book by writer Lü Jiamin (吕嘉民, writing under the pen name Jiang Rong, 姜戎), entitled *Wolf Totem* (*Lang tuteng* in the original, 狼图腾) and published in 2004.[57] In the lengthy postscript to his book, written in the form of 'lectures and discussions', Lü argues that the Chinese civilization would not have been able to prosper without regular 'blood transfusions' from the nomads of the steppes, the Jürchen, Mongol and Manchu. "Objectively, the great dynasties of Sui and Tang would not have come into existence without the preceding long-term, wide blood transfusions."[58] "[E]specially the nearly century-long blood transfusion from the Mongols and the two-and-a-half- centuries-long blood transfusion from the Manchu made it possible for the *Zhonghua* nation to endure till modern times, preserving their land, language and race."[59]

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[54] The website was discontinued after the ethnic riots in the summer of 2009, but has reopened again at www.hanminzu.com. James Leibold discusses the role of Hanwang and other forms of Chinese grassroots ethnic nationalism in two recent articles (Leibold 2010a and 2010b). There are also web posts which may be seen as a counter-reaction towards the Hanwang. For instance, one blog states that it aims to "help the Manchus find their place in the world and to introduce the Manchus to the world" (http://www.mmmca.com/blog_ak87/p/172108.html, accessed 26 Apr 2010). A post on that website argues that a pure Han nation has never existed, but the amalgamation of different ethnic groups has always taken place even on the Central Plain; "it would be best to admit that a Han nationality has never existed." This argument is probably based on a fabricated news piece (see fn. 70).

[55] According to Hanwang, the success of the *hanfu* movement has been the first step in an overall rejuvenation. Many proponents of the *hanfu* movement have, however, distanced themselves from the Han chauvinist discourse.

[56] Information aimed at prospective site administrators from 3 April 2009 at http://www.hanminzu.com/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=247912&extra=page%3D1. Accessed 26 Apr 2010.

[57] The book is discussed in some detail in James Leibold 2010c.

[58] Jiang Rong 2004, 382 (postscript).

[59] Jiang Rong 2004, 395–396 (postscript).

Lü compares the Han Chinese 'sheep' unfavourably with the dynamic, imaginative, free and even democratic 'wolves' of the steppes, whose way of life resembles that of real wolves.

> The free, independent, bold and indomitable character of the steppe wolves is based on their superior nature [in contrast to dogs, which cannot survive without protection from humans]. The same applies to humans: if a nation does not possess high capabilities or if its character is weak, it is futile for that nation to dream of achieving independence, freedom, democracy, prosperity or strength.[60]

> Confucianism and feudalistic autocracy castrated and suppressed man's wolfishness, thus making [the *Zhonghua* people] altogether sheepish, backward and weak, and led them into a blind alley. … The way out for the *Zhonghua* nation can only be found in properly releasing man's wolfishness while simultaneously controlling and mastering it by the only possible means, namely real democracy and the rule of law, and discarding false rubber-stamp democracy.[61]

This ethos closely resembles the 1980's television series *River Elegy* (*Heshang*, 河殇), which criticized the Chinese 'inland' and indrawn culture and extolled the Western 'oceanic' and enterprising societies.[62] Lü's alter ego in the *Wolf Totem*, Chen Zhen, says:

> When walking on the road of civilization, the westerners maintain the half-wildness of man, whereas the *Huaxia* people stick to the 'un-wildness' of man and walk on a ploughman's road of civilization. Speaking metaphorically, the westerners walk on the road of 'civilized wolves' whereas the *Huaxia* people walk on the road of 'civilized sheep'.[63]

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[60] Jiang Rong 2004, Chapter 24, 241. This excerpt is missing from the translation by Howard Goldblatt (The Penguin Press, New York 2008), which appears to be abridged. The postscript is also omitted from the translation.

[61] Jiang Rong 2004, 402 (postscript).

[62] See e.g. Blum & Jensen 2002, 9.

[63] Jiang Rong 2004, 366 (postscript).

Lü's polemics aroused heated debate, which hasn't subsided. The counter-argument, expressed in many blog posts, states that the 'non-Chinese' conquerors are to blame for China's gradual weakening after the prosperous Song dynasty and the eventual humiliation by the Western colonial powers. The Mongol and Manchu are accused of having massacred millions of Han Chinese.[64] One Chinese blogger, writing in English, laments:

> With lots of massacres, Manchu controlled the south. ... Nowadays many people think Qing's rulers [*sic*] loved Han's culture [*sic*] and kept ancient Chinese books, but in fact, they destroyed Han's culture and distorted Chinese books and proprieties [*sic*], and they destroyed the soul of Chinese people. Age-old Central Nation was destroyed, Age-old Huaxia Civilization was destroyed. ... And most horribly, the soul of Huaxia was destroyed.[65]

Han nationalism as a phenomenon forces us to ask whether 'Hanishness' is a primordial *identity* or an acquired *identification*.[66] The culturalistic view of Chinese history implies that 'non-Chinese' may become 'Chinese' through cultural indoctrination.[67] Thus, to speak the Han language and follow the Han customs would make one Han. However, the creation of the ethnic groupings in the Republic and the People's Republic has made the Han an ethnic group. The jargon on Hanwang clearly implies that one can only be born Han.

The situation is complex. While the Han are officially regarded as an ethnic group, the official language of the People's Republic is called

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[64] See Leibold 2010c for a summary of two representative writings on the Hanwang portal.

[65] Jiang Yike: "The Downfall of the Last Chinese Empire—The Loss of the Huaxia Civilization", at http://www.ourorient.com/articles/relations/loss.htm. Accessed 26 Apr 2010. Similar texts in Chinese abound on different websites. There are opposing views as well, which present the Yuan dynasty as the saviour of China's territorial unity or the Qing dynasty as the greatest dynasty in Chinese history.

[66] Cf. Mattlin 2001, 171.

[67] Confucius is believed to have said: "When barbarians come to China, they must be sinicized." Actually, this is a culturalist misinterpretation of a quotation in a writing by the great Tang dynasty scholar Han Yu (韩愈, 768-824). See Kallio 2005, 15.

Hanyu, the language of the Han.[68] In English, that language is called Chinese, but all the people living in China, Han or otherwise, may also be called Chinese by virtue of their being Chinese nationals.[69]

According to Chinese geneticists, all Han Chinese today have a coherent genetic structure. This coherence is said to be the result of millennia of fusion, assimilation and migratory waves (from the north to the south).[70] According to prominent anthropologist Fei Xiaotong (费孝通, 1910–2005), the Han population has always formed the core of the fusion process.[71] This view is supported by the culturalistic explanation: the superiority of the civilization of the Central Plain—the *Huaxia* or *Zhongxia*—has caused the other peoples to gravitate towards the centre.

Despite the genetics, the view of the Han as an ethnic group has been questioned by Western scholars. The relative sizes of the Han population and the second biggest ethnic group are in a different league altogether. As Thomas S. Mullaney writes: "To compare Han to any given non-Han [ethnic group] is in certain respects akin to comparing a phylum to a class, a class with an order, or an order with a family—that is, across entirely different taxonomic

[68] In principle, *Hanyu* refers jointly to all Chinese regional variants (dialects, regionalects), including not only the most spoken variant, Mandarin, but also Cantonese, Shanghainese etc. In practice, however, *Hanyu* refers especially to standardized Mandarin (officially called *Putonghua* in the Mainland, *Guoyu* in Taiwan and *Huayu* in Singapore and among overseas Chinese). The term *Hanyu* is rarely used outside the People's Republic.

[69] The terms used for the Chinese (people) in Chinese include *Hanren* (used in the PRC to refer to the Han Chinese), *Huaren* (used especially outside the PRC to refer to Han Chinese; also carries a culturalist connotation of *Zhonghua* or 'all Chinese') and *Zhongguoren* (principally a political term referring to Chinese nationals, but as *Zhongguo* originally referred to the 'Central Kingdoms', i.e. the *Huaxia* states of the Central Plain, the term *Zhongguoren* carries such a strong cultural-ethnic undertone that not all minority people are willing to identify themselves as *Zhongguoren*).

[70] Bo Wen et al. 2004. Widely publicized news reports in February 2010 of a DNA study by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which allegedly demonstrated that no 'pure' Han exist and that the whole concept of the Han as a genetically defined ethnic group must thus be called into question, are apparently baseless. The researcher quoted in the news reports says no such study exists. (See http://www.tianya.cn/publicforum/content/worldlook/1/253431.shtml. Accessed 20 Apr 2010.)

[71] Leibold 2009.

orders[72]."Linguistically, the Han can be divided into speakers of several 'regionalects' (to use the term coined by John DeFrancis[73]), often misleadingly called dialects. Though language is not necessarily related to ethnicity, China is known to have been both ethnically and culturally diverse during the first unification and long thereafter.

It is probably fair to say that although the ethnicity of the Han has a genetic basis, being conscious of one's 'Hanishness' is an acquired identification more than a primordial identity. It has been possible to identify oneself ethnically as a Han for just over a century, but the ethnic divide is firmly based on the culturalistic view, which made a distinction between the cultured 'us', the *Huaxia* of the Central Kingdom, on the one hand and the uncivilized 'others' of the surrounding areas on the other.[74] This view dates back well over two millennia. As Lothar von Falkenhausen writes:

> One fundamental yet gradual tendency in social development during the Zhou period [ca. 1045–256 BCE] was the subsumption of the clans under a larger unit that we may somewhat anachronistically call the "Hua Xia nation," and the exclusion of the "Barbarians" from that nation. ... The emerging "Hua Xia" supra-clan entity was endogamous: marriage to unacculturated "Others", though apparently not proscribed, was not encouraged.[75]

Naturally, the way history is presented is always a conscious choice. Although the Han is not explicitly a name for a race by any definition, it implicitly becomes conceptualized as one due to the historiographic tradition which stresses the fundamental differences between 'us' and 'the others'. Calling all the non-Han nationalities collectively 'the minority nationalities' further cements this age-old view. The

[72] Mullaney 2009.

[73] DeFrancis 1984, 57.

[74] From time immemorial, the Chinese have made a distinction between themselves and the 'barbarians', i.e. between the *Hua* (or *Xia*) and the *Yi* (夷).

[75] Falkenhausen 2006, 167.

racial discourse has a long history in China.[76] As elsewhere in the world, it has always included an element of racism, the belief that "racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race."[77] The racist undercurrent in Chinese society is especially prevalent in regard to black Africans.[78]

Today, the claims of superiority are most often heard on the part of the Han (which is not to say that all Han are racist nor that there are no racists among any of the other nationalities). Race is a social construct, and it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of the racist discourse in order to see the full scope of the sensitivities related to ethnic relations in China.[79]

Unity versus pluralism

Professor Victoria Tin-bor Hui from the University of Notre Dame has written:

[76] According to Frank Dikötter (1992), the discourse on 'race' appeared in China at the end of the nineteenth century and dominated the nationalist ideology at the beginning of the twentieth century. The discourse was not so much centred on the Han versus the other nationalities as on the 'yellow race' (or the Han together with the 'inner barbarians') versus the 'outer barbarians' (the Westerners and Africans).

[77] Definition from the *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary* (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism, accessed 26 May 2010).

[78] The racist riot targeting black students in Nanjing, in 1988, is perhaps the most striking recent example. It is notable that a person of (supposed) African origin is invariably called a 'black' (*heiren*, 黑人), which in the Chinese context is a derogatory expression. It is quite possible that the insistence among some Chinese scholars to regard Peking Man as an indigenous ancestor of the Chinese is due to the reluctance to accept an 'African' origin. (See Schmalzer 2008, 277.)

[79] See López 2000, 165: "I define 'race' as a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry. I argue that race must be understood as a sui generis social phenomenon in which contested systems of meaning serve as the connections between physical features, faces, and personal characteristics. … Race is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process …."

> While a monolithic [Central Kingdom] tended to repress dissent, dominate its neighbors and hinder trade, a plural [Central Kingdom] was more likely to make concessions to society, develop international law and promote trade. … In sum, Chinese history is not unlike European history in experiencing both realpolitik and idealpolitik elements. While China has a long history of domination and coercion, it also has a deeply rooted liberal tradition. … This liberal tradition … includes not just classical Confucianism at the philosophical level but, far more importantly, state–society bargains, diplomatic relations and commercial activities on the ground.[80]

Similar voices also emerge from within Chinese society. Related discussions are mushrooming. James Leibold maintains that there are "several latent fissures in the very composition of the Chinese nation-state" and alternatives to "China as a 'unitary, multi-ethnic state'" are being actively sought. "The Internet revolution and the dramatic changes unleashed in reform-era Chinese society have opened up new spaces—some elitist, some populist and some largely obscured—for the articulation of alternative national imaginaries, ensuring that the Party-state no longer holds a monopoly on the symbols, categories and meanings associated with being 'Chinese'", concludes Leibold.[81]

Ge Jianxiong writes very positively about the advantages of decentralization during the periods of division. According to him, periods of division opened up avenues for exploiting remote regions which remained neglected during the periods of unity due to their low importance, as seen from the capital, and to their physical distance from the heartland. Periods of division presented opportunities for the talented to find positions in the service of the regional rulers. Periods of division also witnessed great technological and intellectual advancements, whereas unity often equalled stagnation. New ideas flourished and new schools of thought were formed due to the

[80] Hui 2008, 53–65, 60, 63. By "a plural Central Kingdom" the author means that *Zhongguo* referred originally, before the first unification, to the 'Central Kingdoms' in the plural.

[81] Leibold 2010a, 24.

freedom made possible by the lack of a strong, ideologically unitarian government.[82]

Ge is cautious enough not to sound like a 'splittist'. Instead, he asserts that unity will prevail in China as long as the policies of reform and opening up continue. Ge emphasizes that he is not critical of unity, but of the excessive practices used to gain and maintain unification and centralized rule.[83] According to him, today's China is no longer unified under one ruler or one ruling family but under one nation. That means that unity is needed not because it is in the interests of the ruler but because it is in the interests of the people. Periods of division were natural in the old days, due to the coercive measures used to gain and maintain unity. In contrast, the positive values of the periods of division can today be found through increasing democracy and local autonomy, Ge concludes.[84]

Diana Lary points out that one reason why the central government today is promoting "the credo of historical unity" is the regions' desire for increased autonomy. While some provinces have become richer, they have also become more independent and unwilling to have the central government dictate that they must allocate part of their revenues to the poorer provinces. A "major recrudescence of regional power" is a fact in China today, and such development may become at odds with the aims of the central government.[85]

Ge Jianxiong is not alone in questioning unity as the one and only road to peace and prosperity. Dissident political scientist Yan Jiaqi (严家其, formerly at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) advocates a federal–democratic model which would simultaneously increase local democracy and maintain national cohesion despite different disintegrating trends.[86]

Confucian revivalist Lin Anwu (林安梧, Professor of Chinese Literature at the National Taiwan Normal University) claims that there is an important distinction between unity by force and unity by common will. Lin claims that the unity during the imperial era was (and in today's People's Republic is) carried out through force,

[82] Ge Jianxiong 2009, 171–172, 185–188.

[83] Ibid., 189, 246.

[84] Ibid., 246–249.

[85] Lary 1997, 183.

[86] Yan Jiaqi 1992.

whereas the original Confucian ideal is 'pluralist unity' which is based not on force but on virtue. In the best spirit of the traditional culturalism, Lin favours the latter and calls for the realization of 'Cultural China', a meta-structure under which all Chinese political entities could coexist.[87] Both Yan Jiaqi's federalist model and Lin Anwu's Cultural China have been discussed as possible solutions to the Taiwan issue.[88]

A Hunan-based journalist, Xiao Jiansheng (肖建生), discusses why China's politics have never undergone a transition from centralization to pluralism in his recent book, entitled *Zhongguo wenming de fansi* (中国文明的反思, 2007), "Reflecting on the Chinese Civilization". The book is a compact political and social history of China from remote antiquity up to the republican revolution.

Xiao maintains that the 'Grand Unity' (*Da yitong*) achieved by the First Emperor of Qin was by no means a positive historical achievement. On the contrary, sticking to the Grand Unity gave absolute power to the emperor which, in turn, gave way to absolute corruption. Under such rule, the people were treated as slaves and as beasts of burden. Furthermore, according to Xiao, the unification put an end to the tradition of sophisticated diplomatic relations which had existed prior to the unification. After the unification, China had no neighbours with whom to engage in diplomatic relations, and therefore the country's image became one of a solitary centre of the world. China was seen to equate to All-Under-Heaven. Such subsequent dynasties during which China turned similarly inwards and saw no reason to trade or compete in development with any other power were consequently periods of backwardness, concludes Xiao.[89]

Xiao uses the Song dynasty as an example of a period when the people were able to enjoy the benefits of pluralism precisely because China was not unified. Xiao reminds his readers of how the Song dynasty is often looked down upon as a weak dynasty which barely survived under the pressures from its northern adversaries. It was because of the weakness of the Song dynasty that China eventually fell under Mongol rule, according to the conventional way of thinking. In contrast, Xiao uses the Song dynasty as an example of

[87] Lin Anwu 1994.

[88] See also Kallio & Mattlin 2004.

[89] Xiao Jiansheng 2007, 54, 71–81, 84, 89.

a time when China was ruled in a humane and just way. According to Xiao, Song China was a liberal, open and pluralistic society. There were no demands for ideological unity or orthodoxy. Philosophy, science, arts and education flourished in such an atmosphere. Trade also thrived and the society had an international flavour. Even a large number of Jews found a home in Song China at a time when they were not welcome in many other parts of the world, remarks Xiao.[90]

Xiao steers clear of advocating that China should be turned into a Western style, multi-party democracy. Instead, he presents the Song dynasty as an important example of benevolent centralized rule. He claims that history indicates a way to make China's political system more humane, while keeping the centralized rule of the Communist Party intact.[91]

In the "Foreword" to his history book, Xiao Jiansheng questions the correctness of the conventional understanding of history:[92]

> Some people refuse to reflect thoroughly on their own history, and thus they remain unable to recognize correctly the achievements of the Chinese civilization and unable to absorb the truly useful lessons from history. … For example, the Confucians in ancient China … promoted such ideas as "the people are important, the ruler is unimportant", "rule humanely, love the people" and "the people are the basis of the state". These, originally so good, thoughts and political ideals were negated for the longest time. Instead, people approved of and carried on the ideology of violence and autocracy and later followed the bad customs[93] of the outlaws in the wild.

[90] Ibid., 2, 128–129, 165–166. A similar appraisal of the Song era can be found in Lary 1997, 181.

[91] Xiao Jiansheng 2007, 5, 352.

[92] The following three fragments are translated from Xiao Jiansheng 2007, 1–6.

[93] 'The customs of the outlaws in the wild' is *jianghu xiqi* (江湖习气) in the original, literally 'the spirit of the rivers and lakes (i.e. the way of life in the backwaters and wilderness). The phrase implies cunningness and sleekness and refers both to swindlers and charlatans as well as to the outlawed swordsmen who often feature in popular literature as Robin Hood-esque people's heroes. Here the phrase may refer to the jackal-like strategy of survival of the fittest, which has marked the periods of rural unrest during the Imperial Era or the Cultural Revolution and appearances of unchecked capitalism in modern times.

> Even today many people view the violent unification of [China] by the First Emperor of Qin and the consequent establishment of a tightly unified imperial autocracy as a great historical achievement. But have they not thought that if this really was such a grand achievement, then why has China not seen the emergence of such great thinkers as Laocius, Confucius or Mencius ever since Qin conquered [the rest of China]?

Xiao then goes on to discuss the relation between Chinese and Western culture, and draws the conclusion that they are not necessarily far apart:

> Everyone is today saying that we should revitalize the great Chinese culture, but have those who keep saying that really thought, what is this great Chinese culture? ... I feel it is necessary to take democracy, the rule of law, liberty and human rights, among others, as criteria of modern civilization, in order to be able to reflect upon the history of China's civilization in a systematic and thorough manner.
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> One very practical question ... is how to reform China's political system so that it suits the rapidly developing economic situation in our country, that is, how to base our society on democracy, rule of law, equality, liberty and harmony? ... One must frankly admit that there is no political system in the world which is all good and flawless. However, at least from today's perspective, the Western democratic model is relatively advanced ... and of universal value. ...

Xiao ends the "Foreword" with careful formulations that aim at political correctness:

> The problem is that in China, a country with a vast territory, a large population and thousands of years of history as an autocratic state, it would be unwise to rashly carry out reforms equalling a total westernization. ... Therefore, in order to reform the political system in today's China, we must draw experiences and lessons from the Chinese history. Only in that way may we find a successful political model which suits the national characteristics of China and the psyche of the Chinese people.

It is a telling sign that Xiao's book was banned immediately after its publication in 2007.[94] The Party–state tries to defend its monopoly in defining the meanings of history and 'Chineseness'. The Communist Party is apparently acting upon the belief that whoever controls history, controls China. This indicates that the Party will continue to resort to coercive measures, and the space for pluralism and liberalism will remain limited.

[94] "HK sells a book banned in China", by Vaudine England, BBC News, Hong Kong, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8278014.stm. Accessed 28 Sep 2009. Why Ge Jianxiong's book hasn't met with a similar fate is anyone's guess. Perhaps his established status both as an academic and as a politician helps.

Chapter II
The revival of tradition

Introduction to Chapter II

This chapter presents the efforts by the Party-state to reinvent tradition. It aims to shed light on the ongoing dialogue between modernity and tradition, communism and Confucianism, internal and external orientation, ideology and practice. The focus is on the efforts of the Party-state to turn selected elements of the Chinese traditional schools of thought into a new synthesis, emphasizing harmony and patriotism, called Traditional Learning. This chapter also illustrates how Confucianism is deeply intertwined with both Traditional Learning and Chinese communism.

Tradition, especially Confucianism, which had been the school of thought favoured by the emperors and the ruling scholar-official class, came under fierce attack in the early 20th century among the revolutionaries, who aimed to put an end to the imperial system and to "Save the Nation". However, the relationship between Confucianism and communism has always been complex. The Chinese communists adopted the Confucian ideal society, called the Great Community, as the goal of the communist revolution. At the same time, Confucius was condemned as a feudal aristocrat and a reactionary.

When communism in its fanatical, Maoist form started to fade away in the late 1970s and early 1980s, traditional values such as respect for education became fashionable again. It was concluded that the correct elements of Confucianism outweigh its incorrect elements. However, an outright, overall rehabilitation of Confucius was and still is impossible for the Communist Party, which sees itself as the direct descendant of the early anti-imperial movement.

Alarmed by the city-dwellers going onto the streets demanding democracy at a time when communism was collapsing in Europe, the Communist Party began promoting traditional culture in order to steer the people away from Western liberalism. At the time, some other Asian states were similarly promoting so-called Asian values.

During the last two decades, the term Traditional Learning has established itself as the designation for the amalgamation of China's traditional culture and philosophy and the counterpart of 'Western learning'.

The prevailing slogan of the Chinese Communist Party is "building a Socialist Harmonious Society". The concept of harmony is most often traced back to Confucian texts, and it is frequently said that building socialist harmony requires the fusion of Marxism and Traditional Learning. The Party-state is keen to present itself as the torch-bearer of Traditional Learning as it is a young 'dynasty' and needs to show itself as the inevitable pinnacle of historical development. Traditional Learning also offers the means to move away from Maoist communism spiritually.

Confucianism occupies a central position in Traditional Learning, and most of the manifestations of Traditional Learning are Confucian in nature, or at least in appearance. There are Confucius Institutes all over the world and Confucius's birthday is once again being observed. The most striking example is the plan to build a new 'cultural capital' for China at his birthplace. Interestingly, the project was conceived as a propaganda tool to win over the sympathies of Taiwanese compatriots.

However, it would be an exaggeration to call every aspect of Chinese tradition or culture 'Confucian'. On the other hand, although it can be argued that the revolutions in the 20th century have effectively broken the cultural continuum that Traditional Learning represents, it would be unfair to disregard all modern manifestations of Confucianism as Disney World-esque artificialities. Its instrumental usefulness aside, the intriguing question is, how viable is Traditional Learning (with Confucianism at its heart): can it really fill the ideological vacuum by virtue of its substance? In other words, can Traditional Learning become an engine of spiritual enlightenment?

From the point of view of intellectual history, it has been argued that China's drive for modernization and Saving the Nation during the last century has suppressed everything that has not been instrumental to development, including societal ideals of enlightenment, such as freedom, democracy or tolerance. Today, it seems that the Party-state wishes to reinvent Chinese tradition as 'harmony', which is used merely as a euphemism for 'stability' and 'unity'.

It is somehow expected of the Confucians that they should be enlightened individuals who work for the betterment of society and maintain their integrity even at the expense of their self-interests. Confucians should be 'public intellectuals'. Such idealism seems at odds with the trends to make Confucianism—either by itself or as an element in Traditional Learning—into a religion of sorts, as advocated by some dissident thinkers, or a dogmatized ideology to be merged with communism.

The failure of the revolutionaries to uproot Confucianism

As the school of thought favoured by the emperors and the ruling scholar-official class, Confucianism stood for orthodoxy during the imperial era. For that reason, many early reformists and republicans in the late 19th and early 20th century attacked Confucianism mercilessly.

The anti-Manchu activist Zhang Binglin (章炳麟, 1868–1936), whom the communists revere as an early revolutionary, stated in 1904 that China's lack of enterprise, which kept the country under the yoke of the Manchu and the colonial powers, was due to the Confucian emphasis on authority and conservatism.[95] Zhang favoured other classical schools of thought, such as Mohism (the school of Mozi), and promoted Traditional Learning (*Guoxue*) instead, meaning traditional Chinese philosophies by and large as opposed to the 'Western' value system, as the way to save the nation.[96] Saving the Nation, or National Salvation, *jiu guo* (救国)—defending (or redefining) the national integrity and dignity—was the main goal of the reformists and revolutionaries in late 19th and early 20th century China.

The mouthpiece of the New Culture Movement which flourished during the first decade of the new republic, *Xin shiji* ("New Century"), published several articles attacking Confucianism. One from 1907 stated:

> Confucius provided the foundations for autocratic government and bitterly poisoned our fellow countrymen for over two thousand years. … I say that if the people of the world want to

[95] Shimada 1990, 115.

[96] Ibid., 14, 111.

> partake of happiness, they must first destroy superstition; and, if the Chinese people want to enjoy happiness, they must first carry out a [revolution overthrowing Confucianism].[97]

This same spirit marked the culmination of the New Culture Movement, the May 4th Movement in 1919. It arose from disappointment towards the Versailles Treaty, which had awarded the German concessions on Shandong peninsula to Japan. China's weakness and inability to claim her rights was attributed to traditional values, in particular Confucianism. Two western gentlemen, 'Mr Science' and 'Mr Democracy', were called in to overthrow Confucius. Nationalism, not based on the old culturalist values but seeking to make China a nation among nations, grew stronger. The founding mythology of the People's Republic presents the May 4th Movement as a revolutionary, anti-imperialist and anti-feudal movement which laid the ideological foundation for the Chinese Communist Party.

Nevertheless, the relationship between Confucianism and revolution has always been complex. On the eve of the republican revolution, reformer and restorationist Kang Youwei (康有为, 1858–1927) presented Confucius in a very positive light, quite unlike Zhang Binglin. According to Kang, Confucius was a democratic reformer and a prophet of the age of Great Community (or Universal Commonwealth, *Datong*, 大同), the third and final stage in the traditional view of historical progress.[98] Kang described this utopia as an age when national frontiers and social classes disappear and universal peace prevails.

Kang published his views in a book entitled *Datong shu* in 1917, which instantly became very influential. The Chinese communists equated the Marxist utopia with the Great Community, and the young Mao Zedong (1896–1976) said in a private letter that achieving the Great Community was his target.[99] In 1949, speaking as the leader

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[97] Translated and quoted in ibid., 137–138.

[98] Originally, *Datong* was a golden age which had presumably existed in the distant past and was then followed by worse times. The goal of Confucius was to show the way 'back to the future' and to help the people return to the golden age.

[99] "'Datong' lixiang yu Shehuizhuyi zai Zhongguo de chuanbo" by Wang Suli, *Renminwang* website, at http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/49157/49163/4466836.html. Accessed 30 Apr 2010.

of the Communist Party, he stated that the goal of communism in China was to eliminate class and to realize the Great Community. Mao also said that while Kang Youwei had not known how the Great Community could be reached, communism now provided the way.[100]

Despite the equation of the communist utopia and the Confucian ideal of the Great Community, there are good grounds to condemn Confucianism from the viewpoint of socialist ideology. Confucius himself was a reactionary figure if viewed through the lens of historical materialism. He advocated a return to Zhou rule which, according to Marxist historians, was a slave society, whereas the Qin dynasty, which followed the Warring States period when Confucius lived, was more advanced as a feudal society.

An article by Dr Qian Mansu (钱满素) from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, listing four major negative aspects of Confucianism, serves as a good example of the orthodox, Marxist view. According to her, (1) Confucianism formed the basis for a patriarchal clan system which prevented personal development, (2) Confucianism promotes rule by men but not rule by law, (3) the Confucian ideal that anyone can become a sage is both unhelpful and unrealistic, and (4) the study of Confucianism was subordinate to politics, prevented technological development, and failed to encourage intellectual curiosity. Qian said Confucianism is simply an obstacle to China's development.[101]

This is the stand that Mao Zedong also adopted as the leader of the Chinese Communists. In 1940, in an essay titled "On New Democracy", he wrote:

> We must transform China, which is ruled by the Old Culture and thus ignorant and backward, into such a China which is ruled by the New Culture and thus civilized and advanced. … In China, we have an imperialist culture …. In China, we also have a half-feudal culture which reflects half-feudal politics and half-feudal economics; people who advocate respect for Confucius and reading the Classics, advocate the old Confucian propriety code and other old ideas, and oppose the new ideas of the New Culture, are all representatives of the half-feudal culture. … [These two old cultures] must be overthrown. If we don't overthrow them, we

[100] "Lun renmin minzhu zhuanzheng", in Mao Zedong 1966, 1405–1406, 1408.

[101] Quoted in Ling & Ma 2008, 265.

won't be able to establish any New Culture. ... The battle between the cultures is a battle of life and death.[102]

In 1953, Mao attacked the venerable philosopher Liang Shuming (梁漱溟, 1893–1988) in an essay titled "Criticizing Liang Shuming's Reactionary Thought".[103] Mao's attack was triggered by Liang's criticism towards Mao's agricultural policies.[104] In point 12 of the lengthy essay Mao stated:

> As to the errors of Confucius, I see him as undemocratic and lacking the spirit of self-criticism, somewhat like Mr. Liang. [His ideas] have the air of evil hegemonism and the flavour of Fascism. I urge friends, in particular Mr Liang, not to study this set of ideas by Confucius. That would make me very happy.[105]

During the chaotic ten-year period of 1966–1976, which started with the launch of the infamous Cultural Revolution and ended with Mao's death, Confucianism came in for particularly fierce criticism. Confucianism was made the embodiment of all 'feudalist rot'. However, it must be realized that the campaign to criticize Confucius and to "knock down the Confucian shop" was mostly motivated by the internal power struggle, and Confucius was just used as a scapegoat.

Similarly, history was instrumentalized for political purposes. The First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) was made a national hero as the ruler who first unified China, and Mao Zedong was presented as his only equal in history. This was also a direct jab at Confucianism, which was almost annihilated during the Qin dynasty. The Qin rulers favoured Legalism, *Fajia* (法家), known for its preference for rewards and especially punishments as the means to keep the people at bay, and its scorn for the 'softy' Confucians. Ironically, however, many of the 'feudalist' characteristics that

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[102] Mao Zedong 1967, 624, 655.

[103] Mao Zedong 1977, 107–115. Volume 5 of *Mao Zedong's Selected Works* was published during the Cultural Revolution, whereas editions published before or thereafter only include volumes 1–4.

[104] Lodén 2006, 170–171.

[105] Mao Zedong 1977, 113.

Confucianism was criticized for were actually more Legalist in nature. In fact, imperial Confucianism was just "Legalism with a Confucian façade" as the rulers realized that rewards and punishments are actually quite effective.[106] This led to a kind of ossification of Confucianism, such as the Three Cardinal Leads and Five Constants (see Chapter III, "What is Confucianism?") which were used as prime examples of feudal backwardness.

Amidst the Cultural Revolution campaigns, even the famous philosopher Feng Youlan (冯友兰, 1895–1990) had to write a self-criticism. In it, he confessed how his former defence of Confucianism had "served the big landlords, big bourgeoisie and Kuomintang reactionaries". He wrote:

> [The means] advocated by Confucius were in every case intended to benumb and deceive the working people more and more so that they would neither want nor dare to resist. … [Confucius advocated] the all-round restoration of the old order of slave-society. … I formerly interpreted Confucius's 'love for men' to mean love for all men. … [His] love, in fact, was only for a handful of slave-owning aristocrats. … Confucius's ideas were a reflection of [the] situation in the class struggle of that time. … Educated by the Cultural Revolution, I have gained a somewhat better understanding of Confucius.[107]

In contrast to Feng Youlan, Liang Shuming never admitted to any errors in his thinking. In 1974, he wrote: "In regard to the popular opinions presented in the cause of the current Criticize Confucius campaign, I don't agree with most of them."[108] "To hold to the current delusions—that 'constraining oneself and keeping to propriety'[109] meant restoration of the Zhou dynasty or that the Zhou dynasty was a slave society or even that Confucius himself was a protector

[106] Hsiao 1977, 137.

[107] Feng Youlan 1974, 88, 92, 102–103, 105.

[108] Liang Shuming 2008, 164.

[109] 'Constraining oneself and keeping to propriety' is the phrase *ke ji fu li* (克己复礼) from the *Analects*, XII.1. During the Cultural Revolution, the latter part, 'keeping to propriety' (*fu li*), was read as 'restoration of the old system', something that Lin Biao (林彪, 1907–1971), who was criticized alongside Confucius, was accused of.

of slavery at the junction of a slave society and a feudal society—is to heap mistakes upon mistakes."[110] Liang urged his contemporaries to put things in their right historical perspective and not to resort to historical falsifications. He points out that the Three Cardinal Leads and Five Constants were not invented by Confucius. "Just as Marx cannot be blamed for the mistakes of all those students of Marxism who have sunk into the pitfall of Marxist dogmatism, how then could we blame Confucius for the feudal ethic code which was formed by the later generations?"[111] Though these words were not published at the time, one cannot but salute the intellectual integrity of Mr Liang.

Attitudes towards Confucianism began to change soon after the Cultural Revolution. This followed in the wake of the efforts to revive formal education, which had been sorely neglected for a decade. It was acknowledged that economic development relied upon a professional workforce and management as well as scientific research. The age-old maxim often associated with Confucianism, 'respect teachers and value education', was highlighted by the second paramount leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Deng Xiaoping (邓小平, 1904–1976), in a speech in August 1977.[112] Universities resumed normal recruitment that same year.

Deng Xiaoping launched the policies of reform and opening up in 1978. Two years later, he named Modest Welfare (*Xiaokang*, 小康) as the target of his reform policies. Xiaokang is the second stage in the traditional view of historical progress, the one preceding *Datong*. This signalled that while communism still remained the goal, it was put on hold for the foreseeable future, and China was to concentrate on economic growth. Modest Welfare has since remained the stated objective of the communist leadership.

A conference on social science theories in late 1978 concluded that the negative and positive aspects of Confucianism should be distinguished from each other.[113] In essence, this meant adherence to Mao's words from 1940: Communist Party members must "discard

[110] Liang Shuming 2008, 170. From an essay entitled "Jintian women yingdang ruhe pingjia Kongzi".

[111] Ibid., 171.

[112] "Zun shi zhong jiao", at http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/63/info1226904015050763.htm. Accessed 22 Apr 2010.

[113] Ai 2008, 57–58.

the feudalistic dross and keep the democratic essence" of ancient culture.[114]

In the 1980s, further conferences on Confucianism were held. The Confucian emphasis on social harmony was well suited to downplay the importance of the class struggle, which had gone to extremes during the Cultural Revolution and was no longer wanted in the era of economic reform. The government even funded an academic project on New Confucianism (see Chapter III, "The emergence of New Confucianism") which was undoubtedly aimed at strengthening the position of 'socialist Confucianism', that is, Confucianism which is compatible with the correct political doctrine.

A representative example of opening the way for 'socialist Confucianism' is an article discussing what Confucianism has to offer for the Socialist Market Economy in China, by Professor Luo Guojie (罗国杰) from Renmin University (see also Chapter III, "What is Confucianism?"). Luo opines that while a market economy means increased competition, the Chinese should aim for "fair competition" and steer clear of the selfish profit-seeking of the 'petty men'. Following propriety and justice, as advocated by Confucius, means collectivism. Luo condemns individualism as the major threat to socialism during this era of reform and opening up. China must stick to Marxism, follow the path leading to the good of the many instead of the few, and be extremely cautious of the corrupting influence of Western ideologies and values. In the proper fashion, Luo concludes that one must put traditional Chinese culture under careful scrutiny in order to be able "to discard the dross and select the essence" which is useful in the present world.[115]

Luo appears to have glossed over matters in regard to earlier communist views on Confucianism's conservatism. While he admits that Confucianism in its time supported the cause of the slave-owning class, his message is that the correct elements of Confucianism outweigh its incorrect elements. It is also noteworthy that he places unity at the core of Confucian tradition.

[114] Mao Zedong 1967, 668. From the essay "Xin minzhuzhuyi".

[115] Luo Guojie 1999, 444.

The project for replacing Confucianism with Traditional Learning

Confucianism and other Chinese traditional schools of thought got another boost from the patriotic education campaign, launched in 1991 in the aftermath of the Tian'anmen events in 1989. According to Wang Zheng's study, "a patriotic narrative replaced the old class-struggle narrative" in the new school textbooks, produced during the campaign. In addition, the textbooks presented "a new 'victimization narrative', which blames the 'West' for China's suffering." 'Rejuvenating China' was a popular political slogan.[116] The idea of Chinese traditional learning, presented at least as equivalent to the Western philosophical and scientific tradition, fitted this patriotic narrative well.

The third generation leader Jiang Zemin (江泽民, b. 1926) said in a speech in 1991: "With regard to the rich cultural legacies left over from China's history of several thousand years, we should select the essence and discard the dross therefrom, and carry forward and develop them in line with the spirit of the times in order to make the past serve the present."[117] This statement was related to the fight against 'bourgeois liberalization' by the neo-conservative wing of the Chinese Communist Party, led by Jiang. In 1986, the Party had started promoting the building of a 'Socialist Spiritual Civilization'. It was an effort to steer the Chinese people away from worshipping the Western values which had started seeping into the country, partly introduced through the think-tanks[118] of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, which influenced the liberalist movements in the late 1980s, including the Tian'anmen demonstrations.

In 1994, traditional culture was placed in a central position in the Patriotic Education campaign. In 1995, the Central Party School and the China Confucius Foundation (established in 1984 by the central government to promote research on Confucianism in order to advance Socialist Spiritual Civilization) organized an academic symposium on

[116] Wang 2008, 784, 794.

[117] The complete transcript of Jiang's speech in English, *Xinhuawang*, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/20010726/433649.htm. Accessed 29 Apr 2010.

[118] Li 2009.

Marxism and Confucianism. As was to be expected, the symposium exposed the prevailing distrust towards the 'feudalist character' of Confucianism, though some argued that in order to survive, Marxism must be sinicized, and in order for this to happen, it must absorb elements of China's traditional culture.[119] Although China's national media reported in 1993 on the emergence of a 'traditional learning fever', interest in traditional learning was more of a fabrication than a real, nation-wide fad at that time.[120]

The 1990s also saw the emergence of 'Asian values'. The latter can be seen as a counter-reaction to the prevalence of the views of Max Weber (1864–1920), who attributed China's failure to develop capitalism to the Confucian mentality which, according to his analysis, favoured the *status quo* and preferred adjusting to the world rather than attempting to change it. In the views of Singaporean leaders Lee Kuan Yew (李光耀) and Goh Chok Tong (吴作栋), Confucian virtues such as respect for education, loyalty to both the extended family and the state, preference for social harmony, and collectivism, had formed the spiritual basis for the rise of the 'East Asian Tigers', South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong.[121] Later, other Asian leaders, such as Mahathir bin Mohamad of Malaysia, Suharto of Indonesia and Jiang Zemin of China, also expressed their support for countering the Western emphasis on human rights and democracy with Asian values centring instead on the right of development.[122]

Not altogether groundlessly, the Chinese government's interest towards tradition and 'Asian values' was criticized by Taiwanese Confucians as a 'United Front gimmick'[123], that is, as an attempt to elicit the sympathies of overseas Chinese and Taiwanese through Confucian rhetoric. The Taiwanese must have looked askance at

[119] Makeham 2008, 65–66, 239–241. The new emphasis on traditional learning also provoked criticism from those who feared that it would deviate China from its course of modernization (Ai 2008, 63).

[120] Ibid., 68, 70 fn. 35.

[121] See Ai 2008, 44–45.

[122] See Kraft 2001.

[123] Ai 2008, 51. See Makeham 2008, 197. 'United Front' refers to the periods of cooperation between the Communist Party and the National Party before and during the Chinese Civil War. In 1981, the Communists made a plea to the Nationalists in Taiwan to form a new united front for the reunification of China.

communist China joining hands with the South East Asian countries by playing the Confucian card, which had previously been Taiwan's trump.

Following the worldwide collapse of the communist ideology, and in the wake of the Chinese Communist Party's positive attitude towards classical schools of thought, even liberal and anti-Marxist views of Confucianism began to emerge. Some liberal thinkers went as far as to say that Marxism was not compatible with modernization and should therefore be replaced by Confucianism. Some scholars sought to use Confucian concepts to fill the spiritual void, which they claimed was a result of the opportunism and nihilism of the Cultural Revolution, or even the anti-traditionalism of the May 4th Movement.[124]

This highlighted the need for the Communist Party to distance itself from Confucianism again. After all, the Communist Party sees its foundation as resting on the legacy of the May 4th Movement, which is conventionally perceived as anti-Confucian. Consequently, a new appraisal of the relationship between communism and tradition began to gain prevalence. Professor Yan Jiayan (严家炎) from Peking University opined that while the Cultural Revolution had resulted in an ideological crisis and smashed tradition, the same wasn't true for the May 4th Movement. While the latter had attacked the Three Cardinal Leads, this did not constitute an overall negation of Confucianism. Yan pointed out that imperial Confucianism also had unorthodox branches. He furthermore emphasized that China's traditional culture was more than just Confucianism.[125]

As a consequence, the government started promoting Traditional Learning, *Guoxue*, following the idea of Zhang Binglin, mentioned above. In 2004, at the fourth plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, it was affirmed that "China's advanced socialist culture" needs to be constructed on the basis of 5,000 years of traditional culture.[126]

What is Traditional Learning then? Historian Mao Peiqi (毛佩琦) from Renmin University expresses it this way:

[124] See Song Xianlin 2003, 91, 94. Ai 2008, 41, 52.

[125] Quoted in Ling & Ma 2008, 272.

[126] Makeham 2008, 318.

> Put simply, it is the learning that makes the Chinese Chinese. … Put more elaborately, the objects of the study of traditional learning not only include literature but also substantial things; they not only include material artefacts but also immaterial cultural heritage; they include, among others, buildings, clothing, food, music, paintings, medicine and the theatre of all our nationalities. … China's traditional learning has never rejected the intake of foreign elements: when Buddhism was introduced into China, it went through changes and became uniquely Chinese Buddhism …. Therefore, the studying and revitalising of traditional learning today does not mean retreating into antiquity or ossification. … Nevertheless, China's traditional learning is clearly different from Western learning. China's traditional learning is our counterpart of Western learning and both represent totally different scientific systems.[127]

What is the use of Traditional Learning? According to Mao Peiqi, the continuity of China's culture was broken in the revolutionary era. After the establishment of New China, "at the time when total westernization was the target of all-round critique, China actually moved towards total westernization. Only after the reform and opening up period had lasted for 30 years did the prospering Chinese awake, and the protection and revitalization of traditional learning become part of the national consciousness."[128] He continues:

> As a strong, independent nation among nations, China must have a correspondingly strong and independent national culture. … China does not need to absorb the wisdom of her traditional culture only in order to fulfil the needs of her own reconstruction and development, but China also faces an opportunity and the responsibility to contribute her wisdom for the benefit of the whole of humanity.[129]

However, even if the Communist Party is reluctant to officially endorse Confucianism, it has not been possible to keep Confucius away from

[127] Mao Peiqi's "Foreword" in *Shisan Jing jie du* (2008). Cf. Zhang Dainian, quoted in Makeham 2008, 67.

[128] Mao Peiqi's "Foreword" in *Shisan Jing jie du* (2008).

[129] Ibid.

Traditional Learning. In practice many, if not most, of the concrete manifestations of Traditional Learning are related to Confucianism. As Liang Qichao (梁启超, 1873–1929) wrote: "Confucian philosophy does not equate with the whole of Chinese culture, but if you take Confucianism away, I am afraid not much else will remain."[130]

Three traditional festivals—*Qingming* (Tomb Sweeping Day), *Duanwu* (the Dragon Boat Festival) and *Zhongqiu* (the Moon Festival)—were made official holidays in 2007.[131] Although these festivals are not Confucian in origin, the folklore attached to them has a strong Confucian flavour. For instance, both *Qingming* and *Duanwu* are related to the remembrance of certain righteous and virtuous scholar-officials who lived during the Eastern Zhou period (770–256 BCE). Confucius's birthday is once again observed with lavish ceremonies every September.[132]

Institutes of Traditional Learning have been established in universities, and Confucianism has a central position on their curricula. A statue of Confucius was erected to mark the establishment of the School of Chinese Classics at Renmin University in 2005. The Research Centre for China's Traditional Culture at Renmin University convened an editorial meeting in 2004 for the book series "Recitation Texts to Be Used in Promoting Confucianism to the Masses". In the same year, a series of primary school textbooks on Confucianism were published under the endorsement of China's Ministry of Education. The academic year in many schools begins with a quasi-Confucian ceremony where the students wear ancient-style robes and headgear (often to the dislike of *hanfu* purists). Weekend classes in Confucianism for school children and even pre-school children have become popular.[133] One may also note that Article 21 in China's

[130] Quoted in *Shisan Jing jie du* (2008), "Editors' Foreword".

[131] "Chinese mark 1st 'official' Qingming with visits to deceased", by Xinhua, Beijing, in *China Daily Online*, 4 Apr 2008, at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2008-04/04/content_6592879.htm. Accessed 16 Sep 2009.

[132] Confucius's birthday was celebrated on the Mainland for the first time in 1989 (Ai 2008, 31). Prior to that, only the anniversary of Confucius's death was observed on October 1st (also the national day of the PRC). Traditionally (and all along in Taiwan), the birthday is observed by Confucians.

[133] Ai 2008, 55. Makeham 2008, 318–319, 322. Ho 2009. "China's thriving Confucian schools," by Jill McGivering, *BBC News*, 3 Jan 2008, at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7169814.stm. Accessed 28 Sep 2009. See also Li Xiangping & Shi Dajian 2009, 74.

Marriage Law, which stipulates that adult children have the duty to support their elderly parents, is inherently Confucian.

Confucius is also the spearhead of the Ministry of Education–led drive to introduce Chinese culture to the world. Modelled after the Goethe-Institut, Alliance Française and other such institutions, there are to date some 300 Confucius Institutes in various parts of the world. Approximately one third of these are in European countries, including one in Finland at the University of Helsinki.[134] The goal is set at 500 institutes.[135]

It would be tempting to hypothesize that the establishment of the Confucius Institutes is a conscious effort to bolster China's peaceful rise, but the fact remains that the Ministry of Education ranks relatively low in the Chinese organizational hierarchy, and it is therefore improbable that it should have been entrusted with a major role in Chinese foreign policy implementation. Besides, the Confucius Institutes are under Chinese control to varying degrees. Some, like the Confucius Institute in Stockholm, are tightly overseen by their home institutions, which leaves little room for potential Chinese propaganda purposes.[136] The phenomenon of the spread of the Confucius Institutes is nevertheless worth keeping a close eye on.

A Harmonious Society

In the wake of the side effects of the otherwise successful economic policies, especially the growing inequality, the Communist Party had to acknowledge that "social equity and justice is a basic condition of social harmony".[137] In order to create a new moral focus which would balance the brutal competition over economic growth, the fourth

[134] Exact numbers as of October 2009 are available on the website of the Office of Chinese Language Council International, or *Hanban* for short (http://english.hanban.edu.cn/kzxy.php, accessed 29 Apr 2010).

[135] Li Xiangping & Shi Dajian 2009, 74.

[136] In 2007, a member of the Swedish Parliament expressed concern that the Confucius Institute in Stockholm would provide a bridgehead for Chinese government propaganda and even espionage (http://www.riksdagen.se/Webbnav/index.aspx?nid=101&bet=2007/08:46, accessed 29 Apr 2010).

[137] Ai 2008, 32. Bell 2008, 9. Shambaugh 2008, 115.

generation leader Hu Jintao (胡锦涛, b. 1942) initiated the concept of a 'Socialist Harmonious Society' in 2005. Whereas the concrete content in building the harmonious society must come through social and economic policies, conceptually harmony is central to Chinese traditional thought in general, and to Confucianism in particular. However, in the official Party documents discussing the Socialist Harmonious Society, Confucianism is not mentioned, although Hu Jintao himself has made references to Confucius in his speeches.[138]

At the 17th Party Congress, the word 'harmonious' was added to the CCP Constitution.[139] Hu Jintao had this to say about the Socialist Harmonious Society:

> Building a harmonious socialist society is a historical mission throughout the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.... It is through development that we will increase the material wealth of society and constantly improve people's lives, and it is again through development that we will guarantee social equity and justice and constantly promote social harmony. ... In accordance with the general requirements for democracy and the rule of law, equity and justice, honesty and fraternity, vigor and vitality, stability and order, and harmony between man and nature and the principle of all the people building and sharing a harmonious socialist society, we will spare no effort to solve the most specific problems of the utmost and immediate concern to the people and strive to create a situation in which all people do their best, find their proper places in society and live together in harmony, so as to provide a favorable social environment for development.[140]

Modest Welfare has also been given concrete criteria in terms of national income. Both the timetable and the criteria have been modified several times. Reaffirming Deng Xiaoping's goal-setting from 1980, Hu stated that the society should enter the *Xiaokang* level

[138] See Bell 2008, 9.

[139] The amended text is available e.g. at http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229722.htm. Accessed 19 Aug 2010.

[140] Complete text of Hu's report at the 17th Party Congress in English at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749_2.htm. Accessed 26 Apr 2010.

of overall welfare ("moderately prosperous society" in the official translation) by 2020.[141] Furthermore, Hu outlined the meaning of Modest Welfare in this way:

> When the goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects is attained by 2020, China, a large developing socialist country with an ancient civilization, will have basically accomplished industrialization, with its overall strength significantly increased and its domestic market ranking as one of the largest in the world. It will be a country whose people are better off and enjoy markedly improved quality of life and a good environment. Its citizens will have more extensive democratic rights, show higher ethical standards and look forward to greater cultural achievements. China will have better institutions in all areas and Chinese society will have greater vitality coupled with stability and unity. [142]

Hu Jintao also emphasized the need to "promote Chinese culture and build a common spiritual home for the Chinese nation".

> Chinese culture has been an unfailing driving force for the Chinese nation to keep its unity and make progress from generation to generation. We must have a comprehensive understanding of traditional Chinese culture, keep its essence and discard its dross to enable it to fit in with present-day society, stay in harmony with modern civilization, keep its national character and reflect changes of the times. ... The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will definitely be accompanied by the thriving of Chinese culture.[143]

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[141] Speech at the 17th Party Congress at http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2007-10/24/content_6938568_3.htm. Accessed 26 Apr 2010.

[142] Complete text of Hu's report at the 17th Party Congress in English at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749_3.htm. Accessed 26 Apr 2010.

[143] Speech at the 17th Party Congress at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/24/content_6938749_6.htm. Accessed 26 Apr 2010.

The concept of harmony, *he* (和) or *hexie* (和谐), has its roots in Confucianism.[144] Fan Zhongyan's (范仲淹, 989–1052) famous essay "Inscription at Yueyang Tower" contains the phrase: *zheng tong ren he* (政通人和), "the state was administered smoothly and the people lived in harmony with each other". 'Harmony' is often defined through this quote by Confucius: "The gentleman acts in harmony with others but is no conformist. The petty man is conformist but does not act in harmony with others."[145] Senior editor of the *People's Daily*, Lin Zhibo, explained the meaning of this Confucian maxim for the realization of the Socialist Harmonious Society in this way:

> 'Harmony' is harmonious and unified, 'conformity' is similar and unanimous; 'harmony' is abstract and internal, 'conformity' is concrete and external. ... 'To act in harmony but not to be conformist' is the only way to common prosperity and development in the multi-cultural world. ... 'Not to be conformist' means that one does not strive for similarity nor aim to duplicate what others have done. As long as one's big goals are not in conflict with those of the others, one should recognize the differences, tolerate the differences and even respect the differences. In this way, the contradictions may be dissolved and all can coexist and prosper together. ... It is only through integration[146] that we may smoothly take the step from economic globalization to a culturally pluralist unity ... and finally reach the realm of Great Community

[144] The character *he* (和) was recently chosen "the most 'Chinese' Chinese character" by the monthly *Zhonghua yichan* ("'Harmony' voted No. 1 character" by Liu Chang, *Global Times*, 18 Oct 2010, at http://china.globaltimes.cn/society/2010-10/582905.html, accessed 19 Oct. 2010).

[145] *Analects* XIII.23. In this quotation, the character used for 'harmony' is actually 合 (a synonym and in modern Chinese also a character similar in sound to 和). The first sentence of this quotation is displayed in the short film *Hexie Zhongguo* ("Harmonious China"), which was shown to visitors at the China Pavilion in the Shanghai Expo 2010, together with "(although) I follow my heart's desires I shall not cross the bounds (of propriety)" from *Analects* II.4.

[146] The somewhat unusual expression that Lin Zhibo uses for 'integration', *mohe* (磨合), refers literally to grinding off sharp edges in order to make people concordant.

> in the world. Such Great Community would mean internal harmony and unity but not external similarity and unanimity ….[147]

Today, the differences between Asian values, traditional studies, Confucianism and socialist harmony are being purposefully blurred, which is in accordance with both the interests of the Party, not wanting to see an overemphasis on Confucianism, and of the people, for whom the traditional culture is a living and ever-changing organism and who have no need to differentiate between Confucianism and other elements of Chinese culture.[148]

Workers Daily published a commentary in 2006 which discussed the image of Traditional Learning among the population. According to the commentary, people understand Traditional Learning to mean the Confucian classics, classical poetry and arts as well as traditional customs. The commentary saw this as a narrow view but expressed hope that the values that people identify with Traditional Learning could strengthen a common identity and the cohesion of the nation. According to the commentary, these values include fraternal love, collectiveness, harmony without conformity, the oneness of humanity, patriotism, people forming the basis of the state, consideration for others, perseverance and diligence, thriftiness in running a household, and respect for education. The author, politics editor Liu Wenning (刘文宁), warns against absorbing influences which are incompatible with modernization, especially in terms of education.[149]

A similar sentiment is shared in a commentary published recently in the *People's Daily*. The author, writer and columnist Wang Meng (王蒙), criticizes the craze for reintroducing classical primers to school children. "It is all right and necessary that Chinese children today are taught to obey rules, talk politely, respect their teachers and venerate the leaders", the author writes, but notes that such traditional values must be subject to the principles of modern society, such as equality before the law, and must not hinder creativity, imagination and

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[147] "'Junzi he er bu tong' de jiedu", *Renmin luntan*, vol. 4, 2005, at www.people.com.cn/GB/paper85/14577/1295896.html. Accessed 27 Apr 2010.

[148] See Allen 1999.

[149] "Pinglun: You guan 'guoxuere' de ruogan sikao", by Liu Wenning, *Xinhuawang*, at news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2006-08/17/content_4971071.htm. Accessed 27 Apr 2010.

readiness to debate. Children must also be encouraged to engage in physical activities and play, things neglected in the classical primers.[150]

Outside China, the end of the Asian economic miracle has recently embarrassed the advocates of Asian values.[151] Even Lee Kuan Yew has said that respect for elders does perhaps not meet the demands of modernity and that loyalty to family has often led to family cronyism.[152]

Inside China, the discourse on Asian values is still very much alive. Vice-Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, He Yafei (何亚非), claimed recently that in the minds of many Chinese, the Asian values, or Confucian thought, are just as important as universal human rights standards. He said in an interview that while China recognizes the universality of human rights, it also acknowledges that different societies may employ different methods in promoting and protecting human rights due to their different cultural, societal and historical backgrounds. Therefore, human rights and Asian values or Confucianism are not dialectically opposite but mutually complementary value systems, concluded He.[153]

A case in point: The Zhonghua *Culture Symbolic City*

Traditional studies are self-evidently meant to promote a positive image of China to the Chinese 'diaspora' (the overseas Chinese of both recent and earlier eras), as well as the Taiwanese and the world at large. It is not misleading to talk of 'United Front Gimmicks'. The meaning of these efforts for the 'peaceful rise of China' and 'China's soft power' will be a phenomenon to follow closely. Here I introduce two examples of such 'gimmicks'.

The first example has been discussed in some detail by James Leibold in *The China Journal*, namely the Humanistic Olympic Studies

[150] "Cong redu 'Dizi gui' shuoqi", by Wang Meng, *Renmin ribao (Haiwaiban)*, 12 Jan 2010, p. 1.

[151] Ai 2008, 46–47.

[152] *Newsweek* interview in 2001, at http://www.singapore-window.org/sw01/010128nw.htm. Accessed 28 Apr 2010.

[153] "He Yafei: Rujia sixiang gen renquan biaozhun tongdeng zhongyao," by Xinhua, 19 March 2010, at http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2010-03-19/024017238601s.shtml. Accessed 28 Apr 2010.

Center which was established in Beijing ahead of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. According to Leibold, the concept of "Humanistic Olympics" was "originally intended as a foil for Western critics of China's human rights record." The Humanistic Olympic Studies Center was established in order to flesh out the concept with Confucian meaning, so the "Great Community (*Datong*) of the world" and "harmony between man and nature" (*Tian ren heyi*, 天人合一) were linked with the Olympian ideals by the scholars participating in the project. The same thought was put in concrete form in the opening ceremony of the Olympics where the world was given "an exquisite cultural banquet" of the "profound poetry" of Chinese culture, adapted to suit foreign palates.[154]

An even more concrete example is the "*Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City" (*Zhonghua wenhua biaozhi cheng*, 中华文化标志城) project which aims to build an entire city to symbolize China's cultural heritage. The project was conceived as early as 1995, when President Jiang Zemin issued an eight-point proposal for the development of the relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The sixth point states that the 5,000-year-old culture forms a spiritual link which binds all the sons and daughters of all the ethnic groups of the *Zhonghua* nation together.

Jiang Zemin elaborated the theme in 1997 in a speech at Harvard University where he said that culture also advances the cause of China's reunification. In 1998, the "*Huaxia* Cultural Links Project" (*Huaxia wenhua niudai gongcheng*, 华夏文化纽带工程) was launched jointly by the Taiwan Affairs Office under the State Council and other bodies dealing with propaganda work and overseas Chinese relations. In 2004, Jiang's successor, Hu Jintao, emphasized the great historical significance of the project, alluding to the historical task of China's reunification.[155]

The "*Huaxia* Cultural Links Project" has promoted different activities, such as the launching of campaigns promoting classical literature and philosophy. The most ambitious endeavour which the Project has conceived is the building of the "*Zhonghua* Culture

[154] Leibold 2010a , 20–23

[155] Information on the *Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City website at www.ccsc.gov.cn. Accessed 15 Jan 2010.

Symbolic City". President Hu Jintao and the Ministry of Culture gave the idea their blessing in 2001.[156]

The "*Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City" is to be built in Jining City in Shandong Province. The city is set to span over 300 square kilometres, combining the ancient home of Confucius in Qufu and the ancient home of Mencius in Zoucheng into one tourism site, complete with a range of new buildings. The stated cost of the project is 30 billion renminbi yuan (EUR 3 billion). According to some proponents of the project, the cultural sites of the new city would provide the venue for all national commemorative events in the future. It is to become China's "Holy Land" or at least China's "Cultural Capital". The plans include erecting a 168-metre-high statue of Confucius.[157]

The construction supposedly got underway in 2010. According to the plans, first to be built are a new Confucius Museum and a youth centre which will form part of a Confucian academy. Part of a World Bank loan granted to China for the protection of cultural heritage during 2010–12 is targeted for the project, and a World Bank appraisal team visited the site in early 2010.[158]

Naturally, the strongest lobbyists for the project come from the region. For any province, a project of this magnitude is most welcome. However, the plans have also evoked strong opposition. The project is seen by many as obscenely expensive and megalomaniac. Many critics claim that the cost will exceed the estimated 30 billion yuan manifold, while even that amount of money would be enough to build 60,000 new village schools. It is also feared that the new buildings and roads will destroy the old cultural landscape. The project is said to disregard nationalities other than the Han and schools of thought other than Confucianism. In addition, it is accused of overlooking the

[156] Ibid.

[157] "Zhuanjia cheng Jining jiang chengwei woguo wenhua fudu," *Diyi Caijing Ribao* through *Sina.com* news, 3 March 2008, at http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2008-03-03/045615061062.shtml. Accessed 15 Jan 2010. Blog post by Tao Dongfeng (陶东风) on 19 March 2008, at http://blog.sina.com.cn/taodongfeng. Accessed 15 Jan 2010. The chosen height represents low-brow numerology as '168' is pronounced somewhat similarly to 'may your way be prosperous'.

[158] Information on the *Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City website, www.ccsc.gov.cn. Accessed 25 Feb 2010. List of the projects at http://www.qddpc.gov.cn/uploadfile/200997101619497.pdf. Accessed 18 Aug 2010.

achievements of New China. Some have even contemptuously dubbed the project an attempt to create a "Chinese Jerusalem".[159]

It is true that the word *Huaxia* in the name of the framework project is problematic. The word refers specifically to the forefathers of the Han Chinese who inhabited the central, 'cultured' states during the pre-imperial era. There is perhaps reason to believe that the "*Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City" is being used to promote Han nationalism. One of the chief advisors on the project is Professor Ge Jianxiong, an avid commentator on contemporary affairs.[160] His involvement in the highly political, government-supported project is at first sight surprising. The general ethos of Ge's book *Tongyi yu fenlie* (discussed in Chapter I) underrates unity as the main tradition in Chinese history and thus goes very much against the official view.

In his role as advisor on the "*Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City" project, Ge has said:

> Chinese culture must be considered to include the cultures of all nationalities living in China. Chinese culture is pluralistic and not just the culture of the Han nationality (the *Huaxia* culture). Even if we were to regard it only as the culture of the Han nation, it is not based solely on Confucianism or the school of Confucius and Mencius. ... Jining City (composed of Qufu and Zoucheng) has certain advantages, being situated in the cradle of traditional culture ... but it is not the only such place.[161]

Ge explained that he is not seeking the creation of a "holy site" (for the *Huaxia* nation or Confucianism), but a "cultural secondary capital" which would ease the burden of Beijing by becoming the venue for certain national festivities. First and foremost, "the entire project must be undertaken in a way which is in accordance with

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[159] Blog post by Tao Dongfeng (陶东风*) on 19 March 2008*, at http://blog.sina.com.cn/taodongfeng. *Accessed 15 Jan 2010. Xin shiji zhoukan* through *Baidu kongjian*, 21 March 2008, at http://hi.baidu.com/56cun/blog/item/53a179c4769a97ad8326acfa.html. Accessed 15 Jan 2010.

[160] "Ge Jianxiong tan Zhonghua wenhua biaozhi cheng jianshe wenti," *Xinjingbao* through *Sina.com* news, 12 March 2008, at http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2008-03-12/021515126572.shtml. Accessed 15 Jan 2010.

[161] Ibid.

the Constitution and other laws, and which protects the unity of the state, the union of the nationalities, territorial integrity and societal harmony."[162]

What does Ge Jianxiong mean by all this? One clue can be found in an interview he gave to the *New York Times* in 2004. Referring to the omissions and alterations in Chinese history books used in high schools he said: "In China, history is still used as a political tool, and at the high school level, we still must follow the doctrine."[163] So I wonder if Ge is just paying lip service to the official view on China's unity, while he really believes that history will repeat itself and China will once again become divided. Besides, it would be easy to believe that Ge would see such a division as benefiting the Chinese people, considering the way he extols the virtues of non-centralized rule in his book. I also wonder if Ge isn't just paying lip service to the "union of nationalities", while he is really advocating the creation of the "cultural capital" as a way to bolster the cultural identity of the descendants of the *Huaxia*, the Han Chinese. Such an identity would be needed, were China to become divided again.

Saving the Nation with political religion

Judging by the combination of "building a Socialist Harmonious Society" and the promotion of Traditional Learning, it seems that the Party-state wishes to reinvent Chinese tradition as 'harmony'. On the basis of the internal situation in China and the legitimization needs of the Party, it also seems likely that 'harmony' is used as a euphemism for 'stability' and 'unity'. In the light of contemporary Chinese history, this would represent a link in a long, unbroken continuum.

The history of twentieth-century China has been described as a duel between National Salvation and Enlightenment (*qimeng*, 启蒙). National Salvation is often accused of having suppressed the enlightenment of the societal sphere in China. During the republican

[162] Ibid.

[163] "China's Textbooks Twist and Omit History", by Howard W. French, *New York Times*, 6 December 2004, at http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/06/international/asia/06textbook.html?pagewanted=print&position=. Accessed 15 Feb 2010.

revolution in the early 20th century, slogans promoting science led to the development of a scientific world view, whereas slogans for democracy were transformed into 'democratic centralism' (i.e. one-party rule) by the Mao Zedong-led communists, maintains Li Zehou (李泽厚), a prominent, critical-Marxist philosopher. He particularly blames the militarization within the Communist Party during the war in the 1930s and 40s.[164]

Saving the Nation is invariably presented as modernization: shedding the old shackles that kept economic, scientific and military development at bay. Although China is often presented as the longest surviving culture in the world, it can also be argued that the cultural continuum has been completely and irrevocably severed by the revolutions of the 20th century: the republican revolution, the communist revolution, and the so-called Cultural Revolution. According to the latter view, tradition (especially in the form of Confucianism) has no place other than in the museums of intellectual history.

Joseph R. Levenson wrote in 1965: "By making their own museum-like approach to traditional Chinese culture, the Chinese kept their continuity without precluding change."[165] Some twelve years later, Thomas A. Metzger argued instead that Chinese thinkers today are still captives of their cultural traditions, shaped by Confucianism, but with an optimistic outlook. The predicament of the Confucians in the imperial era was related to the difficulty of transforming one's inner moral nature (becoming a 'sage') into external instrumentalities, but Marxism at least partially solved the problem, "especially through [Mao's] equation of practical, selfless work devoted to 'the people' and the inner dignity of the individual."[166]

In the view of Li Zehou, the traditional calling of the Chinese intelligentsia was no different from that of those religious believers who wish to "save man from floods and flames".[167] The goal of the Confucians has always been equally the salvation of the soul and the salvation of society, or to use the traditional Confucian concepts, 'Inner Sageliness' (*neisheng*, 内圣) and 'Outer Kingliness' (*waiwang*, 外王).

[164] Li Zehou 1994, 157–158.

[165] Levenson 1965, vol. III, 124.

[166] Metzger 1977, 233.

[167] Li Zehou 1994, 154. The quotation is from *Mencius*, "Teng Wen Gong II".

This means that a Confucian is supposed to first become sage-like in knowledge, wisdom and morals through self-cultivation, and then turn that enlightened state into enlightened action for the betterment of society like a sage king of yore. Looking at many of those who today identify themselves as followers of Confucianism (see next chapter) it becomes evident that their predicament is still the same as during the imperial era, but at least the tradition is living outside museums.

Calling Confucius a "prophet" and using concepts such as "holy site" in connection with Confucianism is liable to make Confucianism seem like a religion. In China, there was an attempt to make Confucianism a religion during the early republican era. Kang Youwei published a petition to specify in the constitution that Confucianism is the "natural religion" of China. Zhang Binglin was annoyed by these attempts and reminded people that Confucius was never the object of lavish worship and was honoured only as a progenitor of their profession by students and scholars.[168]

It is indeed possible to classify Confucianism as a religion because there are so many different definitions of religion. According to some scholars, Confucianism is a religion because it "offers a total, or holistic, perspective on the human condition" and a philosophy of life with eternal, even divine, precepts.[169] It is similarly debatable whether Confucianism is a philosophy; the answer depends on the definition of philosophy.

The main argument against the classification of Confucianism as a religion is the lack of belief in a personal god as well as strict doctrines or rituals.[170] There is also no Confucian concept of an afterlife. Besides, the presentation of Confucianism as a religion or even as an ideology is probably a late, and ultimately Western, invention. Professor Lionel M. Jensen from the University of Colorado at Denver claims that it was the Jesuit missionaries who, in the late 16th century, "recast" Confucianism as a religion with Confucius as the Christ-like central figure. According to Jensen, before the Jesuits there was no such

[168] Shimada 1990, 124, 125–126, 166 (fn. 55). Li Ling 2007, 383. According to the petitioners, Mongolia and Tibet could keep their freedom to practise Buddhism. In regard to other parts of the country, Kang Youwei was probably advocating the destruction of Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples to some extent. (Shimada 1990, 167, fns. 61 and 63.) Cf. fn. 299.

[169] Lodén 2006, 3–4.

[170] See e.g. Li Zehou 1994, 153.

thing as 'Confucianism' but instead, only the ethical and spiritual traditions of the scholarly class claiming to carry on the teachings of Confucius.[171]

It needs to be pointed out here that in view of the anachronistic character of the term Confucianism, discussed above, it is becoming customary to use the Chinese term *Ru* even in English-language texts when referring to Confucians and their school of thought. Originally, *Ru* (儒) referred to experts of rites and propriety, and came to be used as the word referring to the followers of the teachings of Confucius probably only after the death of the man himself.[172] In this paper, however, I have chosen to use the conventional 'Confucianism', even when translating the term *Ru* from the Chinese.

As will be discussed in Chapter III, there are those in China today who are again calling for the establishment of Confucianism as a religion and making it the leading moral guideline—a national religion—of China. There are also other efforts in China today, both within and without the government, to consciously fill the spiritual vacuum, caused by the lack of ideological content in China's current form of 'communism'. From the point of view of political science these efforts are akin to the creation of a 'civil' or 'political religion'. Both terms refer to a political ideology which has sociological and ideological similarities and may fulfil similar cultural and political functions to a religion.

Mika Aaltola describes one type of politico-religious role which is central in today's world politics as follows:

> They offer a hope of restoration and of a return to fundamental values. They do this by applying culturally embedded visions of right and wrong. These visions are often overtly religious in tone. ... The captivating and enigmatic mythological gallery of historical

[171] Allen 1999. According to Jensen, the Jesuits invented the Latinized name "Confucius", which is based on a very rare, honorific appellation Kongfuzi (孔夫子), 'Grand Master Kong'. The usual Chinese appellation is Kongzi, 'Master Kong'. Perhaps the Jesuits felt that the usual appellation would not set Confucius apart from all the other 'Masters', such as Laocius (Laozi) or Mencius (Mengzi).

[172] *Ru* (儒) is a cognate of words referring to 'weak, pliant' which were pronounced similarly and are written with characters having the same phonetic element (e.g. 腬, 懦). As such, *Ru* may have been a derogatory term used by the non-*Ru*. See Waley 1989, 118, fn. 3.

figures provides a rich source of authority and charisma for the custodians of principle.[173]

Today, there are many political actors in China behaving as such "custodians of principle". Many of them, both on the side of the establishment and of the dissidents, use Traditional Learning, or more specifically, Confucianism, as their source of authority. Whether we label them promoters of civil or political religion depends on our angle of vision.

As Aaltola points out, civil religion is associated with pluralism, voluntarism and individualism, whereas political religion is often equated with coercive totalitarian systems. Political religion is often connected with Islam in particular.[174] "The distinction between civil religion and the more conservative formulation of political religion partially overlaps the distinction between society-centric and state-centric approaches to the problem of international order", writes Aaltola.[175]

Intriguingly, in China today we see processes furthering both civil and political religion at the same time, and those promoting a political religion-like ideology do not always represent the establishment. To an extent, the difference between Enlightenment and National Salvation is similar to the duality of civil and political religion; the former is more inward-oriented and the latter is more outward-oriented. Idealistically, Confucianism would belong firmly on the side of Enlightenment (or civil religion), but as noted above, in reality, Confucianism has often been used just as a sanctimonious façade.

[173] Aaltola 2008, 17.

[174] Aaltola 2008, 28–29.

[175] Ibid.

Chapter III
Confucianism old and new

Introduction to Chapter III

This chapter takes a closer look at Confucianism and how it has been reinterpreted and even reinvented by different actors. Earlier in this paper, Confucianism was discussed in relation to Traditional Learning. As has been pointed out, Confucianism does not equate with Traditional Learning, but the former unquestionably holds a central position as the core of the latter. In order to be able to discuss the role of Confucianism in Chinese society in a more nuanced manner, it is necessary to become acquainted with the basic concepts of Confucianism, and in particular, with how Confucianism is interpreted in China today.

Although the Party-state may wish to reinvent Chinese tradition as 'harmony' and present harmony as the essence of Confucianism, there are many dissenting views. This chapter focuses on the debate over the historical roots of contemporary Confucianism in China. It highlights the problems in constructing such interpretations of Confucianism or Traditional Learning which could not be contested. It demonstrates how different actors are able to find justification for widely differing views even when they are supposedly based on the very same roots.

According to the interpretation by the politically correct, Confucianism is collectivist and, as such, promotes a strong central authority to maintain social stability for the benefit of all the members of the collective. The ancient spirit of self-sacrifice forms the basis of modern patriotism. Confucius's call for economic equality is well suited to the building of Modest Welfare. While early Confucian thinkers stated that people form the basis of the state, they said nothing about people being the masters of the state, which is in accordance with the communist 'democratic centralism'.

Looking at the historical development of Confucianism provides a more polychromatic image. Confucianism has never been a

monolithic school of thought. One may roughly identify several stages of development during the imperial era, but the development was by no means rectilinear. Even very early on, the authenticity of certain Confucian scriptures was contested. In the 19th-century contestation between different groups of reformists and conservatives, the exegetics helped to form the front lines.

As noted in Chapter II, Confucianism as a living tradition came close to extinction following the nationalist revolution and then the victory of the communists in the civil war. Consequently, there were attempts to revive Confucianism throughout the 20th century. After the establishment of the People's Republic, the revivalist movement had better chances of success outside China. There it developed into so-called New Confucianism. When the Party-state's attitude towards Confucianism began to change in the 1980s, the New Confucian movement gained ground back in China as well. The most important task for the New Confucians has been to build a genealogical tree of ideas, which connects them back to the 'original' Confucians. The difficulty lies in defining what was 'original'. This has made the exegetics important once again.

As a result, it is possible to identify different generations of New Confucians, and furthermore, at least four different groupings within them that are active in China. The main branch, which may be regarded as the orthodox New Confucianism, is related to 'subjective' Confucianism from the 1500s, which emphasized the importance of innate moral awakening. Today, the proponents of the main branch call for replacing Marxism with Confucianism as an ideology. That is the goal of another branch as well, but its proponents are more militant and aim at establishing Confucianism as the national religion. While neither of these branches is likely to gain a larger foothold in China, the so-called Socialist Confucians who mix Marxism with Confucianism enjoy the support of the establishment. The middle ground is held by those few who believe that Traditional Learning may provide the basis for gradual political reform in the future.

One of most exciting elements in the debate related to history and tradition in China is the heated discussion taking place, not only among the academia but also the general public, about the nature of certain recently unearthed Confucian texts. During the early 2000s, the texts were published as 'layperson editions' and are consequently available to anyone interested in such matters. The

focus of the discussion is on whether the texts can shed light on the 'original' character of Confucianism, and if so, what that character might have been like.

This chapter introduces two different answers to the latter question by two scholars. Both see Confucius as an enlightened revolutionary, differing only in their views on whether the revolutionary ideals were democratic or proto-communist in nature. Interestingly enough, both of these views originate from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, arguably the most influential academic institution in the field of social sciences and philosophy in China.

What is Confucianism?

The description of Confucianism by Luo Guojie serves well as a concise introduction to the basic concepts and the character of Confucianism for the purposes of this paper. It is furthermore interesting how Luo Guojie justified the return to Confucian values in a book published by the Central Party School in 1998.[176]

Luo sees the special value of Confucianism over other philosophical schools in China in its emphasis on morality as the basis for the stability of the country, harmony among the population, quality (*suzhi*, 素质) of the citizens and the betterment of human society as a whole. Although Mohism, which stresses the wellbeing of the people and the equality of all, used to be the favourite traditional philosophy of the Chinese communists, Luo disregards its ideals as too unrealistic. It is as if he is saying that the time for communism has not yet come.

Whereas Mohism has a certain revolutionary character, Confucianism has, in Luo's opinion, always been favoured by the rulers in times of relative stability and peaceful development. That is because Confucianism ties politics with ethics: The most desirable

[176] Zhang Kemin (ed.) 1999. The title of the book translated into English is "Historical Questions from China and Abroad Discussed by Eight Scholars". The following paragraphs are based on Luo Guojie 1999, 405–441, except where otherwise indicated.

quality of the ruler (or any man) is *ren* (仁), or 'humaneness',[177] which is also the main concept of Confucianism. To act according to *ren* is dependant on one's ability to discard such erroneous ways which do not agree with *li* (礼), or 'propriety'. *Li* is the other main concept of Confucianism and originally referred to 'rites' or 'rituals'. Thus all action should have an ethical basis.[178] It illustrates the importance of *li* that Li Zehou, among others, has said that 'the religion of rites' (*lijiao*, 礼教) is the Chinese religion.[179]

Luo breaks the core of Confucianism down into five components. First is *ren* which, from the point of view of rulers, means that they must love and protect their people, see to the needs of the people, and put the people before themselves in every respect. If that is not done, the people will rise against the rulers. Furthermore, the Neo-Confucians of the Song and Ming dynasties extended this love to encompass the whole world; humans and animals alike are all of the same origin. Luo quotes Zhang Zai (张载, 1020–1077): "Heaven is called Father, Earth is called Mother. … People are my flesh, animals are my kind."

Second, Luo sees Confucianism as inherently collectivist. According to Confucius, the only condition for attaining *ren* is to "constrain oneself and keep to *li*".[180] One must not see, hear, say or do anything that is not in accordance with *li*. Luo defines *li*, or propriety, as the requirements of the political system, the restraints of the law, and ethical rules. Therefore, says Luo, *li* is equal to the interests of the state, society, and the collective. Luo quotes *Zuo zhuan*: "*Li* is what draws the borders, sets the governments and defines the classes for the benefit of our heirs". And: "If *li* is not followed, the division between the upper and lower classes will become muddled, and how could the dynasty survive over generations then?"

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[177] The translations of the Confucian philosophical concepts are continuously contested. Here it suffices to say that *ren*, often translated as 'humaneness', is the guiding principle of good human relations. By extension, *ren* also carried the meaning of 'fraternity' and other virtues befitting an upper-class knight, such as manliness and chivalry.

[178] On the relationship between *ren* and *li*, see Shun 2002.

[179] Li Zehou 2008, 343. Li Zehou maintains that Confucianism is not a philosophy in the Western sense and although it contains elements of a religion, it is not a true religion either. Instead, Confucianism is half-religion, half-philosophy, according to Li (Li Zehou 1994, 153).

[180] On the translation of the quotation, see Shun 2002, 61 and 71, fn. 19. See also fn. 109 above.

Li is also linked to *yi* (义), or 'justice', and 'just' is defined through the good of society. What differentiates the 'gentlemen', or those who adhere to *ren* and *li*, from the 'petty men', is that the former aim at benefiting the public, whereas the latter are driven only by self-interest.

Luo sees a link between Confucian collectivism and the age-old ideal of unity. According to Luo, Confucius was strongly against any insurgent activities by the vassal states, which together formed the united empire under the rule of one hegemon. The biggest danger, in Confucius's thinking, was chaos and instability, which could threaten the unity of the empire. Confucius said: "When the Way prevails under Heaven, ritual music and campaigns of war all originate from the Son of Heaven; when the Way does not prevail under Heaven, ritual music and campaigns of war originate from the vassal lords" — which must not be. The mandate of the ruler is dependent on his ability to have his orders obeyed through the empire. In Luo's interpretation, Confucius stressed that the authority of the central government is fundamental in safeguarding social stability and order.

According to Luo, this fundament is even more valid today than it was in Confucius's days. Whereas the centralized state power in the imperial era stood for the oppressor class, today the state represents the people. Therefore, being on the side of centralized rule means promoting the wellbeing of the people as well as stability and unity.

Third, Luo stresses the connection between Confucian family values and the qualifications for civil servants. These family values predate Confucius and are usually presented as Five Constants (*wu chang*, 五常):[181] father is to be just, mother is to be caring, elder brother is to be supportive, younger brother is to be respectful, son is to be filial. To act according to these five teachings is to adhere to *li*. Yanzi, one of Confucius's contemporaries, said, recorded in *Chunqiu*: "The ruler commands and the ministers revere, the father is caring and the sons are filial, the elder brother is loving and the younger brother is respectful, the husband is gentle and the wife is agreeable, the mother-in-law is caring and the daughter-in-law is amenable;

[181] Luo uses the term Five Teachings (*wu jiao*, 五教). The term Five Constants may also refer to the five cardinal virtues of Confucianism (which have been defined differently in different times).

thus is *li*." Confucius said plainly: "The ruler shall rule, the minister shall administer, the father shall be fatherly, the *filius* shall be filial."

Luo asks, how can one be expected to love one's country and one's nation if one doesn't love one's parents. Therefore, concludes Luo, the old Confucian maxim of "seeking for loyal ministers at the homes of filial sons" is still valid today.

Fourth, Luo commends Confucian idealism; how the early Confucians toiled for their own spiritual betterment even in dismal economic conditions. Such a spirit of self-sacrifice may, according to Luo, serve as the basis for patriotism and love for one's nation. Though Luo doesn't explicitly say so, the ethos of striving for spiritual instead of material wealth is well-suited to the realities of a developing country. Luo quotes Mencius: "There are those ennobled by Heaven and those ennobled by men. Those who are chivalrous (*ren*), just, loyal, trustworthy and who untiringly rejoice in the good, they are the ones ennobled by Heaven. The dukes, lords and councillors, they are the ones ennobled by men." Luo gives Confucianism credit for advocating ennoblement by Heaven, interpreting it in the modern world as recognition through one's morally exemplary conduct among the masses.

Fifth, Confucianism puts great emphasis on one's self-cultivation. In Song-era Neo-Confucianism, the correct method (*gongfu*, 功夫) of self-cultivation became a value in itself due to the influence of Buddhist meditation practices. However, as Luo points out, in early Confucianism what mattered was the result of self-cultivation: it was the basis for keeping one's family in order, ruling the country and pacifying All-Under-Heaven. In order to keep his people content and peaceful, the ruler must first cultivate himself. Similarly, for the wellbeing and stability of the nation, the moral education of the entire population is crucial.

All in all, Luo describes Confucianism as a tool for ruling the country, pacifying the population, stabilizing society, harmonizing the relations between people and raising the moral standards of the citizens. On the one hand, a Confucian government will profit, enrich and protect people, and on the other, educate, mould and guide people. While the government should help the population to prosper, it must also prevent mutually disruptive competition. Luo reminds people that Confucius urged his followers not to worry about poverty but about inequality, equality being crucial for social stability. For the

Confucians, it is only the 'petty men' who strive for personal gain. According to Luo, the political content of Confucianism is embodied in the principle of disregarding small gains in order not to lose sight of great accomplishments.

Luo sees the relevance of Confucianism for government in other spheres as well. According to Confucius, it is more effective to use education than punishment to get the people to follow the conventions of society: punishment does not develop a sense of shame in people, whereas governance based on virtue (*de*, 德) does. Confucian rulers must follow the 'Kingly Way' based on virtue instead of the way of the hegemon based on might. Luo quotes Jia Yi (贾谊, 200–168 BCE), noting that even Chairman Mao praised this text highly:

> When the ruler cultivates punishment, people turn their backs on him with resentment, but when the ruler cultivates propriety, people cling to him. ... To guide the people with virtuous teachings will make virtue and respect widespread and the spirits of the people will be joyful; whereas to drive the people with laws and orders will only increase the number of laws and orders while the minds of the people will be gloomy. The common feelings of joy and gloom are the reasons for the calamity or prosperity of the state.

Similarly, continues Luo, the reason for the demise of the Qin dynasty, the first dynasty ever to unify all China, was the tyrannical nature of its rule. However, Luo notes that even according to Confucius, the rulers must use both soft and hard measures, in a balanced manner.

For Confucians, the rulers are praiseworthy due to their exemplary behaviour. The virtue of the ruler is like the wind, which makes the grass lean in a certain direction. Luo quotes Zhuge Liang (诸葛亮, 181–234):

> The Lord of the People shall first straighten his character and only then issue orders. If the character of the ruler is not straight, the orders will not be followed. If the Lord's orders are not followed, chaos will emerge.

Luo notes that for the Confucians, the principle of ruling the country is the idea of people forming the basis of the state. *The Book of History* states: "The people (*min*, 民) are the sole root (*ben*, 本) of the state"

and "Heaven must act according to the wishes of the people", suggesting that the Mandate of Heaven which the Emperor should have is dependent on the ability of the ruler to safeguard the wellbeing of his subjects. Mencius said, "the people are most valuable, the state comes second, and the ruler is the least important". Xunzi, another developer of early Confucianism, compared the ruler to a boat and the people to water: water supports the boat but may also capsize it. It is worthwhile mentioning here that in Chinese, the principle of people as the basis (*minben*, 民本) is semantically different from democracy which, in Chinese, refers to "people as the masters" (*minzhu*, 民主). Therefore, the Communist Party may safely promote *minben* as it has no direct linkage with democracy.

Lastly, Luo praises the Confucian emphasis on personal virtue as the sole criterion for selecting people for office. One's birth is of no significance. This ideal prevailed throughout the entire imperial era, when the principal way into office was the examination system, a ladder of successive examinations whereby the identity of the candidates was hidden from the evaluators of the examination essays. However, it must be pointed out that the system had its loopholes,[182] exceptions were regularly made, and since success in the examinations required years of concentrated study, the ladder was within reach of the offspring of rich families only.

Naturally, Luo points to the negative elements of Confucianism as well. The fact that Confucianism does not question the class-society is something to be condemned. The Neo-Confucianism that became prevalent during the Song era over-emphasized filiality (*xiao*, 孝), and the Three Cardinal Leads (*san gang*, 三纲)—ruler leads subject, father leads son, husbands leads wife—were used just to protect the feudal rule. In the words of Luo, Neo-Confucianism went astray in its demand for "fallacious loyalty and fallacious filiality". However, Luo warns against too one-sided criticism. It is only natural that children should respect their parents. Confucianism also puts the good of the state before that of the ruling class.

[182] See e.g. the vivid account in Spence 2007, 54–57.

Confucianism in the late imperial era

Confucianism today is not a monolithic school of thought, nor has it ever been. Like any tradition with a long history, it has gone through various transformations and restorations. In order to properly understand the discussion related to Traditional Learning and Confucianism today, it is necessary to take a look at Confucianism as a phenomenon in intellectual history.

Historically, Confucianism during the imperial era may be divided into three stages of development. (1) After the time of Confucius and his personal disciples, his thinking was further developed by Mencius (Mengzi, 孟子, ca. 371–ca. 289 BCE) and a contemporary of the latter, Xunzi (荀子). During the rise of the Qin Kingdom, which favoured Legalism over other schools of thought, and the consequent Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE) under which China became a unified empire for the first time in history, Confucianism was almost eradicated.

(2) The Han dynasty (206 BCE–220) marked a revival of Confucianism, which then replaced Legalism, associated with the oppressiveness of the Qin rule, as the official ideology in the empire. During the centuries of disintegration and war which followed the fall of the Han dynasty, Buddhism and Taoism gained ground at the expense of Confucianism.

(3) Confucianism underwent a revival first during the Tang dynasty (618–907), thanks to the rectification efforts of Han Yu (韩愈, 768–824), and then an actual rebirth in the Song dynasty (960–1127), resulting in the rise of Neo-Confucianism (*Xin Ruxue*, 新儒学). One of the branches of Neo-Confucianism, based on the teachings of Cheng Yi (程颐, 1033–1107) and Zhu Xi, became the orthodox form of Confucianism for the remaining imperial era.

During the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), further branches of Neo-Confucianism emerged. The so-called School of Song Learning continued the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, while the so-called Empirical Research School (also known as the School of Evidential Learning) called for discovering 'the truth through the facts', especially in the works preceding Neo-Confucianism. The historical roots of both Contemporary New Confucianism and Traditional Learning can be found in the same source, namely the Empirical Research School of the Qing dynasty.

Song-dynasty Neo-Confucianism, which had originally risen as a counter-reaction to the rise of Buddhism and had aimed to re-establish the central role of Confucianism in China, was split into two opposing poles as early as the Song dynasty. The official orthodoxy during the Qing era, the School of Song Learning, was based on the teachings of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. Its central concept was *li* (理) or the 'rational principle'. *Li* exists 'above form' (*xing'ershang*, 形而上); expressed in modern terms, it is a metaphysical concept. Through personal cultivation a person could make his nature accord with the Heavenly *li*.[183]

The opponents of the Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy followed the teachings of Lu Jiuyuan (陆九渊, 1139–1192) and Wang Yangming (王阳明, 1472–1528).[184] They urged scholars to shun the 'idle theorizing' of the rationalists and stated that "[the] mind, when properly trained and cultivated" would serve as an adequate "guide for statecraft policy".[185] Their central concept was *xin* (心), or mind (often translated as 'heart-mind'), which referred to Wang Yangming's idea that everyone possessed 'innate knowledge' (*liang zhi*, 良知), a moral consciousness that came intuitively to a person through self-cultivation.[186] This idea was not devoid of Chan-Buddhist influences. The academics in the communist era classified the Cheng-Zhu school as objective idealism and the Lu-Wang school as subjective idealism, 'idealism' being used as a derogatory label.

Although some scholars during the early Qing dynasty regarded Cheng-Zhu learning "as the basis for keeping Ming loyalism alive", through the influence of the Tongcheng School, personified in Yao Nai (姚鼐, 1731–1815), Cheng-Zhu learning gradually became the orthodoxy favoured by the Manchu rulers. The civil service examinations were based on Cheng-Zhu learning, the Kangxi Emperor (ruled 1661–1722) ordered the installation of Zhu Xi in

[183] Lodén 2006, 112, 115.

[184] Mou Zongsan calls the conventional dichotomy Zhu Xi–Wang Yangming oversimplified and notes that there were altogether nine leading personalities during the Song and Ming dynasties, and three (not two) major schools developed as a consequence. Professor Chen Lai from Peking University identifies four schools (Bresciani 2001, 366, 436).

[185] Elman 1991, 76, 81, 84–85.

[186] The guiding principle of Wang Yangming's thought was uniting knowledge with action: "Knowledge is the beginning of action, action is the result of knowledge" (*Chuanxilu* I.28).

the Confucian temple, and an imperial edition of the Four Books (considered the core of Confucius's teachings) was completed during the reign of the Yongzheng Emperor (ruled 1722–1735).[187]

The proponents of 'empirical research' (*kaozheng*, 考证) favoured textual study and were against the metaphysical character of Song Learning. They became collectively known as the Empirical Research School or the School of Han Learning, as opposed to the School of Song Learning. They wished to purify the classics of heterodox elements, such as Buddhism, and restore their textual integrity. Such a jumble of interpretations had accumulated since the Song era that it was impossible to see the real core of Confucius's teachings. Propriety, *li* (礼), had to be returned to the central position in Confucianism again.[188] To some degree, the empirical research scholars resembled those Christians who, during the Reformation, started questioning the sacrosanctity of the Latin version of the Bible on the basis of Greek and Hebrew linguistics.

For instance, Gu Yanwu (顾炎武, 1613–82) attacked Neo-Confucianist (especially Wang Yangming's) 'speculation' and wished to promote such solid scholarship as had been practised by the ancient text school of the Han dynasty.[189] Gu opined that the scholars needed to return to the roots and sweep aside the jungle of later interpretations. At first, no impiety towards Cheng-Zhu learning was intended on the part of the empirical research scholars, but by the 1750s, their school had become a serious challenger to the orthodoxy.[190]

The Empirical Research School evolved into different branches. The split had its roots in the division between the scholars involved in the 'exegetical studies' (*jingxue*, 经学) during the Han dynasty—the Ancient Text School and the New Text School—but the divisive lines were somewhat different. The infamous first emperor of Qin had ordered all Confucian texts to be burned, and thus Confucianism was first revived on the basis of oral tradition, and was written down only after the fall of the Qin dynasty, during the Western Han Dynasty.

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[187] Chow 1994b, 185, 190, 193.

[188] Chow 1994a, 181.

[189] According to Torbjörn Lodén (2006, 138), we must thank the School of Han Learning for establishing the scientific foundation for classical sinology, aptly called *hanxue* in Chinese.

[190] Chow 1994b, 190–191.

These came to be called 'new texts' (*jinwen*, 今文) when a selection of pre-Qin texts, 'ancient texts' (*guwen*, 古文), were found during the Eastern Han dynasty.[191] There was much debate on the value of the new discoveries, but finally, during the Tang dynasty, an official edition of the Classics was produced which consisted mainly of the ancient texts.[192] Although the Ancient Text School thus gained the upper hand, later studies have shown that many of the ancient texts were, in actual fact, forgeries.

During the late Qing dynasty, the old exegetical debate between the Ancient Text School and the New Text School surfaced again. As Torbjörn Lodén has noted, it was probably natural that the focus of the empirical research scholars would shift from an exclusive study of pre-Qin era 'ancient texts' to include the Han-era 'new texts' as well.[193] A branch split off the Empirical Research School and became known as the New Text School.

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[191] The schools were not just interested in the authenticity of the texts, but also got involved in the politics of their time. The *guwen* school sided with the 'usurper' Wang Mang, who established the short-lived New Dynasty (9–25) (Gernet 1985, 164). In turn, Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, 179–104 BCE) of the New Text School rallied support for the unified, central rule of the Han dynasty. With that aim, he promoted the idea of the Heavenly Mandate being dependent on the wellbeing of the people: The ruler receives his mandate to rule from Heaven. If the ruler harms his people, Heaven will take the mandate away. Thus unity is preserved only through stability. Dong Zhongshu also formulated the Three Cardinal Leads. Dong Zhongshu's ideas are perhaps the most lasting philosophical heritage of the two schools. During the continued rivalry of the school after the fall of the Han dynasty, the *jinwen* school reflected a 'cabbalistic' tradition which tended to look at the texts as a collection of prophesies, whereas the *guwen* school was characterized by a rationalist, but also moralizing and ritualistic approach. Dong Zhongshu also presented Confucius as a mythical, supernatural being (Shimada 1990, 127).

[192] Song Zhiming 2009, 266.

[193] Lodén 2006, 152–153. The usage of the term *guwen* meaning 'ancient texts' must not be confused with the other usage meaning 'ancient style'. Under the influence of the Tongcheng School, so-called 'eight-legged essays' were the required form of essays in the civil service examinations, while the 'ancient prose' of the Tang and Song masters was seen as the stylistic basis for the eight-legged essays. In contrast, some proponents of the School of Han Learning maintained that so-called 'parallel prose' was closer to the style used in the days of Confucius. When the Movement for Ancient Prose rose during the Tang dynasty, it was directed against parallel prose, which was considered artificial and unnatural. So paradoxically, the School of Han Learning was in favour of *guwen*, meaning 'ancient texts', but not necessarily of *guwen* meaning 'ancient style'.

Scholastically, the New Text School doubted not only the Song-era interpretations of the ancient texts but the actual authenticity of the texts themselves; they criticized the "'false Classics' in order to peel down to the 'true Classics' of timeless transcendent importance".[194] They wished to analyze the Confucian texts against the historical background, the Former Han era, during which the Confucian state orthodoxy was first formed. They showed that *Zuo zhuan*, a collection of historical accounts and one of the ancient texts, was not a commentary on the *Chunqiu* annals (the "Spring and Autumn Annals", a record of historical events included among the Six Classics, namely the holiest books in the Confucian canon, and traditionally accredited to Confucius), but was fabricated to seem so during the Western Han era.[195] Instead, they turned their attention to *Gongyang zhuan*, which really was a commentary on the *Chunqiu* annals, and thus the New Text School also became known as the Gongyang School.

Some proponents of the new texts used their studies to advocate some reformist, anti-authoritarian ideas. The *Gongyang zhuan* puts emphasis on the Heavenly Mandate of the ruler and states that without the mandate, a ruler is a usurper. It is in the New Text School edition from Later Han where history is described as the three-stage process from the Age of Chaos to that of Modest Welfare (*Xiaokang*) and finally to the age of Great Community (*Datong*). As noted in Chapter II, Kang Youwei presented Confucius as a prophet of the Great Community, a utopia without national frontiers and social classes and where universal peace prevails. He stated that the West, with its modern values, was already on its way towards the utopia. Kang Youwei subscribed to Western values but found them within Confucianism, in contrast with many other reformists who saw Western values only as a tool (*yong*, 用) for strengthening the Chinese essence (*ti*, 体).[196]

Interestingly, in view of its anti-authoritarianism and eschatological tendencies, the Gongyang School bore some

[194] Levenson 1965, vol. I, 94.

[195] Lodén 2006, 153, 155. Levenson 1965, vol. I, 81–82.

[196] Lodén 2006, 154. Song Zhiming 2009, 256. Levenson 1965, vol. I, 77, 81. Gernet 1985, 594. The *ti-yong* dichotomy was central to the philosophical debate of 19th- and early 20th-century China, in particular among the statecraft-oriented empirical research scholars (see below).

resemblance to the Lu-Wang School. Even the attitude towards 'understanding' Confucianism was similar. Kang Youwei opined that the followers of the Empirical Research School "read the classics, but not the spirit contained therein",[197] thus echoing Wang Yangming's famous words: "The learned men of our time do not understand that they should look for the essence of the Six Classics in their hearts but instead search in vain for shadows and echoes and get stuck in the jumble of semantics in their empty-headed belief that they may so find the true meaning of the scriptures".[198] On the other hand, while the Lu-Wang school can be described as 'spiritual localism',[199] the Gongyang School followed a more conventional, Confucian approach and "virtually took unity to be the sole manifestation of the Tao/Way".[200]

'Ancient texts' became in turn a rallying cry for those among the main branch empirical research scholars, hereafter collectively referred to as the School of Han Learning, who wanted to preserve the Chinese tradition intact and guard it against foreign, first Manchu and then Western, influences. Gu Yanwu was a staunch Ming loyalist who advocated the ancient ideal of regional rule or 'divided enoffment' (*fengjian*, 封建) instead of central government.[201] He saw the "introverted tendency of Neo-Confucianism", especially Lu-Wang learning, as the cause of the scholars' "unwillingness to oppose the new rulers openly". Another opponent of the Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy was Wang Fuzhi (王夫之, 1619–93), who attacked the Manchu rule on the basis of their ethnicity, "thereby deviating from the culturalism that we may identify as part of mainstream Confucianism" as Lodén writes.[202]

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[197] Shimada 1990, 59.

[198] From "Inscription at Pavilion for Revering the Scriptures". Translated into Finnish in Kallio 2008, 165–170.

[199] Kallio 2009, "Conclusions".

[200] Li 1999, 178.

[201] See de Bary & Lufrano 2000, 39, for a translation (by William Rowe) of a related essay by Gu Yanwu. Zeng Jing (曾静, 1679–1736) explained *fengjian* being similar to the 'subsidiarity principle' of the European Union: "Though the Son of Heaven presided ..., the job of nurturing the people and the responsibility for governing them devolved on the enoffed rulers of each smaller region." (Spence 2001, 166.)

[202] Lodén 2006, 133, 136–137.

The School of Han Learning evolved still further. By looking at the historical context in which the earliest Confucian writings were born, the scholars came to put emphasis on the other philosophical schools of the pre-Qin era as well. Most significantly, some scholars raised Mohism above Confucianism as the most worthwhile ancient tradition. Mozi, the founder of Mohism, had preached 'reciprocal love' (*jian'ai*, 兼爱; often translated somewhat misleadingly as 'universal love'[203]), which was seen as a more positive concept than the Confucian 'fraternal love' (*bo'ai*, 博爱). The latter, in its emphasis on family and friends (that is, the likes of oneself), was deemed narrow and conservative. Xunzi also enjoyed a renaissance, with some scholars placing him on an equal footing with Confucius (see below). These scholars became known as the School of the Multiple Masters (*zhuzi*, 诸子).[204] In regard to the development of Confucianism, this school was the beginning of what I venture to call 'modern' exegetical studies.

In the latter half of the 19th century, intellectual orthodoxy in the form of the Cheng-Zhu School of Neo-Confucianism regained ground. The Empirical Research School and exegetical studies, especially the New Text School, were accused of making the spiritual basis of society vulnerable in the face of foreign invasions and rural unrest. The central figure in this was Zeng Guofan (曾国藩, 1811–1872), an eminent civil and military official who became famous for suppressing the Taiping Rebellion in 1864. Zeng was a follower of Yao Nai and wanted to revitalize the Tongcheng School.[205] This current of orthodox Confucianism sowed the seeds of its own destruction.

Ironically, the writings of Zeng Guofan had an impact on the rise of the anti-Confucian New Culture Movement in the first decades of the 20th century. Zeng stated that ancient learning must be of practical use to the present society (*jing shi zhi yong*, 经世致用). This slogan was often repeated by Chiang Kai-shek, but Mao Zedong, who was heavily influenced by the New Culture Movement in his youth, also quoted Zeng Guofan frequently in his writings.[206]

Zeng's slogan had initially been invented by Gu Yanwu. While promoting exegetical studies, Gu had emphasized that the aims of

[203] I have briefly discussed the translation of these terms in Kallio 2007, 121 fn. 7.

[204] Makeham 2009.

[205] Gernet 1985, 592.

[206] Meisner 2007, 5.

such studies should not be academic, but practical.[207] This approach, revitalized by Zeng Guofan and others, gave impetus to the New Text School and further to 'modern' exegetical studies. Its followers accused Neo-Confucianism of being impractical and subjective. Instead, they championed a pragmatic approach to resolving China's dilemmas.[208]

Zhang Binglin took empirical research and 'modern' exegetical studies to a new level. He saw Confucius as a founder of only one of China's traditional schools of thought. Zhang was most critical of the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy, which he considered 'religion', and promoted Traditional Learning instead, meaning traditional Chinese philosophies by and large as opposed to the 'Western' value system. Zhang continued the nationalist ethos of the School of Han Learning and wrote critically about the *kedi* (客帝) or 'foreign emperors' in Chinese history, referring also to the Qing dynasty.[209]

One might cursorily say that the example of Zeng Guofan, among others, triggered a further modernization of the exegetical studies by shifting their focus to statecraft, and Zhang Binglin helped to transform them, especially the tradition of the School of Han Learning, into Traditional Learning. Together with the nationalist revolution, this signified the end of Confucianism as a national ideology.

The emergence of New Confucianism

Following the nationalist revolution and the communist victory, Confucianism as a living tradition was practically eradicated in Mainland China. It was not faring much better elsewhere either. Though Confucianism has been accepted and even promoted in the Republic of China on Taiwan, one could argue that it has survived there only as ceremonial and instrumental vulgar Confucianism (see Lin Anwu's critique of the Nationalists' Confucianism below). Consequently, there was a need to reinvent it.

[207] See e.g. de Bary & Lufrano 2000, 35–36.

[208] See e.g. Gernet 1985, 592–595; and Mote 2003, 929–933.

[209] Shimada 1990, 10–11, 111–115.

In the first half of the 20th century, scholars like Liang Shuming and Feng Youlan attempted to re-create Confucianism through the introduction of Western philosophical and scientific concepts into the traditional discourse. In 1958, a group of scholars published a declaration in two Hong Kong journals, entitled in English "Declaration on Behalf of Chinese Culture Respectfully Announced to the People of the World".[210] It is an "emotionally charged apologetic for traditional Chinese culture" which "rejects the positivist paradigm ushered in by modernity and Westernization and demands a place for Chinese cultural values on the world stage", writes John Makeham.[211]

The term 'Contemporary New Confucianism' (*xiandai/dangdai Xin Ruxue/Rujia*, 现代/当代新儒学/儒家) was not commonly used until the popularization of the writings by Du Weiming (杜维明, name also transcribed as Tu Wei-ming, b. 1940) in the late 1980s.[212] Du has lived most of his life outside Mainland China, first in Taiwan and then in the United States, but he frequently lectured on the Mainland in the early 1980s. His selected writings were published on the Mainland in 1992 together with a foreword by Fang Keli (方克力, then Professor of Philosophy at Nankai University, b. 1938). Du presents New Confucianism as the third stage of Confucianism which follows the first stage of 'classical' Confucianism, which lasted until the end of the Han dynasty, and the second stage of Neo-Confucianism during the Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties.[213]

According to John Makeham, the single most immediate factor for the flourishing of New Confucianism in the 1980s was the Chinese government's decision to nominate it as the subject of one of the key research projects under the 7th five-year plan in 1986. The project

[210] Makeham 2003, 27–28. Song Zhiming 2009, 297.

[211] Makeham 2003, 28. John Makeham argues (ibid., 27–28) that the declaration was merely another manifestation of Confucian revivalism. He opines that the tendency to retrospectively treat the declaration as the beginning of New Confucianism is somewhat artificial.

[212] Du Weiming 1993, Fang Keli's "Foreword", 1–2. Du is commonly known in the media as the "foremost New Confucian thinker" though Makeham questions whether he is a Confucian in the first place (see Makeham 2003, 41). *Nanfang renwu zhoukan* listed Du among the top fifty public intellectuals (*gonggong zhishifenzi*, 公共知识分子) in China in 2004. The only other person on that list who is also mentioned in this paper is Qin Hui, a well-known blogger (see below). (Http://business.sohu.com/s2004/zhishifenzi50.shtml. Accessed 29 Oct 2010.)

[213] Ibid., 267.

was directed by Fang Keli.[214] Since then, it has become an important part of the New Confucian discourse to identify the lineage of New Confucianism and thus tie it together with the longer Confucian tradition. Naturally, the question of lineage is a question of identity. It is also a way to create a distinction between "us, the orthodox" and "they, the heterodox". There are two traditions for establishing the lineage of the (Confucian) Way, the *daotong* (道统).[215] During the Han and Tang dynasties, emphasis was on the concrete teacher–student continuum whereas the Song dynasty Neo-Confucians stressed ideology and the interpretation of Confucianism. The New Confucians have followed the Neo-Confucian practice, which is only natural in a situation where the tradition has effectively been severed.

Most contemporary New Confucians would probably agree that New Confucianism follows the lineage of historical Confucianism which was connected to the New Text School and the Gongyang School on the one hand, and the 'subjective' Neo-Confucianism of Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming on the other. For the majority of New Confucians, this is the 'true' lineage, in contrast to the Qing-era orthodoxy centred upon the 'objective' Neo-Confucianism of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi and plagued by the exegetical studies (especially the School of Han Learning). Some would even identify Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao as the first New Confucians.[216]

The New Confucians are customarily divided into different 'generations'. Naturally, differences exist when it comes to naming the 'members' of any given generation in different sources. The genealogy has been extensively discussed by Umberto Bresciani (2001) and John Makeham (2008). Makeham warns against seeing

[214] Makeham 2008, 34. Makeham 2003, 71.

[215] Zheng Jiadong 1994, 184. In Chinese, the concept of *daotong* carries a deeper meaning than just 'lineage'. The concept also implies 'the right, constant tradition'. Many a ruler aspired to have the image of the real follower or protector of *daotong* in order to boost his political legitimacy (*zhengtong*, 正统, originally meaning 'proper succession'). One should realize that in China, religion and politics were never separated in a similar manner to Europe. The 'worldly' ruler was always the 'spiritual' ruler as well (Zheng Jiadong 1994, 185). This aspect is equally important in today's China.

[216] Makeham 2008, 37–38.

a linear line of transmission and notes that there may be Confucian revivalists other than those who may be labelled as New Confucians.[217]

In the following general overview, I introduce the main progenitors of New Confucianism, based mainly on an article by Zheng Jiadong (郑家栋, b. 1956, formerly at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), dubbed the 'grandmaster' of Chinese Confucians.[218] The article was published in the first volume of the book series entitled *Yuan Dao* (原道), "The Original Way", by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1994. The series was meant to probe the question of the 'Way' (Tao) of Chinese traditional culture: where is it coming from and where is it leading to? Zheng's article discusses the lineage of New Confucianism.

The first generation (the 1930s) is usually said to include Liang Shuming, Xiong Shili (熊十力, 1885–1968), Zhang Junmai (张君劢, also known as Carsun Chang, 1886–1969), Qian Mu (钱穆, 1895–1990) and sometimes even Feng Youlan. They were active in Mainland China mainly before the establishment of the People's Republic.

Zheng Jiadong labels Liang Shuming a "practical Confucian" who regarded as central one's ability to turn Inner Sageliness (*neisheng*) into Outer Kingliness (*waiwang*). Liang Shuming believed the Chinese culture (Confucian tradition) dictates that China cannot enter democracy. He himself was not interested in the lineages; on the contrary, he regarded himself first and foremost as a Buddhist.[219] Nevertheless, he holds a very important position among the Mainland New Confucians. As mentioned above, he was severely criticized by Mao Zedong.

Xiong Shili was very much a follower of the exegetical studies (*jingxue*) in that he saw Confucianism as not at odds with the scientific method. Xiong maintained that 'objective' Neo-Confucianism naturally leads one to look for the reason (*li*) in nature and therefore it has the potential to engender scientific methods. In contrast to Liang Shuming, Xiong believed that Confucius's practical orientation (*waiwang*) included sympathy for the working people, communality, equality and democracy. Xiong saw Confucius as the creator of Confucianism who established *ren* (humaneness) as its central

[217] Ibid., 44.

[218] I have also taken note of the genealogies presented in Liu Shuxian 2008, 169–171; Makeham 2003, 34–44; and Solé-Farras 2008, 15–16.

[219] Zheng Jiadong 1994, 164. Li 2009, 172, 181. Lodén 2006, 171.

concept. In comparison with the traditional Neo-Confucians (Zhu Xi had stressed Confucius's role as a transmitter), this constituted a paradigm shift. Xiong regarded both Mencius and Xunzi as less worth following than Confucius.[220]

Xiong Shili's take on Confucianism has been dubbed *dangdai Xin Rujia* (当代新儒家), a term meaning literally 'contemporary Neo-Confucianism'. This term, favoured by the New Confucians outside Mainland China, implies a connection with the Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. In contrast, the term used on the Mainland, *xiandai Xin Ruxue* (现代新儒学), 'modern New Confucian learning', emphasizes the 'modernity' (post-May 4th origin) of the thought.[221]

Feng Youlan promoted 'New Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism' (*Xin Lixue*, 新理学). Feng professed the Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy and wished to create a 'new metaphysics' centring on *li* (the rational principle).[222] However, "one of the most intensely debated issues in New Confucian studies is whether Feng Youlan is a New Confucian."[223] Some Chinese scholars have opined that instead of continuing the tradition of Neo-Confucianism, Feng merely duplicated it.[224] Liu Shuxian (刘述先, see below) says that Feng "was incapable of displaying the strength of character of a traditional scholar".[225]

The second generation (the 1960s) consists of three followers of Xiong Shili who were signatories of the 1958 Declaration and mainly active outside Mainland China, namely Mou Zongsan (牟宗三, 1909–1995), Xu Fuguan (徐复观, 1903–1982) and Tang Junyi (唐君毅, 1909–1978). Zheng Jiadong stresses the importance of Mou Zongsan, whose disciple he professes himself to be.

Like Xiong Shili, Mou Zongsan recognized Confucius as the creator of Confucianism. In particular, Mou saw Confucius as the first to introduce Inner Sageliness or self-cultivation (*neisheng*) to balance Outer Kingliness or practical orientation (*waiwang*).[226] Unlike Xiong, Mou was not a proponent of the exegetical studies and believed that

[220] Zheng Jiadong 1994, 163. Makeham 2008, 158. Liang Tao 2009.

[221] See Makeham 2003, 18 fn. 7.

[222] Song Zhiming 2009, 297.

[223] Makeham 2003, 35.

[224] Bresciani 2001, 209.

[225] Quoted in Song Zhiming 2009, 297.

[226] Liang Tao 2009.

the real meaning of Confucius cannot be found in the Six Classics. Instead, Mou maintained that the essence of Confucianism exists independent of whether the Classics actually record the words of Confucius or not.[227]

Mou was very critical of the Song and Ming dynasty 'rationalist' Neo-Confucians of the Cheng-Zhu school who had emphasized argumentation (finding justification, *yi*, and rational principle, *li*) over moral self-cultivation. In particular, Mou criticized Zhu Xi for replacing the Five Classics with the Four Books (see "The early lineage of Confucianism", below) and for basing their teachings on *Daxue*, "The Great Learning", instead of the *Analects* or *Mencius*.[228] *Daxue* was originally a chapter of *Liji*, "The Book of Rites", and was probably written as a guide for the ruling elite, teaching them to make their personal lives and families examples of tranquillity and order so that the state would also become well governed.

Mou objected to the ethos present in *Daxue*, namely that one's 'sincerity of thought' or morality is dependent on the 'investigation of things', or empirical knowledge. Mou did not see such rationalism and instrumentalism as the way to real 'autonomous morality'. Mou himself opined that the teachings of Confucius and Mencius are ultimately like the Kantian 'metaphysics of morals' which argues for an *a priori* basis for morality. In the Chinese context, this means the unity and oneness of the mind, nature and Heaven. Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming had mutually opposing views on the relation between these.[229]

Mou's approach is a continuation of the 'subjective' Neo-Confucianism of Wang Yangming. This tendency is also reflected in the 1958 Declaration (Chapter 6), which calls for innate moral

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[227] Zheng Jiadong 1994, 166–170, 186–187. Liang Tao 2009.

[228] Zheng Jiadong 1994, 174–175.

[229] Ibid., 175–178. The *Doctrine of the Mean* states: "One's nature is destined by Heaven" (天命之谓性). Zhu Xi paraphrased this by saying: "Heaven bestows on the beings their destiny and what the beings receive is their nature" (天所赋为命, 物所受为性). Diametrically contrasting Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming wrote: "The constant Way is encapsulated in the Six Classics. The Way appears as destiny in Heaven, as nature in man, and as heart (mind) in one's body. The heart (mind), nature and destiny are all one and the same." The word translated as 'destiny' or 'to destine' is *ming* (命), which in Wang Yangming's interpretation refers to 'the meaning of life' rather than 'something preordained' (Kallio 2008, 171–172, fn. 1).

awakening.[230] The Declaration also accuses the Qing-era Empirical Research School of making people lose sight of the 'real' tradition.

Xu Fuguan's approach differed significantly from that of Mou Zongsan. Whereas Mou saw Confucianism as a philosophical system with a metaphysical core, Xu paid attention to the practical orientation (*waiwang*) of Confucianism and its relation to statecraft. While Xu regarded the *minben* ideal (men are the basis of the state) as resembling democracy in principle, he lamented that the Confucians became the rulers' puppets even during the Han dynasty.[231]

The third generation (the 1980s) may be said to include at least Du Weiming (b. 1940), Yu Yingshi (余英时, b. 1930) and Liu Shuxian (b. 1934). Du and Yu have mostly worked in the United States and Liu in Hong Kong. According to Bresciani, their common feature is that they all condemn political Marxism but value Marxism as a historical theory and social science. Their Confucian awakening was linked to the demise of the Weberian theory of Confucianism.[232]

Today, Du Weiming is also classified as one of the 'Boston Confucians' together with Professor Robert C. Neville (b. 1939). Neville's field of research is comparative theology, and his aim is to show that Confucianism does not have "limited East Asian ethnic application" but is actually a "portable tradition" like Christianity.[233]

John Makeham sees Liu Shuxian as the most prominent successor of Mou Zongsan. Liu campaigns for "spiritual Confucianism" (as opposed to Du Weiming's "Confucian capitalism") and calls for "honouring the moral nature" instead of "following the path of inquiry and study".[234] The latter phrase refers to the 'rationalist' Neo-Confucians.

Liu Shuxian acknowledges that because the Chinese tradition emphasizes the Grand Unity (*Da yitong*) as a value in itself, democracy with its notion of pluralism is not compatible with Confucianism.

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[230] Zheng Jiadong 1994, 175. John Makeham disputes (2008, 162) this interpretation of the Declaration by Zheng Jiadong.

[231] Makeham 2003, 204. Lodén 2006, 178.

[232] Bresciani 2001, 389–391. Solé-Farràs 2008, 15.

[233] Neville 2000, 1–2.

[234] Makeham 2008, 71–72.

However, Liu says, the values of liberty and equality may be implanted into Confucianism.[235]

The fourth generation (late 1990s) entered the stage after the death of Mou Zongsan. John Makeham sees Professor Lin Anwu (b. 1957, National Taiwan Normal University) as a central figure in that group. Lin Anwu may perhaps be seen as a successor to Xu Fuguan. Liu Shuxian has expressed his opposition to Lin's "critical Confucianism", and Lin has criticized the "dogmatization" of Mou Zongsan's teachings.[236]

Lin Anwu asserts that although Xiong Shili and Mou Zongsan were gravely concerned about the loss of meaning experienced by the Chinese nation, their newly built metaphysics did very little to advance democracy, science or modern ethics. Since the late 1990s, the most burning issue for the New Confucians has been to select content from the ancient classics which would contribute to the discussion within the emerging civil society. Lin reiterates this claim by saying that the Neo-Confucians should no longer be asking "how to move from *neisheng* to *waiwang*" but instead, "how to adjust *neisheng* to fit *waiwang*". According to Lin, 'Old Confucianism' was rooted in an autocratic, shamanistic clan society. 'New Confucianism' should be rooted in deal-based, open civil society, but the Contemporary Neo-Confucians never got further than groping their way towards such a society; they recognized the need to modernize but did not know how.[237]

Lin has coined the term *Hou Xin Rujia* (后新儒家), 'Post-New Confucianism', to describe his blueprint for 'critical Confucianism', which would lead Confucianism away from "excessive emphasis on inner moral cultivation at the expense of practice". In contrast to 'old' and 'new' Confucianism, 'Post-New Confucianism' is to be rooted in a post-modern, free 'human society'. 'Post-New Confucianism' should not follow 'New Confucianism' but must replace it. 'Post-New Confucianism' must purge away shamanism, autocracy and other vestiges of 'old Confucianism'. Lin also deplores the continuing influence of "imperial-style Confucianism". He draws a structural parallel between autocratic monarchy and the kind of 'subjective'

[235] Li 1999, 185.

[236] Makeham 2008, 71, 171.

[237] Lin Anwu 2005, "Foreword".

Confucianism as promoted by Wang Yangming and Mou Zongsan. According to Lin, innate moral knowledge (*liangzhi*) and autocracy are similarly absolute. "Innate moral consciousness gives priority to the ontological mind … as the highest absolute, whereas autocracy gives priority to the ruler."[238]

Lin not only criticizes Mou Zongsan's Contemporary New Confucianism but also the Confucianism promoted by the Nationalists in Taiwan. He calls it "a new form of imperial style Confucianism". Lin states that in Taiwan, the self-proclaimed masters of the 'true political tradition' (*zhengtong*, 政统) declared themselves to be the protectors of the 'true cultural tradition' (*daotong*), although in theory, *daotong* should override *zhengtong*, and 'cultural China' should take precedence over 'political China' and 'economic China'. This is a point where many of the New Confucians are in agreement: the goal of reviving Confucianism is to build a new moral and cultural basis for political rule, in Mainland China and Taiwan alike.[239]

Lin proposes broader engagement with different Confucian thinkers and other schools of thought, including Marxism, liberalism and even scholastic philosophy.[240] He states that the primary concept of genuine Confucianism is neither 'heart-mind' (*xin*) nor 'rational principle' (*li*) but *qi* (气). *Qi* is a notoriously vague concept and may refer, for instance, to energy, ether, or spirit. It is a central concept in Taoism. For Zhu Xi, *qi* meant the life-force of the observable world (*xing'erxia*, 形而下), which could obscure the perfect *li*.[241] Lin defines *qi* as something that interconnects the metaphysical and the physical. "[T]he concept of *qi* emphasizes the genuine interactivity and resonance in the overall interconnectedness of history and society."[242] Lin's definition seems related to the one by Zhu Xi and

[238] Makeham 2008, 42, 171, 173–176. See also Lin Anwu 2005, "Foreword". Makeham sees a parallel between Lin's wish to eliminate magic and Weber's Entzäuberung; "Weber regarded the Protestant Reformation as having played a key role in paving the way for modernity through its criticism of magic" (Makeham 2008, 175).

[239] Makeham 2008, 202–203.

[240] Ibid., 171.

[241] According to Zhu Xi, a person could clear his/her *qi* through self-cultivation (see Lodén 2006, 115).

[242] Makeham 2008, 181.

is probably aimed at reducing the role of the heart-mind as a subject of the metaphysical realm.[243]

John Makeham remains sceptical of the 'Post-New Confucianism'. He questions whether Lin Anwu really has been able to create anything "genuinely innovative, creative and influential". Other critics have similarly written off Lin Anwu's thinking as "shouting slogans" against Mou Zongsan without the ability to match the latter as a thinker.[244]

The third and fourth generation New Confucians in Mainland China

Researchers have identified several groups which may be labelled as representatives of the 3rd or 4th generation active on the Mainland. Among these are the followers of Mou Zongsan, dubbed 'apologetics' by Jesús Solé-Farràs (2008). Their most prominent figure is Luo Yijun (罗义俊, b. 1944, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences), a major supporter of the 1958 Manifesto. From 1986, he was a member of the Fang Keli-led research project. In 1992, he publicly identified himself as a Confucian instead of just a researcher of Confucianism. Luo has called for Confucianism to be revived in order for it to replace Marxism as the ideology which would guide China in the 21st century. He continues to frequently publish articles related to Confucianism. Zheng Jiadong also seems to regard himself as a successor to Mou Zongsan's tradition, although he is critical towards 'subjective' Confucianism and calls for combining metaphysically oriented Confucian learning with real-life oriented action (see below).[245]

A second group are the 'militants', spearheaded by Jiang Qing (江庆, b. 1953, formerly at the Shenzhen Administrative College), who is

[243] Lin's 'Critical Confucianism' bears a close resemblance to 'Critical Buddhism' by Hakayama Noriaki (see Hakayama 1997). See Lin Anwu 2005, "Foreword". – Zeng Guofan also regarded *qi* as the central concept because he felt that neither *li* (the rational principle) nor *xin* (the heart-mind) were sufficiently 'Chinese' but could be found in Christianity as well (Feng Youlan 1995, 80).

[244] Makeham 2008, 347, fn 29.

[245] Solé-Farràs 2008, 153–154, 252–254. Ai 2008, 37. Bresciani 2001, 440.

perhaps currently the best known of the Mainland New Confucians besides Luo Yijun. Jiang is critical towards Mou Zongsan's tradition, yet cannot be seen as a follower of Xu Fuguan. Instead, he is calling for the establishment of Confucianism as a religion (*Rujiao*, 儒教) so that it would replace Marxism–Leninism as the 'national doctrine' (*guojiao*, 国教). Influenced by Du Weiming, Jiang Qing also believes that Confucianism is one of the world religions.[246] I will discuss Jiang's thinking further in Chapter IV.

There are proponents of the Confucian religion representing a younger generation, too. One of these is Professor Chen Ming (陈明, b. 1962, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of World Religions), who rather pragmatically courts 'New Authoritarianism'—a political theory which became popular in China in the late 1980s and which emphasized the importance of a strong central government for economic development—in order to rally support for his cause.[247] Another is Professor Peng Guoxiang (彭国翔, b. 1969) at the Philosophy Department of Tsinghua University. He has published several articles discussing Wang Yangming's thought and translated many works by Du Weiming into Chinese. Peng believes that by using a broad definition of religion, Confucianism can be classified as a religion. Unlike Jiang Qing, Peng doesn't believe that Confucianism can offer answers to all worldly matters, but must be considered a religious system of values only.[248] Kang Xiaoguang (康晓光, b. 1963), Professor of Regional Economics and Politics at Renmin University, has also authored several essays advocating the establishment of Confucianism as the state religion.

Then there are the 'Socialists', an instrumentalist grouping more Marxist than Confucian. Their leading figure is Fang Keli, who is very critical towards both Luo Yijun and Jiang Qing. This is the kind of New Confucianism that the Communist Party wishes to utilize in order to build up the Socialist Harmonious Society and to strengthen its legitimacy.[249] While this group may prove influential in the governmental efforts to build Traditional Learning, it is in my opinion

[246] Makeham 2008, 263. Bresciani 2001, 429.

[247] Makeham 2008, 197.

[248] Peng Guoxiang 2002. Wang Zhicheng 2009.

[249] See Ai 2008, 38–40.

doubtful whether Marxism–Leninism–Maoism can really be merged with Confucianism.

There has also been a grouping labelled the 'liberals', who promote gradual political reform which would lead to a 'Chinese Confucian democracy'. They argued that while Marxism is not compatible with China's modernization, Western liberal democracy is also not suited to China's cultural tradition. Confucianism, on the other hand, would be compatible with democracy.[250] The liberals were linked with the Chinese Cultural College (*Zhongguo wenhua shuyuan*, 中国文化书院), established in 1984 by several prominent scholars at Peking University, including Feng Youlan and Liang Shuming.

While the Chinese Cultural College still exists, it seems to have become an organ supporting the Socialist Confucians. One of the founders who is still alive, Tang Yijie (汤一介, b. 1927), maintains that Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism are all equally important for China's national revival, and his recently published thoughts seem to chime well with the promotion of Traditional Learning and building the Socialist Harmonious Society.[251]

The preceding overview, together with an outline of the genealogical tree of Confucianism since the Han dynasty, is presented in the form of a diagram in **Figure 4**.[252]

Because Zheng Jiadong, once the 'grandmaster' of Chinese Confucians, appears to have been seriously discredited by a scandal,[253] the question remains, is there anyone in Mainland China (besides Luo Yijun, who is already past retirement age) who is able and willing to carry on Mou Zongsan's line? As Fang Keli has noted, New Confucians in

[250] Ai 2008, 40–41.

[251] See e.g. Tang Yijie 2006a and 2006b.

[252] Cf. Bresciani's chart of the New Confucian movement (Bresciani 2001, 35).

[253] Zheng Jiadong was detained in the summer of 2005 on charges of having smuggled six women into the United States. One year later he was convicted and sentenced to prison for 2½ years. On the internet, the affair stirred up heated discussion on whether it had anything to do with the nature of Confucianism, either with the hollowness of Confucian virtue or, more apologetically, the unrealistic expectations placed on Confucian self-cultivation (e.g. "Zheng Jiadong shijian yu Xiandai Xin Rujia de kunjing", by Guyun, in *Nanfang Zhoumo*, 15 July 2005, available at http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2005-07-15/11487232558.shtml, accessed 19 May 2010). Cf. Qian Mansu's view that the idea of anyone being able to become a sage is both unhelpful and unrealistic, in Chapter II, "The failure of the revolutionaries to uproot Confucianism".

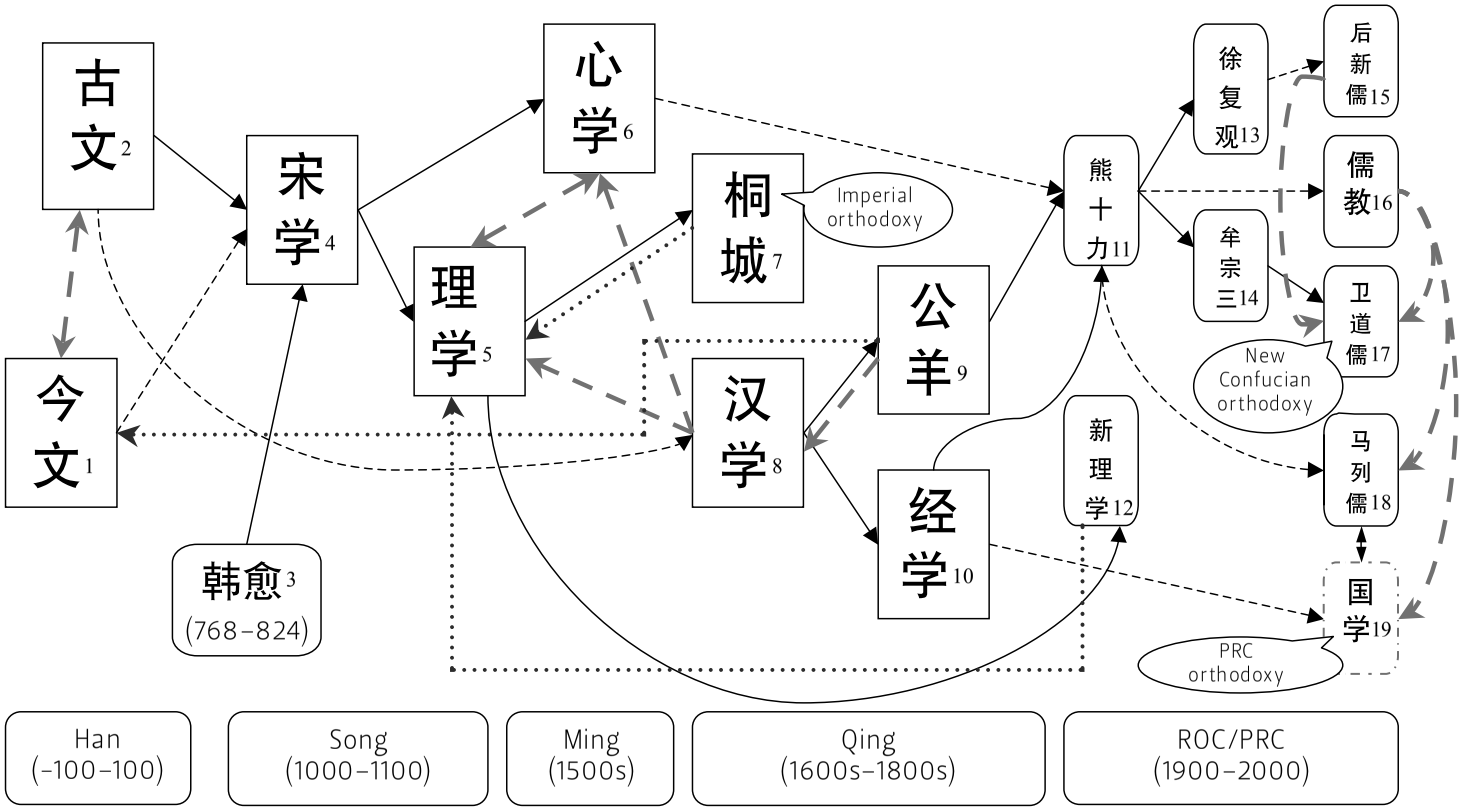

Figure 4. Outline of the genealogical tree of Confucianism since the Han dynasty

KEY

direct influence or descendence

indirect or weak influence

opposition

identification

non-Confucian school

From left to right, top to bottom:	
Han dynasty	1 New Text (今文) School
	2 Ancient Text (古文) School
Tang dynasty	3 Han Yu (韩愈)
Song and Ming dynasty	4 Song Learning (宋学) i.e. Neo-Confucianism (新儒学)
	5 Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism (理学)
	6 Lu-Wang Neo-Confucianism (心学)
Qing dynasty	7 Tongcheng (桐城) School i.e. School of Song Learning
	8 School of Han Learning (汉学 or 新汉学) i.e. Empirical Research (考证) School
	9 Gongyang (公羊) School i.e. New Text (今文) School
	10 'Modern' exegetical studies (经学)
1st gen of New Confucians	11 Xiong Shili (熊十力)
	12 New Neo-Confucianism (新理学) by Feng Youlan (冯友兰)
2nd gen of New Confucians	13 Xu Fuguan (徐复观)
	14 Mou Zongsan (牟宗三)
3rd and 4th gen	15 Post-New Confucianism (后新儒学) by Lin Anwu (林安梧)
	16 Confucian religion (儒教) by Jiang Qing (江庆) et al.
	17 Apologetic Confucianism (卫道儒)
	18 Marxist-Leninist 'Confucianism' (马列儒)
	19 Traditional Learning (国学)

Mainland China are at least "theoretically speaking" outlawed because their stand negates historical materialism, dialectical materialism and hence Marxism.[254] Furthermore, 'militant' Confucianism is clearly too extremist to lead anywhere, 'socialist' Confucianism is Confucian in name only, and 'liberal' Confucianism appears to have faded away, making the future of New Confucianism seem bleak.

We may see from the above that the relation between the Outer Kingliness (*waiwang*) and the Inner Sageliness (*neisheng*) is central to defining the proper lineage of Confucianism (*daotong*). Another issue is the difference between Confucianism (*Rujia*, 儒家) and Confucian learning (*Ruxue*, 儒学). Zheng Jiadong predicts that handling the

[254] Guo 2004, 75.

division between the intellectual, ontological *Ruxue*, based on knowledge, and the *Rujia* based on moral action which results from personal cultivation, will be crucial for the future development of Confucianism.[255]

Zheng is in favour of combining *Rujia* and *Ruxue* into "learning concerned with life": Academic systems of knowledge (*xuetong*, 学统) can function as the premise for subjective experience or the *Rujia* spirit of practice and social concern.[256] When referring to the "spirit of practice" Zheng quotes Fan Zhongyan's essay entitled "Inscription at Yueyang Tower" about the sages of the past: "They must have said, let us be the first to concern ourselves with the concerns of All-Under-Heaven and the last to enjoy the joys of All-Under-Heaven! Alas! Who am I to follow when such men are among us no more."[257]

Zheng also proposes a "broad definition of *daotong*". According to him, a broadly defined *daotong* is not only a genealogical model but a kind of "cultural consciousness". As Makeham concludes, Zheng's "broad *daotong*" leads into cultural nationalism where the *Rujia* are both the inheritors and participants of the Chinese culture.[258]

Just who it is that represents the newest generation of New Confucians on the Mainland is a question for further research. Some proponents of the Confucian religion were mentioned above, but at this stage I am unable to assess how representative their views are among the 'younger' Confucians. I would argue that for a possible fifth generation (consisting of people born mainly in the 1970s) to be successful, it would have to follow either the 'critical Confucianism' sketched by Lin Anwu or the 'learning concerned with life' approach outlined by Zheng Jiadong. The other avenues seem to be dead ends.

Or perhaps the answer lies in abandoning the genealogical thinking and returning to the roots. Discussion about the origins and the 'true' nature of Confucianism has indeed begun, following some recent archaeological finds.

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[255] Makeham 2008, 142.

[256] Ibid., 143, 165. This reminds us of the thought of Gu Yanwu, who promoted the study of everything, not just the Classics, and "argued that broad studies should be combined with a sense of shame over the remaining injustices in the world" (Lodén 2006, 133; see Gu Yanwu 2000, 175–178).

[257] For a translation of the whole essay in Finnish, see Kallio 2008, 31–33.

[258] Zheng Jiadong 1994, 190. Makeham 2008, 140–141, 157–160.

The early lineage of Confucianism

Archaeology and linguistics have come to the aid of those who wish to make new interpretations about Traditional Learning and Confucianism. The unearthing of several previously unknown texts, preserved on bamboo slips, from a tomb in a village called Guodian in Hubei Province in the early 1990s, has been particularly inspirational. Several of the texts have been classified as belonging to the Confucian school of thought.[259] The Guodian tomb dates back to approximately 300 BCE, and it is possible that the unearthed texts were produced just decades after Confucius's death in 479 BCE, and thus predate Mencius, the first major developer of Confucianism after Confucius himself.

As discussed above, defining the *daotong* is of great importance to the self-legitimization of the contemporary Confucians. The Guodian find is naturally relevant to the discussion concerning the early lineage of Confucianism. The established view on the early lineage was formulated by the Song dynasty Neo Confucians, especially Zhu Xi. According to this view, Confucius passed his school of thought on to Zengzi (曾子, a disciple of Confucius), who then passed it on to Zisi (子思, allegedly a grandson of Confucius), who then passed it on to Mencius. The younger contemporary of Mencius, Xunzi, is depicted as a heterodox, and he thus falls outside the lineage.[260]

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[259] Kenneth W. Holloway cautions against classifying the Guodian texts according to the different schools, i.e. Confucianism and Taoism, and notes that the division into different schools could be artificial and may not have taken place before the Han dynasty (Holloway 2009, 6, 41).

[260] Makeham 2008, 222–223. Han Yu, the first to outline a Confucian genealogy, said of Xunzi that he "picked up pieces of Confucius's learning but failed to grasp its essence" ("Yuan Dao", translated in Kallio 2007, 112–119). The discussion on Xunzi revolves around his view on Heaven and nature, *Tian* and *xing*. Both Mencius and the *Doctrine of the Mean* represent the view that "one's nature is destined by Heaven"; therefore, Heaven and Man are one. In contrast, Xunzi did not see Heaven as the ruler of one's destiny; to use modern concepts, he equated Heaven with impersonal natural forces which are separate from Man. Xunzi considered man's 'nature' (*xing*, 性) to include just the 'animal instincts', to use modern analogies again. More important in Xunzi's view was man's 'artifice' (*wei*, 伪), what one has learned and how one controls one's instincts. Xunzi also emphasized 'propriety' (*li*) and 'justice' (*yi*), in contrast to Mencius, who put the highest value on 'benevolence' (*ren*) (Robins 2007; Goldin 2000).

From early on, the lineage has been called into question. In particular, the role of Xunzi has been viewed in various ways. For instance, Sun Fu (孙复, 992–1057) maintained that Confucius revived the Confucian Way after the disintegration of the Zhou Dynasty, Mencius revived it when the death of Confucius had given way to the heresies of Yang Zhu and Mozi, and Xunzi revived it after it had been disrupted by the chaos of the Warring States period. "Mencius often spoke about humaneness (*ren*) and seldom about propriety (*li*), while Xunzi often spoke about propriety (*li*) and seldom about humaneness (*ren*)", noted Kang Youwei. Both poles, *ren* and *li*, are necessary for the Kingly Way (*Wang Dao*, 王道), Sun Fu and others have argued, while the orthodoxy has sided with *ren*.[261]

The orthodox view on the lineage has been endorsed by the majority of contemporary New Confucians, including Mou Zongsan.[262] Why the New Confucians have stressed Mencian 'idealism' and the subjective Inner Sageliness stems from embarrassment over the fact that Confucius himself never reached an official position, let alone the throne (though his later biographies often contain such fabrications).[263] Mencius set out to create an image of Confucius as a Sage whose real achievements had to do with his spiritual growth. As Professor Qin Hui (秦晖) from Tsinghua University has pointed out, Confucians prior to the Han dynasty looked towards the legendary Three Emperors and the Kings of Zhou as their idols and it was not until the Song dynasty that Confucius's *Analects* attained the highest position in the Confucian canon.[264] Confucius himself said that he "didn't create but only transmitted".

Traditionally, the authoritative texts had included the so-called Five Classics: the *Classic of Changes*, the *Classic of History*, the *Classic of*

[261] Liang Tao 2009.

[262] This discussion is still very much alive. The new translation of the *Analects* by Brooks & Brooks (1998) aims to prove that *ren* is the central concept in original Confucianism.

[263] See Waley 1989 13–14, and Li Ling 2009, 13.

[264] Qin Hui 2009. The *Analects* was studied as early as the Han dynasty, when it was first regarded as Confucius's own commentary on the Five Classics and later as one of the Seven Classics (i.e. the Five Classics, the *Analects* and the *Classic of Filial Piety*). Schoolchildren typically studied the *Analects* as an elementary textbook prior to embarking on the more difficult Five Classics (Gardner 2003, 7–8).

Poetry, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Book of Rites*[265] (originally, there had been six classics, but the *Classic of Music* had been lost). It was thanks to Zhu Xi that the Five Classics were superseded in importance by the Four Books: the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Zhu Xi maintained that "the Four Books revealed Confucian truths more clearly and effectively and should thus take precedence over all other writings in the canon". In 1313, the Four Books, with Zhu Xi's commentary, were declared the basis of the civil service examinations.[266] It was only the Gongyang School and later the New Confucians who put Confucius on a pedestal as the originator of Confucianism.

The Guodian texts have been keenly exploited to either defend, modify or attack the established view on the early lineage of Confucianism. One group uses the Guodian find to support the existence of the Zisi–Mencius connection and thus the find is taken as further proof of the established, and New Confucian, view. It is perhaps no accident that one of the major proponents of overseas New Confucianism, Du Weiming, is also one of the most eager researchers into the Guodian texts.[267]

Another group uses the Guodian find to promote the idea of the antiquity of the Chinese culture. This is related to the state-sponsored Three Dynasties (Xia–Shang–Zhou) Chronology Project, which was one of the key projects under the Ninth Five-Year Plan in 1996–2000. The project aimed at establishing a scientific foundation for the traditional belief that the Chinese civilization really is 5,000 years old with an unbroken, homogeneous dynastic history (see "A case in point: The *Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City" above). This belief is heavily contested by the scientific consensus, according to which

[265] According to Torbjörn Lodén, the original, pre-Qin *Book of Rites* (*Lijing*) was probably very different from the later version (*Liji*), compiled during the Han dynasty (Lodén 2006, 10).

[266] Gardner 2003, 2–3. All in all, the Confucian canon during the Song dynasty comprised thirteen books: the Five Classics, the Four Books, and certain other works. The other works were the *Classic of Filial Piety*; three accompanying works to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Zuo zhuan*, *Guliangzhuan* and *Gongyangzhuan*; the *Erya* dictionary; and two books on rituals in addition to the *Book of Rites*, *Zhouli* and *Yili*. Because *Zuo zhuan* was considered part of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and because the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* were parts of the *Book of Rites*, the total number came to thirteen.

[267] Makeham 2008, 216–233, and Liang Tao 2009.

the Zhou dynasty (its latter part, 841–256 BCE) certainly is historical but there is no archaeological evidence for the existence of the Xia dynasty (allegedly 2070–1600 BCE). In contrast, the Chronology Project presents Xia as a powerful state formation.[268]

Yet another group maintains that the Guodian find exposes flaws in the established lineage by showing that Xunzi's thinking was important for the development of later Confucianism alongside Mencius's thinking. This seems plausible indeed, and Paul Rakita Goldin argues convincingly that many aspects of Xunzi's thinking are present, at least in a raw form, in the Confucian texts found in Guodian.[269]

Nevertheless, even this interpretation of the Guodian texts isn't value-free. Some, like Li Zehou, may favour this approach because it counters the New Confucian view of the lineage.[270] There is also a connection to the ideal of the Socialist Harmonious Society. According to Yuan Tengfei (袁腾飞), the author of an extremely popular textbook on Chinese history, a harmonious society needs both *ren* and *li*. *Ren* means that people care for each other. For the ruler to love his people and to be loved by them requires *li*: people need to act according to their position and be content with their lot.[271]

A case in point: Reinterpretations of Confucius

The Guodian texts provide material for purposes other than simply analyzing the lineage of Confucianism. Many expect that it is possible to find traces of original Confucianism in the texts because they are so very old. The studies on the nature of 'true' Confucianism bear direct relevance to the debate on the role of tradition in today's China, but

[268] See Makeham 2008, 231.

[269] Goldin 2000. Most significantly, Goldin shows that the interpretation of *xing* or 'nature' in both the Guodian texts and in Xunzi's thought (and possibly Gaozi's) differs from the view presented by Mencius. Mencius believed that it is the inherent goodness of the *xing* of human beings that distinguishes them from animals. According to the Guodian texts, all members of a certain species are born with the same, morally indeterminate *xing* and people can make themselves good through self-cultivation.

[270] See Makeham 2008, 225.

[271] Yuan Tengfei 2009, 31–32. This resembles the way Yu Dan presents Confucianism in her recent bestseller, *Confucius from the Heart* (see below).

it is not always easy to decipher what the pundits are actually saying amid all the linguistic and philosophical jargon.

Two views, both originating from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, serve as good examples of the heated debate related to the Guodian texts. Approaching the subject from different angles, and arriving at somewhat different conclusions, both nevertheless praise the texts as a source of a new understanding of 'original' Confucianism. Both underline the 'revolutionary' and 'political' spirit of early Confucianism.

Liang Tao (梁涛, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, History Institute) wishes to bolster his original view of the democratic spirit of Confucius, and with that aim in mind he—arguably rather freely—attributes a great many Guodian texts to Zisi, whom he takes to be the grandson of Confucius.[272]

According to Liang Tao, early Confucianism had two mutually complementary trends. Mencius promoted "benevolent (*ren*) rule" and Zisi stood for "All-Under-Heaven is one community" (*Tianxia wei gong*, 天下为公). Mencius also taught that the people are the basis of the state, and Liang maintains that Zisi meant that political power belongs to all people. Thus, argues Liang, the two trends together form an indigenous, Chinese basis for democracy.[273] Liang deplores the fact that only the Mencian trend has continued while the rest became diluted into the principle that an unworthy ruler

[272] Makeham 2008, 225. Liang Tao 2009. Some texts found in Guodian are widely believed to be parts of the now lost *Zisizi*, the collected writings of Zisi. A received text in the *Book of Rites* entitled "Ziyi", which is traditionally attributed to Zisi, has its counterpart among the Guodian texts. One of the Guodian texts is entitled "Duke Mu of Lu questions Zisi" and is unquestionably related to Zisi. (See Henricks 2000, 5.) In contrast, Paul Rakita Goldin (2000, 115) strongly criticizes "the emerging trend to associate the Guodian manuscripts with Zisi" and argues, instead, that the manuscripts show a connection to Xunzi. Brooks & Brooks (1998, 285, 287) challenge the view that Zisi was a grandson of Confucius.

[273] Holloway (2009, 22) suggests that (at least some) Guodian texts describe an ideal society "where individual egalitarianism is balanced with communitarian connectedness to create a harmony between the priorities of the majority and minority groups in our society". Holloway's discussion of the Guodian texts is interesting, but his analysis is marred by the fact that he translates the key concepts following the customary, Confucian tradition. Especially problematic are *ren* and *de*: translating them as 'humaneness, humanity' and 'virtue', respectively, seems forced.

must abdicate.[274] In Liang's words, 'common world' became just 'one family'; and in a 'common world', all are equal, whereas in 'one family' somebody is the head of the family. Furthermore, the exegetical studies (*jingxue*) of the Ancient Text School and the New Text School petrified Confucianism as they helped to cement the Confucian canon, based on the Mencian tradition. They also replaced the focus on propriety and justice with the cultivation of one's inner *ren*, and replaced politics with mere academic study.[275]

Liang Tao discusses the meaning of the *ren* concept in the light of the Guodian texts. In the latter, *ren* is most often written with a variant of the graph 忎 (which is an ancient form of the standard graph 仁). The Guodian variant has 身 as the phonetic component, meaning 'self'. Liang Tao sees this as a concrete example of Confucius's interpretation of *ren*: originally, the concept not only implied 'loving one's fellow men', as Mencius claimed, but also 'overcoming one's selfish desires' and 'cultivating oneself'.[276] Furthermore, *ren* as 'loving one's fellow men' is not entirely different from loving oneself, because in Confucius's thinking, *ren* starts from the relations to one's blood relatives and is therefore related to the concept of filial, or brotherly, piety.[277]

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[274] Holloway (2009, 17–20) claims that the Guodian texts, and "Tang Yu zhi dao" in particular, endorse neither abdication (in favour of a virtuous and capable person, instead of one's son) nor hereditary succession, but promote a balanced view between the two. My own interpretation of "Tang Yu zhi dao" is quite different, and I read the text as an instrumentalist endorsement of abdication only (Cf. Pines 2009, 63–65).

[275] Liang Tao 2009. This resembles the lamentation of Gu Yanwu, expressed in his *Rizhilu* (chapter "Fuzi zhi yan xing yu Tiandao"): "People today do not study the content of the Six Classics … and talk idly about 'clearing one's mind in order to find one's nature' and use this to replace the practical studies oriented at self-cultivation and the administration of people." (不习六艺之文 … 以明心见性之空言代修己治人之实学。)

[276] Liang Tao refers to the phrase 克己 from the *Analects* XII.1. As Edward Slingerland (2003, 125) points out, the meaning and translation of the passage have been debated continuously over the centuries. My translation here, 'overcoming one's selfish desires', is based on the context of Liang Tao's essay. See fn. 109.

[277] Liang Tao 2008. I would be ready to carry this logic further. In early dictionaries, *ren* is said to mean *qin* (亲). As a verb, *qin* means 'to feel close to someone, to love (one's close ones)', and as a noun, 'a close person, kinsman, relative'. It is conceivable, in my opinion, that *ren* originally denoted 'kinship' and acquired the meaning of general 'humaneness' as a later extension.

Liang Tao proposes that contemporary Confucians should learn from the Song dynasty Neo-Confucians who absorbed Taoist and Buddhist influences and were therefore able to make new, innovative interpretations. Similarly, contemporary Confucians should integrate Western philosophy and science into Confucianism. The basis of Confucianism is to be found by studying the Guodian texts. Such a new synthesis would enable China to continue the kind of enlightenment that emerged during the Ming and Qing dynasties and to rejuvenate her democratic tradition. According to Liang, the Confucians should discard the old Four Books (see "The early lineage of Confucianism" above) and replace them with a set of New Four Books, namely the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Book of Rites* and the *Xunzi*.[278]

All in all, Liang sees it as the contemporary Confucians' duty to transform the old, *neisheng* oriented Confucianism into a new *waiwang* orientation. In other words, studying the classics must be replaced by political action.[279] Although Liang doesn't directly say what kind of action would be needed, reading between the lines suggests that he is using the Guodian texts to find arguments in favour of reforming the current political system.

Jiang Guanghui (姜广辉, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of History of Chinese Thought) thinks initially along the same lines as Liang Tao, but arrives at a different conclusion. The Confucian lineage, established by Zhu Xi, passed from Confucius to Zengzi and from him to Zisi and Mencius. Kang Youwei already held a different view and saw Zisi as the follower of Ziyou (子有, a disciple of Confucius) instead. According to Jiang, the Ziyou School of early Confucianism promoted the right of the people to overthrow a bad ruler, and the central slogans in the school were 'Great Community', 'Modest Welfare' (*Xiaokang*) and 'All-Under-Heaven is one community'. It was the most rebellious of the early schools.[280]

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[278] The *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* are actually two of the 49 chapters in the *Book of Rites*. Traditionally, these two chapters were attributed to Zisi, and they were elevated to a special position by Zhu Xi during the Song dynasty. Liang Tao (2009) calls for a new edition of the *Book of Rites* which should be based on the Guodian texts.

[279] Liang Tao 2009.

[280] This and the following paragraphs are based on Jiang Guanghui 2007.

Jiang further identifies two other early Confucian schools, those of Zixia (子夏, also a disciple of Confucius) and Zengzi. According to Jiang, the Zixia school concentrated on the study of the ancient ways and scriptures. Unlike the rebellious Ziyou school, they sought cooperation with the rulers. The exegetical studies (*jingxue*) continued the heritage of the Zixia school, claims Jiang.

Jiang further describes the Zengzi school as concentrating on the concept of filial piety, both in the family and in a wider context. Any behaviour which brings shame on one's parents is to be regarded as non-filial. In addition, the Zengzi school is also responsible for making the discussion on metaphysics, the *yin* and the *yang*, part of later Confucianism.

Jiang believes that the Confucian texts unearthed in Guodian belong to the school of Ziyou and his follower Zisi.[281] According to Jiang, the Ziyou–Zisi–Mencius school has the following special characteristics. First, their ideal for society was the Great Community. Second, their political ideal was abdication in favour of the able. Third, they emphasized man's free will.

Traditionally, the ideal of the Great Community was believed to have been a reality during the reigns of the Five Emperors, especially Yao and Shun. The ideal rulers of the Three Dynasties, Xia, Shang and Zhou, supposedly reigned during an era of Modest Welfare. According to Jiang, the era preceding the Xia dynasty was indeed a time of primitive communism when "All-Under-Heaven was one community" and the people "held not only their own blood relatives as their relatives and their real sons as their sons".[282]

Jiang quotes Kang Youwei, who stated that Confucius himself advocated abdicating the throne in favour of the able. According to Jiang, this view is proven right by the Guodian text "Tang Yu zhi Dao". Jiang further states that particularly through the writings of Mencius, the succession of the able became a political ideal with clear democratic overtones. In addition, both Mencius and Xunzi proposed that the people have the right to overthrow an unjust ruler. This interpretation is somewhat different from the view of Liang Tao.

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[281] Jiang makes particular reference to the texts "Tang Yu zhi Dao", "Xing zi ming chu", "Lu Mu Gong wen Zisi", "Zi yi" and "Wu xing". He also notes that some scholars attribute two Guodian texts directly to Confucius himself, namely "Zun de yi" and "Qiong da yi shi".

[282] 不独亲其亲子其子, a quotation from the *Book of Rites*, "Liyun".

According to Jiang, the Ziyou school believed that man has free will. This idea is advanced by the concept of 'sensibility' or 'sympathy' (*qing*, 情). This concept is in contrast with *xing* (性) or man's 'nature', which is innate. According to the Guodian text "Xing zi ming chu", man's nature gives birth to man's sensibilities (to the feelings of others) and sympathy (for one's fellow humans), which in turn are the starting point for the Way (of society). According to Jiang, *qing* is a yardstick against which to measure right and wrong, and it is formed in a person through the process of socialization and education.[283]

In conclusion, Jiang Guanghui argues that the Guodian texts force us to re-evaluate the lineage of Confucianism. Very boldly, Jiang states that both Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming were wrong in their interpretations of Confucianism. Neither of them knew the real tradition which has now been revealed by the Guodian texts. Jiang criticizes Mou Zongsan and the New Confucians for making the Wang Yangming school the core of their view on the true lineage.

Jiang himself gives credit to the Qing dynasty Confucians Huang Zongxi (黄宗羲, 1610–95), Dai Zhen (戴震, 1724–77) and Kang Youwei. According to Jiang, they restored to Confucianism the original ideas of respecting the interests of the people, seeing people as active subjects, and rebelliousness, and their thinking bore a resemblance to the European Enlightenment. The general ethos of Jiang's analysis suggests that rather than extolling the virtues of the enlightenment, he wishes to prove the compatibility of Confucianism with communism.

It is my own humble view, based on my very limited reading of the Guodian texts, that the differences between the Mencian tradition and the Guodian corpus are more striking than the similarities.[284] Therefore, I would be inclined to see the Guodian find as proof of the existence of different branches of (what later became known as) Confucianism during the 4th century BC.

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[283] The concept of *qing* is difficult to translate here. In later Confucianism, it refers to 'feelings' or 'emotions', but it is my understanding (and seemingly also Jiang Guanghui's) that in the Guodian text "Xing zi ming chu", *qing* is both more active and conscious than an emotion.

[284] I have translated (into Finnish) excerpts from four texts belonging to the Guodian corpus, pending publication.

It also seems plausible that the texts originate from the Jixia Academy, where they were used as reading materials, as has been suggested by Gao Zheng (高正) from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.[285] Many philosophers of different schools were active in the academy during the years of its existence (from ca. 360 BCE to 284 BCE), including Mencius and Xunzi.

The discussion on the right method of succession, central to the text "Tang Yu zhi dao", could be related to the events in the state of Qi around the year 386 BCE, when the throne was seized from the 'rightful heir' by the 'able ruler'.[286] Thus the Guodian texts would, at least in part, be coloured by political instrumentalism. It is no wonder, then, that interpreting the texts today has become a politicized issue.

[285] Gao Zheng 2001.

[286] The Tian family assumed the Qi throne formally in 386 BCE, putting an end to a long power struggle. The establishment of the Jixia academy was a means to bolster the family's legitimacy and power. The academy combined academic freedom with economic security and thus succeeded in enticing many talented men to the service of the state.

Chapter IV
Conclusions

Confucianism in contemporary China

Guo Yingjie, lecturer in Chinese Studies at the Institute for International Studies, University of Technology, Sydney, writes: "Fortunately for the Confucians, both Marxists and liberals have moderated their antitraditional stance in varying degrees in the last decade in contrast to the May Fourth era or the 1980s." Guo concludes boldly: "As a result, China is witnessing a reformist ethos that finds no parallel since May Fourth."[287]

Guo's conclusion may be an exaggeration but the discussion on the social and political value base is certainly not at a standstill in China. As mentioned in the Introduction to this report, Li Xiangping and Shi Dajian argue that the Confucian revival movement and the efforts by the state to strengthen its legitimacy are interdependent processes. While the Confucian revival movement provides legitimization for national and local authorities, the latter in turn mobilize resources which further enhance the former. Let us assume that Li and Shi are right in their analysis. Then we need to return to the critique of the Confucian revival and its desirability in order to be able to assess the sustainability of the circle of interdependency between the revival of Confucianism and the legitimization of the authorities.

The critique centres on at least three aspects. The first of these is the compatibility of Confucianism with modernization. The second is the relation between Confucianism and the ideal of unity. And the third relates to the complicated issue of the religiousness of Confucianism.

Since the 1980s, some Mainland scholars have claimed that sinicized Marxism is similar to the Confucianism of the Mencius–Lu–Wang lineage. Both Marxism and Confucianism stressed self-cultivation and collectivism. Other uniting elements are the ideal of 'people as the basis' (*minben*), the Great Community as the

[287] Guo 2004, 89.

ultimate goal, and a dislike of individual benefit.[288] At the same time, Confucianism has been seen as a threat to Marxism.

Fang Keli, who led the research project on New Confucianism launched in 1986, has taken a positive attitude towards many Confucian 'traditional virtues', such as respect for the aged, harmony and solidarity. Such a stance has laid a positive foundation for New Confucianism in China, but only within strict parameters. Fang has emphasized that Confucianism can only add to the 'vocabulary' of the future civilization, not its 'grammar'.[289]

Fang Keli has stated that because New Confucianism is mainly a philosophy of life, one could not reach a true understanding of the thought without a sympathetic attitude towards one's own history and culture. This statement was clearly directed against the anti-Marxist New Confucians in Taiwan and elsewhere outside Mainland China. Fang has also written that in order to nullify the schemes to replace Marxism with Confucianism, one needs to study the New Confucian movement in depth. In Fang's analysis, New Confucianism is an episode in China's history which demonstrates an effort to liberate Chinese capitalism from feudalism.[290] In effect, Fang rules that New Confucianism is outdated in regard to China's socialist modernization.

Senior editors in the *People's Daily*, Ling Zhijun (凌志军) and Ma Licheng (马立诚), explore the discussion on the societal role of Confucianism in their book entitled *Huhan* (呼喊), "Voices", published in 1999. Ling and Ma give most space to the critical views. They quote several scholars in support of their argument: the New Confucians are wrong in trying to negate the May 4th Movement as an 'anti-traditionalist' movement. The New Confucians emphasize the necessity for Inner Sageliness (*neisheng*) as the basis for Outer Kingliness (*waiwang*), but in reality, Outer Kingliness today is a matter of established societal, economic and legal systems and practices.[291]

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[288] Makeham 2008, 237–238.

[289] Ibid., 248, 250–251.

[290] Bresciani 2001, 426–427.

[291] Ling & Ma 2008, 272–273. Ling & Ma aim their criticism especially at a book by Lin Yusheng, *The Crisis of China's Consciousness: radical antitraditionalism in the May Fourth era* (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison 1979). Li Zehou (1994, 152) also saw reason to criticize the same book.

Li Ling (李零), Professor of Chinese Literature at Peking University, discusses the relevance of Confucius in the modern world in his book *Sangjiagou* (丧家狗, "Stray Dog", revised edition 2007). The title of the book refers to Li's desire to present Confucius as a failed sage—a homeless, disdained roamer who did not succeed in getting any ruler to follow his advice—and not the kind of exalted figure popularized in canonized Confucianism. Li reaches a cynical conclusion. Confucius's utopia was the revitalization of the political system in the early Western Zhou era. This utopia was impossible to attain even in Confucius's own time. Furthermore, he targeted his message at the scholar-officials, his peers. Confucius had nothing to offer to the common people even originally, and even less after the reforms of Wang Mang (王莽), the founder of the short-lived New Dynasty (9–23), which restricted the scope for non-Confucian religious rites and practices. It was Westerners who recognized in Confucius the Philosopher King they had been looking for. They put Confucianism on a pedestal as one of the great world religions.[292]

For centuries, Confucianism was an ideology of scholars who adopted meddling with politics as their mission—a trait which Li Ling calls harmful. Echoing Yu Dan (于丹, b. 1965, f.), the author of a best-selling, trivialized popularization of the thought of Confucius, *Confucius from the Heart* (original *Lunyu xinde*, 论语心得, 2007),[293] Li Ling quotes Confucius who said: "If you are not in government office, do not engage in government."[294] Li Ling translates that into modern parlance as: "Mind your own bloody business." Li Ling argues that Neo-Confucian 'innate knowledge' can be used to guide politics as little as democracy can be used to guide scientific research. This is how politics and science differ, says Li and laments that few contemporary Confucians seem to realize that. Confucius cannot save China, nor can he save the world. We must do that ourselves, concludes Li Ling.[295]

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[292] Li Ling 2007, 374–390.

[293] I have briefly presented some criticism targeted at Yu Dan's book in China in *Kiina sanoin ja kuvin* 4/2009–1/2010 (243), 16–19 ("Yksinkertaisen elämän kaipuu – mitä Mestari Kong sanoisi tänään").

[294] *Analects* VIII.14.

[295] Li Ling 2007, 374–390.

As mentioned in Chapter I, there are those who claim that Confucianism stands for 'pluralist unity' and others who extol the virtues of decentralization. Neither of these viewpoints is in accordance with the current, communist orthodoxy. Referring especially to the ideas presented by Ge Jianxiong and Yan Jiaqi (see Chapter I), Victoria Tin-bor Hui concludes pessimistically: "Recent developments suggest that [China remains stuck on the age-old model of Legalism with a Confucian façade], and it is difficult to expect younger generations, who have grown up with intensified 'patriotic education', to steer China away from the Legalist path."[296]

The traditional Marxist view equates unity with progress. For example, Li Zehou maintains that Confucian thought reflected the ideals of a clan society at a time when history was, inevitably, moving towards a system of regional states. Li Zehou describes how the clan states were faltering, rulers of the new regional states were getting richer following the military conquests, and the foundations of the communal communities were crumbling. The old order, where the rulers of the clan states had been vassals of a Son of Heaven, was turning into a battle for supremacy. The importance of Confucius stemmed from the fact that he transmitted the code of propriety (*li*) of the old order to his followers. The code of propriety that Confucius wished to revitalize echoed the original norms of the primitive communities, even though it had already been transformed into rituals serving the interests of the ruling class. For instance, filial piety and respect for the elderly stems from a time when decisions were made 'democratically' by a council of elders. The code of propriety of the old order could not compete with the new teachings. Legalism in particular answered the needs of the new order.[297]

According to Li Zehou, Confucius stood in the ranks of the conservative and backward forces of his time. Confucius promoted the code of propriety that had been in place to protect the personal power of the clan leaders, and stood against the rule based on institutions and law. He favoured the old, communal, economic system and opposed the desire of the rulers to strive for riches. All this shows how Confucius's teachings reflected the declining destinies of

[296] Hui 2008, 63, 65.

[297] Li Zehou 2008, 11–16.

the clan leaders, who were being surpassed by the wealthy, concludes Li Zehou.[298]

From the perspective of historical determinism, Li Zehou's analysis makes sense. Feudalism and capitalism had to be born so that communism, in turn, could enter the stage. The 'primitive unity' of the Zhou rule by the Son of Heaven had to turn into a division of the Warring States so that it, in turn, could turn into the unity of the Qin, glorified by Mao Zedong. Reading differently, we may see that Li Zehou describes the value system of the communal societies as a kind of proto-communism. Thus the teachings of Confucius, reflecting—albeit inadequately—this value system, must be seen as progressive from an ideological point of view. We may perhaps also interpret Li's analysis as a positive appraisal of the 'primitive unity', a *fengjian* system with nominal unity.

However, Li Zehou does not explicitly draw the conclusion that Confucianism actually had progressive elements, although such an implication may be hidden between the lines. This is the problem with those bright thinkers who wish to get their writings published in communist China: it is often next to impossible to decipher their real meaning. On the other hand, these kinds of interpretational problems may simply attest to the flaws in the internal logic of communist historiography.

It is conceivable that a certain religiousness of Confucianism might have its uses. The Communist Party does not want the Chinese population to turn to questionable cults for spiritual inspiration, and any religion may be seen as a rival for loyalty. Therefore, if Confucianism as a non-religion may somehow fulfil the spiritual needs of the people, and even turn people away from religions, it is to be welcomed.[299] On the other hand, Confucianism as a 'state-religion' is obviously not desirable.

Professor Liu Dongchao (刘东超) from Beijing Business and Technology University questions whether contemporary China needs Confucianism either as a school of thought or as an ideology.

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[298] Ibid.

[299] We may recall how Han Yu fiercely attacked religions in his essay "Yuan Dao", defending Confucianism. "Let us make proper citizens of their priests and monks, let us burn their books, let us turn their temples into dwellings", he wrote of the followers of Taoism and Buddhism in (ca.) 805. (Translated into Finnish in Kallio 2007, 112–119.)

Liu claims that all nation states have both a leading ideology and several schools of thought; while the former enhances stability and unity, the latter foster intellectual diversity and systemic harmony. Naturally, if the former is too strong, it may suppress the latter, and if the latter gain the upper hand, societal stability and development may be jeopardized. According to Liu, China aims to maintain a balance between the two under the principle of "one pillar with many supporters" (*yi zhu duo fu*, 一主多辅). The 'one pillar' ideology is Marxism "with its Chinese fruits", Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Thought of Three Represents and Scientific Development Worldview. The 'many supporters' include Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Islam as well as Liberalism, New Leftism and New Confucianism.[300]

Liu Dongchao opines that due to the moral impoverishment in contemporary China, people who truly acted upon Confucian values would be welcome. Therefore, Confucianism serves a purpose as one of the 'supporters'. However, Liu does not think that Confucianism could or should rise to the status of a religion. It could not, because Confucian values are too vague, and because it lacks divine and mystical elements which could appeal to modern people. It should not become a religion, particularly not the national religion, because the time is not ripe for replacing China's current 'pillar' ideology.[301]

Somewhat unexpectedly in this context, Liu cites the Taiwan issue as the biggest stumbling block standing in the way of China's modernization. According to him, the Taiwan issue is especially difficult to solve because of foreign interference and China's troublesome relations with the United States and Japan. Adding the domestic challenges, caused by the ongoing transition from a traditional society to a modern one, to the international situation makes it too risky for China to make any adjustments to its current ideological basis, Liu argues.[302]

Liu concludes that in the future, China's 'pillar' ideology will eventually absorb both modern and ancient as well as Chinese and Western elements. Confucian values, such as the emphasis on ethical government and harmonious society, will thus have a role to play, but

[300] Liu Dongchao 2008, 79–81. The Thought of Three Represents is the ideological grand achievement of Jiang Zemin. Interestingly, Liu fails to mention Mao Zedong Thought.

[301] Ibid. 82–85.

[302] Ibid. 83.

China does not need Confucianism to become the dominant ideology. Liu criticizes the proponents of a Confucian religion (he especially mentions Kang Xiaoguang) for being unrealistic and unhistorical. Finally, Liu dismisses their Confucianism as a mere icon, propped up by nothing more than abstract slogans.[303]

Fang Keli has been especially hostile towards the interpretation of Confucianism promoted by Jiang Qing. Fang Keli sees Jiang Qing as working for the overseas New Confucians who aim at 'renurturing' Confucianism at its place of origin.[304] Jiang's ideas have attracted major international publicity, particularly due to a recent book by Daniel A. Bell (2008), Professor of Political Philosophy at Tsinghua University.

Although Fang Keli links Jiang Qing with the overseas New Confucians, Jiang Qing himself is most critical of the 'idealist' Confucianism of the Mou Zongsan lineage. Jiang praises Wang Yangming (who promoted 'innate knowledge') highly as the person who elevated Confucianism to its full glory during the Ming dynasty. In contrast, Jiang classifies Zhu Xi's Confucianism as a mere branch. However, Jiang accuses the (overseas) contemporary New Confucians of over-emphasizing introspection and the individual at the expense of practical orientation and society. Therefore, the contemporary New Confucians have bifurcated from the main tradition into another branch.[305]

Jiang Qing's views on Confucianism are dogmatic, if not fundamentalist. He depicts Confucianism not as one among many schools of thought during the Warring States period, but as the one and only school embodying China's cultural heritage. According to Jiang, the other schools, such as Taoism, Mohism and Legalism, were the creations of their founders. In contrast, Confucius did not create anything but transmitted the age-old traditions of the ancient sage kings. Therefore, Confucianism alone can be said to be the legitimate representative of the Chinese culture.[306] Among others, Qin Hui has

[303] Ibid. 84–86.

[304] Makeham 2008, 78.

[305] Jiang Qing 2009, 52–53.

[306] Ibid., 19–20.

criticized this view of differentiating between Confucius and the other heads of schools.[307]

The most controversial of Jiang's theses were originally published overseas and in Taiwan, accessible to the scholarly community on the Mainland but not to the general public. In those articles which have not been published in China, Jiang calls for replacing Marxism-Leninism with Confucianism.

Jiang Qing accuses Marxism-Leninism of being a 'foreign culture' which has stolen the position of a 'national doctrine' (*guojiao*) under the protection of the Communist Party. Yet Marxism-Leninism has proved to be "incapable of solving China's problems ... [and] has delayed the course of modernization." As a result, there is a 'crisis of belief' in China, and Confucianism should therefore be allowed to "replace Marxism-Leninism and revive its orthodox historical position... ."[308] In effect, "Confucianism naturally should replace Marxism and Leninism as 'the national religion' and recover its position in history."[309] It needs to be pointed out that there is no difference between a 'national doctrine' and a 'national religion' in the Chinese language; both are called *guojiao*. Jiang believes that the Confucian religion actually existed in remote antiquity even before the time of Confucius.[310]

Jiang Qing has also called for reforming the Communist Party of China into a Confucian Party of China, and has sketched a tri-cameral national legislature whereby the uppermost house would consist of Confucian scholars, versed in the ancient classics. Jiang claims that the legitimacy of that house comes from "sacred sources in Heaven". As such, it would act as a counterbalance to the democratic power of the people, which is needed because the uneducated masses do not always know what is best for the country.[311]

In an apparent attempt to curb the more extreme ideas by Jiang Qing, a collection of essays discussing his thought was published in Mainland China in 2008. The book carries the subtitle "Dialogue with Jiang Qing" and, interestingly, also Jiang Qing's replies to each of the

[307] Qin Hui 2009.

[308] Translated and quoted in Makeham 2008, 262.

[309] Translated and quoted in Song Xianlin 2003, 94.

[310] Wang Zhicheng 2009.

[311] Bell 2008, 180–181, 186, 190–191.

essays are included in the book. The editor of the book, Professor Fan Ruiping (范瑞平) from the City University of Hong Kong, calls Jiang Qing a "big-shot Confucian" in his "Introduction" and says that Jiang's fame is one reason why it is necessary to engage in dialogue with him.[312] Nevertheless, the general tone of the book is mostly critical towards Jiang's thinking.

China Daily published a commentary in 2006 entitled "Confucianism will never be a religion". According to the article, Confucianism has never been a religion and, in any case, religion as a state power should never be allowed in China. The article claims that the goal of Jiang Qing's "fallacy" is to "restore the feudal order". Furthermore, to call Jiang's theory 'fundamentalist Confucianism' is mistaken and "disgraces the name of Confucius".[313]

Interestingly, it seems that there have been no attempts to limit the freedom of Jiang Qing by the authorities. Jiang is operating a Confucian 'retreat centre' near Guiyang where he meets his visitors dressed in traditional *hanfu* clothing and discusses classical texts with them. Perhaps Jiang is simply deemed harmless in his extravagant extremism. Certainly, the fundamentalist character of his thought does not make it easy to make his ideas the starting point for meaningful discussion. Even Daniel A. Bell is cautious and quotes Qin Hui in his comments: "[S]etting up Confucianism as the national doctrine seems to imply treating opposition to Confucianism as heresy. ... I am very much against it."[314]

Let us return once more to Li Zehou. In a book article from 1994, Li questions the need for any *guojiao*. Li wrote that he believed there was a need to break the prevailing (and traditional Confucian) oneness of politics and ideology (*zheng jiao heyi*, 政教合一) in order to overcome China's moral impoverishment and spiritual crisis. Li Zehou claimed that the enthusiasm with which the Chinese intelligentsia in 1919, as well as in 1989, called for National Salvation, patriotism, science or

[312] Fan Ruiping 2008, 2. The book contains one essay (in Chinese) by Daniel A. Bell which is also included (in English) in Appendix 2 of Bell's aforementioned book. In his essay, Bell gently questions the rationale behind the tri-cameral national legislature envisioned by Jiang.

[313] "Confucianism will never be a religion", by Huang Qing, in *China Daily*, 6 January 2006, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-01/06/content_509753.htm. Accessed 8 Feb 2010.

[314] Bell 2008, 188–189.

democracy reflects a quasi-religious ferment which stems from the unrealistic tendency to see politics as ethics and ethics as politics.[315]

In that same article, Li Zehou commented on the discussion on the role of Confucianism in tackling the aforementioned challenges and stated that while he did not agree with those who fully negated Confucian values, nor did he believe that metaphysical New Confucianism could promote the development of democratization in China. Instead, the Chinese should rely on the tradition of rationality and pragmatism (or 'rational reason') and separate morality from politics.[316] Here Li demonstrates a wholly materialistic, Marxist worldview. Translated into modern language, it would imply that economic development must not be hindered by anything. This indeed seems to be the prevailing ideology in today's China; and not only there but in many other parts of the world as well.

Finally, a word about the potential foreign policy relevance of Traditional Learning. It has been suggested that a Chinese, possibly Confucian, international relations theory will inevitably emerge as a consequence of China's growing role on the world stage on the one hand and the rise of traditional values in China on the other. It is easy to imagine that both the concept of harmony and the Confucian utopia, the Great Community (*Datong*), which ideally refers to the whole world, should occupy a central position in the theory.[317] Hypothetically, nations truly influenced by such a theory would essentially manifest peaceful foreign policy behaviour.

In the official rhetoric, China's growing strength is indeed dubbed a "peaceful rise" and China's ambitions are depicted as a "harmonious world".[318] However, China will hardly be content with being a mere

[315] Li Zehou 1994, 155. After taking up residence in the United States, Li has said that while Confucianism is not a real religion, the Chinese Communist Party is a "church", clothed in political organization ("Modernization and the Confucian World", address at the Colorado College's 125th Anniversary Symposium on Cultures in the 21st Century; Conflicts and Convergences, delivered on 5 Feb 1999, at http://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/Anniversary/Transcripts/LiTXT.htm, accessed 29 Oct 2010).

[316] Li Zehou 1994, 152, 155, 158.

[317] See e.g. Bell 2008, 19–37; and Cheung 2008.

[318] The phrase "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*, 和平崛起) was coined by Zheng Bijian (郑必坚) in 2003, then Vice-President of the Central Party School. Note that both the words 'peace' and 'harmony' contain the character *he*.

paper tiger, let alone a Confucian paper kitten, and its real political goals are never entirely devoid of rhetoric. Therefore, the values of Traditional Learning are likely to be reflected in China's foreign policy behaviour as well, and we may expect to continue hearing calls for a balanced and fair world order and even see some related actions on the part of China in the near future. It may be a sign of the nation's ambitions that the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party has named the promotion of cultural development and the raising of China's cultural soft power as one of the priorities in the 12th Five-Year Plan for 2011–2015.[319]

The projections of China's soft power are being keenly monitored by other powers, albeit often with the expectation that soft power is going to give way to hard power when China has the potential to do so. It is probably not overly cynical to assume that China will endeavour to explain its own projections of power outside its borders as being conducive to world harmony and any attempts to interfere with its internal affairs as just the opposite. Nevertheless, this is all guesswork. Further research and time are needed in order to assess the impact of Traditional Learning on China's foreign policy rhetoric and behaviour. By providing the reader with the background necessary for understanding the discussion related to the role of tradition in its Chinese context, this study hopefully makes it easier even for China-watchers not well-versed in Sinology to make intelligent assumptions on the basis of the signals being emitted from this intriguing part of the world.

Concluding conclusions

The Chinese Communist Party is attempting to anchor its legitimacy in history and simultaneously patch the chinks in the Party's rusting spiritual-ideological armour with values adopted from traditional schools of thought. "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" seems to be gradually turning into "Chinese tradition with socialist characteristics". The revival of Confucianism, a central component

[319] "Shouquan fabu: Zhong-Gong Zhongyang guanyu zhiding guomin jingji he shehui fazhan dishi'er ge wu nian guihua de jianyi", *Xinhuawang*, 27 Oct 2010, at http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2010-10/27/c_12708501.htm. Accessed 29 Oct 2010.

in the artificial concoction called Traditional Learning, provides legitimization for the Party through such values as harmony and loyalty to the state, and thus the Party in turn mobilizes resources which enhance the revitalization of Confucianism.

The Party will not allow any outsiders to participate in the revamping of its ideological doctrine, and it is certain that unity will remain the principal dogma. It is also likely that at least in the short term the "socialist characteristics" will remain strong, and the outcome will simply be touched-up communism.

However, in the increasingly plural society in China today, the Party is not able to prevent the common people from engaging in a discussion on the role and nature of tradition on their own, although it will make every effort to keep the discussion within safe parameters. Even that will be difficult, as shown by the examples presented in this paper, and other bold persuasions by 'public intellectuals' and opinion leaders.

While there are ongoing processes which foster the revitalization of Confucianism, or at least some external manifestations of it, in view of the political realities in the People's Republic of China, it seems clear that there will be no room for Confucianism as the 'grammar' of Chinese society in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, New Confucianism faces difficulties in becoming just part of the 'vocabulary', too.

In terms of the latter, the New Confucians largely have themselves to blame. Particularly on account of Mou Zongsan, who presented Confucianism as 'moral metaphysics', Confucianism has been sent into tangential orbit and has become distanced from society. Another problem is the obsession with *daotong*, the true genealogy. As Umberto Bresciani notes, it has been said that the New Confucians' faith in *daotong* "seals them off from any creative development and from a true involvement in the reality of social political developments."[320] According to Li Zehou, "this sealed-off attitude is completely at odds with the open-minded attitude of democracy."[321]

I would argue that in order to survive, the New Confucian movement has to break away from dead ends. One possibility would be to follow the 'learning concerned with life' approach outlined by Zheng Jiadong. According to him, *Rujia* has the spirit of practice and

[320] Bresciani 2001, 481–482.

[321] Quoted and translated in Bresciani 2001, 482.

social concern. Another avenue might be something like the 'critical Confucianism' sketched by Lin Anwu. He calls for adjusting *neisheng* to fit *waiwang*, and maintains that "New" Confucianism should be rooted in deal-based, open civil society. Both Zheng's and Lin's ideas were briefly introduced in Chapter III.

Furthermore, the New Confucian movement has to cast off the shadow of Marxism. On the one hand, it doesn't help the New Confucians if they are accused of subversion. "What hinders [an alliance between the Party-state and Confucianism] is not Party-state opposition to Confucianism but the Confucians' unwavering opposition to Marxism", claims Guo Yingjie.[322] On the other hand, introducing Marxism-Leninism-Maoism into Confucianism (as Fang Keli and others have been attempting to do) would undoubtedly turn it into something unrecognizable: Party dogmas and personal enlightenment don't mix. Therefore, the new generation of New Confucians will have to be free from both the urge to support Marxism and the need to totally negate it.

In all fairness, it has to be said that democracy is arguably as foreign to Confucianism as communism. If we take individual liberty and equality to be the basis of democracy, then values such as filiality or the emphasis on everyone keeping to one's role—either as a ruler, a minister, a father or a son—would have to be removed from Confucianism in order to make it compatible with democracy.[323]

On the other hand, Li Chenyang (李晨阳) from Central Washington University believes that the original Confucianism includes elements that could complement democracy. Referring to the overemphasis on liberty in America in comparison to equality and particularly to fraternity, he writes: "For instance, given that democracy emphasizes individual liberty, the Confucian emphasis on the family would make a better society."[324]

The new generation will undoubtedly also benefit from the newly started search for the roots and the 'true' nature of Confucianism. And although no one truth will in all probability ever be found, a return to the roots is valuable also from a wider perspective. If Traditional Learning (*Guoxue*) is to become the ideological foundation of China's Soft

[322] Guo 2004, 90.

[323] See Li 1999, 188–189.

[324] Li 1999, 187–188.

Power, not to mention a national doctrine (*guojiao*), it needs to be based on a non-falsified understanding of history in order to remain healthy.

One has to acknowledge that China was a unified, 'Chinese-ruled' state for only two-fifths of the imperial era. Even this refers only to 'China Proper', the historical core region of the Han-Chinese nationality. The unity of 'greater China' is a relatively modern phenomenon which has been achieved mainly through coercion. China's past as a 'culturalist' union which has "always" encompassed the minority areas of the present-day People's Republic is a historiographic fabrication.

Culturalism as a historiographic fabrication is but another example of giving political necessities a Confucian façade. After all, culturalism may be seen as inherently Confucian. A culturalistic China was a permanent 'value regime' that existed as an idealistic superstructure over the multiplicity of states during periods of division. The 'values' were those of the ancient sage kings whose teaching Confucius then 'transmitted' to posterity. Culturalism as such may, nevertheless, be a positive force. It is perhaps not entirely out of the question that culturalism could provide a potential foundation for the establishment of a new, 'social contract-based' unity in China.

Similarly, the ancient, arguably Confucian ideal of regional rule (*fengjian*) could contribute to solving those present challenges which are due to the supremacy of the myth of unity. When Lin Anwu states that 'cultural China' should take precedence over 'political China' and 'economic China', it is closely related to the ideas of such proponents of regionalism and pluralism as Ge Jianxiong and Xiao Jiansheng, introduced in Chapter I.

So it might transpire that the root-searching resulting in new insights into history and the origins of Confucianism may help in finding the right building blocks for a new moral and cultural basis for Chinese society, irrespective of what the Party is doing. If the role of the Party were to diminish, Traditional Learning or Confucianism might even take the place of the communist ideology. At least that seems to be what some dissidents are hoping for. But then the question arises, does China need an ideology?

Today, China has a national ideology in the form of the ideology of the Communist Party. We may call this China's *guojiao*, which translates either as 'national doctrine' or 'national religion'; in fact, it is China's 'political religion'. It can be argued that whatever China's

guojiao consists of in the future, it is in the nature of political religion that it will be inherently coercive and totalitarian. Thus, if we are to believe in the inherently pluralist nature of 'true' Confucianism, it will not be good for either China or Confucianism to replace Chinese communism with Confucianism.

Instead, if we are to believe in the overall desirability of pluralism, voluntarism and individualism, China would benefit from making its national ideology more like a 'civil religion', and the promoters of Confucianism would benefit from presenting Confucianism as something different from a *guojiao*.

History has demonstrated that confining Confucianism to the straitjacket of doctrine would make it just another tool for Saving the Nation. Having statues of Confucius erected here and there does not make China Confucian.

Fortunately, new conceptions of original Confucianism are emerging, suggesting that Confucius may become presented increasingly as a herald of enlightenment. As noted at the end of Chapter III, such interpretations have come even from a very influential, pro-establishment, academic institution. If such a Confucius were allowed to take up the position of the 'patron saint' of Traditional Learning, Confucianism would not only be freed from dogma and revived as a living thought-process again, the vitality of the debate related to tradition and history would also be given a major boost.

It is a promising sign that the debate related to tradition and history has so far been rather open. Hopefully, the debate will continue in a true public-spirited manner and will not turn into a nasty game of king of the hill.

In 1525, the prefect of Yuezhou had a library built and said to Wang Yangming: "When the scriptures have been put in order, the commoners will awaken, and when they awaken, they will overcome their evil or wrong devices." The prefect then asked Wang to compose an inscription for the library. Wang wrote: "Who arrogantly talks only of himself and competes in splitting hairs and, hiding his shallowness and cunningness, tries to become the king of the hill at the expense of others, and who still claims to be a follower of the scriptures, becomes guilty of raping the scriptures! ... Little wonder nobody understands what it means to revere the scriptures anymore."[325]

[325] From "Inscription at Pavilion for Revering the Scriptures", by Wang Yangming. Translated into Finnish in Kallio 2008, 165–170.

Glossary of Chinese terms

ben (本), root, basis
bentu (本土), Chinese (countrymen), 'China Proper'
bo'ai (博爱), fraternal love, universal love
buzu jiheti (部族集合体), tribal collective
da Hanzu zhuyi (大汉族主义), Han chauvinism
Da yitong (大一统), the Grand Unity
dangdai Xin Rujia (当代新儒家), contemporary Neo-Confucianism, Contemporary New Confucianism
daotong (道统), lineage of the (Confucian) Way, true cultural tradition
Datong (大同), Great Community, Universal Commonwealth
de (德), virtue
ding (鼎), ceremonial tripod
Fajia (法家), Legalism, School of Law
fengjian (封建), divided enoffment, regional rule
gongfu (功夫), correct method
gonggong zhishifenzi (公共知识分子), public intellectual
guojiao (国教), national doctrine, national religion
Guoxue (国学), Traditional Learning, National Learning
guwen (古文), ancient texts, ancient style
hanbenwei (汉本位), Hanishness
hanfu (汉服), traditional Han clothing
he (和), harmony
heping jueqi (和平崛起), peaceful rise
hexie (和谐), harmony
Hou Xin Rujia (后新儒家), Post-New Confucianism
Huaxia (华夏), population of 'China Proper' (in the pre-imperial era)
Huaxia wenhua niudai gongcheng (华夏文化纽带工程), *Huaxia* Cultural Links Project
jian'ai (兼爱), reciprocal love, universal love
jing shi zhi yong (经世致用), ancient learning applied to modern society, statecraft
jingxue (经学), exegetical studies
jinwen (今文), new texts
jiu guo (救国), Saving the Nation, National Salvation
kaozheng (考证), empirical, evidential (research, learning)
kedi (客帝), foreign emperors
li (理), rational principle
li (礼), propriety, rites

liang zhi (良知), innate knowledge
lijiao (礼教), religion of rites
min (民), people, commoners
minben (民本), people as the basis
ming (命), destiny
minzhu (民主), people as the masters, democracy
neisheng (内圣), Inner Sageliness
qi (气), energy, ether, spirit
qimeng (启蒙), enlightenment
qin (亲), to love, kinsman
qing (情), feeling, sympathy
ren (仁), fraternity, humaneness
ren (忎), kinship, fraternity
Ru (儒), Confucian (scholar)
Rujia (儒家), Confucianism
Rujiao (儒教), Confucian religion
Ruxue (儒学), Confucian learning
san gang (三纲), Three Cardinal Leads, Three Bonds
suzhi (素质), quality
ti (体), body, essence
Tian ren heyi (天人合一), harmony between man and nature
Tianxia (天下), All-Under-Heaven
Tianxia wei gong (天下为公), All-Under-Heaven is one community
waiwang (外王), Outer Kingliness
Wang Dao (王道), Kingly Way
wei (伪), artifice
wu chang (五常), Five Constants
xiandai Xin Ruxue (现代新儒学), modern New Confucian learning, Contemporary New Confucianism
xiandai/dangdai Xin Ruxue/Rujia (现代/当代新儒学/儒家), Contemporary New Confucianism
xiao (孝), filiality
Xiaokang (小康), Modest Welfare, moderately prosperous society
xin (心), mind, heart, heart-mind
Xin Lixue (新理学), New (rationalistic) Neo-Confucianism
Xin Ruxue (新儒学), Neo-Confucianism
xing'ershang (形而上), above form, metaphysics
xing'erxia (形而下), observable world
xuetong (学统), system of knowledge, true academic tradition

yi (义), justice
Yi (夷), barbarians
yi zhu duo fu (一主多辅), one pillar with many supporters
yizu (异族), foreign race, non-Chinese
yong (用), practical usefulness
zheng jiao heyi (政教合一), oneness of politics and ideology
zhengtong (政统), true political tradition
zhengtong (正统), proper succession, legitimacy, orthodoxy
Zhongguo wenhua shuyuan (中国文化书院), Chinese Cultural College
Zhonghua (中华), China, Chinese
Zhonghua minzu (中华民族), Chinese nation
Zhonghua wenhua biaozhi cheng, (中华文化标志城), *Zhonghua* Culture Symbolic City
Zhongxia (中夏), (population of) 'China Proper' (in the pre-imperial era)
zhuzi (诸子), the Masters of all the traditional schools of thought

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Tradition in Chinese politics

The Party-state's reinvention of the past and the critical response from public intellectuals

Jyrki Kallio

Tradition and history have become the Chinese Communist Party's tools of choice for bolstering its legitimacy. The Party is attempting to patch the chinks in its rusting spiritual-ideological armour with a concoction of hand-picked values adopted from traditional schools of thought, especially Confucianism. "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" seems to be gradually turning into "Chinese tradition with socialist characteristics". Simultaneously, the Party keeps reinventing the past in ways that make its rule of a unified, multi-ethnic Chinese nation seem like the natural continuation of a 5,000-year-long history.

In response, a vigorous discussion has arisen, ongoing in different public fora and engaged in by both the proponents and opponents of the Party line. This discussion plays an important role in the wider Chinese political debate, where history has traditionally been the most important source of argumentation.

This study delineates the elements in the discussion related to tradition and history, and provides the reader with the background necessary for understanding the arguments in their Chinese context. At the same time, the analysis calls into question the feasibility of the Party's efforts to merge Confucian values with the dogma of unity.

ISBN 978-951-769-294-6
ISSN 1458-994X

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