

The Construction of Chinese Identities

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The structure of “belonging”: The individual, society and the state

What do priests and market managers have in common? They do not only wish to gain greater knowledge about “God” or “markets” respectively—they wish to transform the identities of believers, or customers, as the case may be. In market economics the aim is not just to adapt to customers’ wishes, but to create customers to suit products. What separates market managers and priests? In most religions the individual seems to have a residual personal identity that we may call soul. To marketing managers the existence of a soul does not seem very relevant as long as it does not interfere with their tasks. Modern style “social engineering” is a secularised form with advanced techniques for altering behaviour—part of what we call socialisation, a process that is as old as human society itself. Behaviour is not only changed by exerting direct pressure on the individual—the introduction of (Western style) property laws on a global scale has deep effects on behavioural pattern, and so does ‘regime change’, whether caused endogenously or exogenously. In this paper I will mainly discuss the relation of individuals towards focal points of identity in China since 1949. Although the shift away from the importance of the ‘unit’ (danwei 单位) especially since the early nineties is probably the most important among such changes, I will approach the issue of identity from a wider perspective, taking in aspects of general changes in society as well as psychological reactions by individuals.

The structure of belonging of the individual is subject to the never ending process of socialisation, and thus subject to the creative interference by individuals and society at large. Groups and sub-groups provide focal points of identity; as groups are constituted and reconstituted, their membership also changes. Some focal points of identity coexist peacefully, while others may conflict violently. Identity is thus part of a reiterative process of social integration and alienation. Nations and states are merely particular forms of social organisations; depending on their historical genesis, and the general level of social, economic and political development at which state formation occurs, the relationship with other focal points of identity is likely to vary. The “age of globalisation” is just another stage in this highly dynamic process—and yet differing qualitatively, since focal points of identity related to globalisation processes seem unrelated to traditional boundaries of social groups, transcending territorial, religious and other boundaries. Before China’s transition to a (socialist) market economy, decisions on personnel in enterprises were handled by the Chinese Communist Party—these days they are increasingly handled by specific enterprise administration sections.¹

Man is what he buys, or can afford to buy. Freedom of choice is increasingly

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proportionate to purchasing power. Markets thus compete with politics to gain space for action free from political constraints in a process that harks back to developments in pre-modern China.² The creation of modern style national and ethnic belonging was inextricably linked to the arrival of the European nation state-but its social and political genesis in China is much more complex than some genealogies of ideas concerning the development of Western concepts of civil society tend to suggest.³

Large scale social engineering is not necessarily a feature of a modern age. In fourteenth century China, the Mongols engaged in a thorough restructuring of Chinese society to fit their concepts of a multi-layered, hierarchically ordered society based on ethnic discrimination. More recently,

“The Manchus, warlords, foreign imperialists, Nationalists and Communists (under Maoist and post-Mao regimes) tried to impose quite different conceptions of citizenship upon the populations living under their control” (Goldman and Perry forthcoming).⁴

Common to these efforts is the assumption that the state (government) has the moral authority to interfere in, and restructure the life-world of micro-society immediately relevant to the individual. In other words, little attention was paid to the possibility of society creating its own space free from state intervention. However, globalisation moves towards the implementation of internationally applicable rules that supersede local particularism, while promising the maintenance of a free civil space based on the separation of state and society.

Socialisation, and the “disciplining” of the individual and labour do not follow universal patterns, but remain deeply under the influence of the local and regional heritage. It is thus not surprising that societies and governments respond differently to the tasks of modernisation and globalisation. As a result, the structure of belonging is not merely the outcome of education and ideological persuasion, or an automatic consequence of the transition to a variant of “market economy,”⁵ but embedded in the process of dynamic change called history, including that of culture. Although much has been written on such transitional processes, these issues remain undertheorised (Tang and Parish 2000, 312).

The forced ascription of status (“peasant,” “worker,” “landlord”) in China since 1949 provided individuals with a status identity usually referred to as shenfen 身分 (personal position), chushen 出身 (upbringing), or beijing 背景 (background). In this terminology status and individual identity seem to merge.

The material structure of society codetermines social identity. In turn the vast array of individual conceptualisations of the social environment itself impacts on the functioning of that very society. In order to explore the structure of identity and belonging we likewise need to explore the images of the self circulating within society. Such images are deeply rooted; there is a strong conviction (and not only in China) that one can recognise a “peasant” by the look of his eyes (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 85).

There have been attempts to construct an ideal type model of Chinese society as if China was a living organism, a system, a “Chinese world” that followed its own particular rules, complex, yet basically endowed with its own, “Chinese” identity. Attempts to differentiate between national identities became particularly fashionable in

nineteenth century Europe engaged in the construction of modern-style nation states, but such endeavours were soon adopted elsewhere, such as in China and Japan. It found its ultimate expression in attempts to construct an ideal type of national identity, the “national character,”⁶ attempts that are in my view unable to answer the fundamental questions about belonging. Asking questions about the structure of belonging and the construction of identities, we wish to explore patterns of behaviour that may be observed directly without probing the psychological background.

Theoretical models of the structure of society have become highly internationalised—their conceptualisations are unlikely to coincide with self-images of society existing within different civilisations. In this study, literary sources are used to provide a starting point for gathering such images of the self in Chinese society.

Belonging According to Reportage Literature

In order to collect material on relevant types of social discourse currently in use in China I decided to focus on conceptualisation of identity in works of literature, including the semi-literary genre of “social reportage” (baogao wenxue 报告文学).⁷

Chinese “belletristic” (or “pure”) literature usually strives for verisimilitude, and this applies even more so to the genre of “reportage literature” (baogao wenxue), which presents investigative reporting in a fictional dress. A prominent theme of this genre is the search for redress of injustice by individuals in the context of the social and political institutions to which they ‘belong’. Excellent examples of reportage literature that provide deep insights in major issues besetting Chinese society in transition are *Daguo guamin* (Great Country, insignificant people) by Lu Yuegang (1998) or *Nongmin de huhuan* (Outcry of the Peasants) by Yang Hao (2000). I benefited in particular from reading *Zhengjie* (Politicians), a novel written by Long Yizhi (1999), a deputy party secretary of a Provincial party government, which provides (fictional) insights into the daily life of (party) politicians rarely available through other sources. The novel reads in parts like an allegory of Zhao Ziyang, especially in its discussion of how major unrest among a university’s students was handled (Long Yizhi 1999, 344). It also stages a businessman with a community spirit who represents local business in the city people’s government (Long Yizhi 1999, 319).

Literary sources have the advantage that they can handle sources too sensitive to be treated elsewhere—such as detailed references to party life, or to religion among party members (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 150). Popular and widely distributed novels are sometimes too sensitive to be discussed in public, such as *Feidu* by Jia Pingwa (2000), and *Weicheng* by Yang Tingyu (2000).

Certain features of the first decades of the People’s Republic must be interpreted as the revival of features of a pre-modern age. Despite the outer appearance of a centralised totalitarian state, individuals were confined to a small scale lifeworld (‘Lebenswelt’), the sphere in which the daily life of the individual takes place, and in which “the state” was a construct far removed from their actual life. Society became highly fragmented, since contacts with institutions and individuals outside the ‘unit’ (place of work, etc) was severely restricted by the authorities. This applied to both the urban residents and the countryside. Until the mid-1980s, Chinese belletristic literature abounded in social stereotypes, since any serious individualisation would by implication cast doubts on the

“truth” of the imposed system of ascribed status. Intervention by the party in society created new social “truths,” deeply affecting personal lives, most violently in the form of “class struggle.” Those classified as landowners, close relatives of landowners or rightists had limited, or no civil rights; being outcasts, they suffered from severe feelings of alienation: theirs was a class created by the party.⁸ For them, the state was a means of repression, and at best distant. The momentous changes China has been experiencing from the nineties are epitomised in the concern among the old-style leaders that China’s younger generation does not care, or cares much less about the individual having to obey “the organisation” (Long Zhiyi 1999, 42, 146). Instead, in the 1990s China developed into a society that saw the explosive rise of endless categories of new individualised “types” of people and professions, particularly evident in the titles of the novels by Qiu Huadong. A remark by Zhong Daoxin (1996, 65) reflects the preoccupation with new roles: “My current status (identity, *shenfen*) is “merchant,” and merchants always find a way to worm their way in.”

Although 1985 is a major turning point in modern Chinese literature, it was not until the 1990s that novels dealing with urbanisation proper began appearing, soon dominating the literary scene.⁹ “Reportage literature” can already look back on a long history. By now new genres have come into existence such as “Shanghai novels,” or “trade and finance novels” (Li Fuwei 1999) that remind us of Japanese genres such as the political novel or the economic/business novel well established since the early years of Japanese modernisation more than a century ago. The appearance of those genuine urban novels as such is indication and proof of the qualitative change that part of Chinese society is undergoing.

The Party versus the State: to whom does the individual belong?

The changing social identity of the more than sixty million members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), both as regards their identity within the party, and their role versus non-party members, cannot be ignored. Despite the party’s reduced “public” visibility, decisions by the party remain important at the level of the life of the individual, as well as at the level of local, regional and central government. While the individual has increased possibilities to take recourse to decisions taken by state organs there are only extremely limited possibilities for initiating proceedings against party decisions within the party organisation-public (state) law is not usually regarded as covering party decisions. It still remains difficult, if not impossible for members and non-members of the Communist Party alike to challenge party decisions, since they are not subject to the general legal framework of the state and its institutions.

The establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 seemed to signify the definitive victory of secularised political and social concepts of European origin (i.e., Communist ones) in China, with the addition of some “Chinese characteristics.” The CCP claimed moral authority to change social relations in Chinese society, underpinned by its ideological monopoly, claims that went beyond mere political-economic rationales. The introduction of a market economy, and the effects of globalisation now challenge this moral monopoly of the CCP, and strengthened demands for reforms in the legal system that give larger play to the application of rules valid throughout the country, creating the potential for the establishment of an autonomous social space free

from arbitrary interference by the party. This should not be confused with the “rule of law” as long as officials acting in the name of the state and the party are able to make use of discretionary power at the level of central government, and also at the level of micro-society. Excessive discretionary power of individual officials easily undermines the assumed moral superiority of the party-led state, and is generally perceived in terms of “corruption” of the new model (Walder 1986; Lu Feng 1993).¹⁰ The separation of party, state and economic institutions propagated in China since the early eighties is a messy process, partly because it entails incessant challenges to the political monopoly of the party. New notions of social belonging, such as “social classes” appeared, yet traditional “class solidarity” has no roots in individual values of belonging—there is no solidarity between the newly rich peasants and those who did not make it (Liang Xiaosheng 1997, 400). Employees in private enterprise undergo a different kind of ‘socialisation’, replacing the authority of political institutions by enterprise authorities.

Rather than challenging the party outright, Chinese social discourse critical of current politics and policies tends to use institution-neutral terms such as “leadership” (lingdao) and “officials” (guan, see below) for various types of “authority” (Long Yizhi 1999, 307, 319). It is generally accepted—at least outwardly—that the party remains the ultimate arbiter, continuing to operate alongside, and above the state.¹¹ The vicissitudes of the party’s history are an important, but not the only, factor affecting the maintenance of party identity.¹² The replacement of political choices by consumer choice, one of the hallmarks of globalisation, is likely to further erode party authority at the micro-level. Participation in “politics” requires special skills, and the political sphere is clearly seen as separate from “ordinary society” (Long Zhiyi 1999, 344). This process further contributes to the alienation of ordinary people from matters of state. The idea of procedures that make the state accessible to all citizens is gradually gaining importance, but its implementation often questionable. In fact, relatively few individuals are aware of such rights.¹³

Workers and entrepreneurs alike do not act as citizens within the framework of a “neutral” state, or “independent” from the party. Co-operation with “officials” (guan) of all kinds remains necessary, coupled with a strong desire to protect and preserve the fortunes of one’s “family” (Xu Jianbin 1996, 283; Jia Pingwa 2000, 178). The party maintains its own decision making system outside the state’s legal system, and attempts to appeal against party decisions both by party members and non-members encounter many difficulties.¹⁴ Last but not least, the existence of a supra-state, a supra-legal party not only makes it more difficult to assess the role of party members and party leadership for any given situation, it also renders research into the structure of social identity and belonging in China in general more difficult.¹⁵ The “reportage novel” *The case that shook Beijing* (Guansi jingdong zhongnanhai) by Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong (1998) provides a vivid example of a party member who suffers persecution leading to the loss of his party membership on the basis of malicious slander, but refuses until the very last to resort to formal appeal procedures. As is the case with numerous other novels, the plot finally resolves the seemingly insurmountable gap between an unjustly treated citizen and the party, state or society.

Inconsistency and unpredictability in the behaviour of state and party mean that idealised images of the relationship of individuals to institutions such as party and

state are less relevant than individual experience in the limited lifeworld of individuals. This has aided the widespread revival of the traditional division between “officials” (guan 官) and “ordinary people” (min 民) in Chinese social discourse in recent years. At first glance, the dichotomy seems to refer to the familiar division of “state” and “society.” In fact, “people” tend to think of “officials” as representatives of an institution to which they are subject, without being part of it.¹⁶ Some party members do not hesitate to use the term guan when referring to themselves. While the party is clearly close to representing the whole of state authority the average citizen finds it difficult to separate state and party authority.

Local ruling elites versus the central government

Pre-modern Chinese government consciously endeavoured to prevent the “localisation” of members of the imperial elite, the danger of ‘fraternisation’ between imperial officials and local elites which they were supposed to govern on behalf of the central government. As part of this policy imperial officials were routinely rotated to different locations. Regular change of office was also supposed to prevent the danger of office becoming hereditary. Imperial elites were thus privileged to be carriers of an “imperial” identity, one that should not be confused with “national” identity. The focus of identity of “ordinary people” (baixing) was as a matter of course directed towards those institutions that provided meaningful social protection—family (clan), local society and local elites. Moral teaching was basically carried out at this level of micro-society, as reflected in compilations such as ‘family injunctions’ (jiaxun). These features continue to exercise important functions into the present age, both within the party and within government institutions (see Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 228). Traditionally, China made a clear distinction between regional and local community leadership and elites of government officials belonging to the imperial realm. Regional and local leadership have always been afforded a particularly important role, as reflected in the remark that the secretary of a province determines the wellbeing of the people of a whole province (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 13). Despite increasing powers of local government, local leaders remain under the final authority of the central government. The partial withdrawal of direct party interference in micro-society makes the role of the party resemble that of former imperial elites that were basically in charge of macro-administration. From time to time, however, calls are made for restoring the strength of party organisation at the local level.

The limited capacity of the modern central government to provide meaningful protection for the citizen implies that the structure of belonging remains heavily dependent on micro-society. Contemporary China inherits features of the traditional fragmentation of Chinese state and society that do not always concur with characteristics of ‘civil society’ in a Western context. More than ever before, the central government is the main guarantor of the unity of the empire as a whole. The history of foreign aggression against China and perceived threats to its unity and security ensure the combination of a country that is united by nationalism, while remaining effectively fragmented domestically. Nationalism does not require centralised rule extending to all aspects of local rule. The imposition of Communist dictatorship in China resulted in patterns of political, social and economic development unlike those in the Soviet Union

and its satellite states, and concepts of citizenship and belonging valid in the Soviet empire cannot simply be transferred to China.

The work unit

In the twentieth century, China was by far the most populous country to impose a new social and political structure on its population, and reshape society to fit an artificially designed class structure.

The ascription of status under the authority of the party, with its lasting effects on the structure of belonging, also meant that the party, and not the state, was identified with relevant social authority. The practice of ascribing class status, as well as the creation of a huge number of quasi self-contained small-scale societies in the form of danwei (work unit) in urban areas, and other forms of collective organisations in non-urban areas linked each Chinese primarily to these groups, and simultaneously erected huge (political and bureaucratic) walls preventing direct access of citizens to state institutions. Personalised rule, rather than principles of uniform rules valid within a particular territory contributed to the fact that for several decades after the establishment of the People's Republic Chinese society maintained, or even strengthened numerous features of a feudal society based on hereditary principles (see e.g. Zhong Daoxin 1996, 22, 28).

A strictly observed segregation between urban and non-urban residents, and the creation of a "work unit society" in urban China produced a society quite unlike any European-style "socialist" system within the Soviet empire. Its main feature is the government-sponsored, subsidised, and controlled work unit. What started out as a move to protect the workers' interest increasingly became a major form of political and social control.¹⁷ Research on its history published in western languages and Japanese appeared at a surprisingly late stage (see e.g. Lü and Perry 1997; several studies by Walder; White 1996, 218; Hebel and Schucher (1991); Yang (1989)).

In the absence of an overarching concept of a universal "society" to which all Chinese belong, the place of work—whether in the shape of a formal 'unit' (danwei) or not—still performs its role as a micro-society with features such as an internal "public space." Its relatively limited size means that individuals are forced to develop fairly complex social strategies versus those members of their unit who possess discretionary powers, since they are often unable to appeal directly to rule-based institutions.

The exclusive role of the CCP as the institution supervising all organisations engaged in the socialisation of the individual has weakened considerably in recent years. The role of the party is changing, but unlikely to disappear. The much larger degree of individual independence is reflected in the Party's concern that the younger generation cares not or much less about the organisational dictum that the individual has to obey "the organisation" (Long Zhiyi 1999, 42, 72, 146.). In many villages, party controlled organisations (tuanzuzhi 团组织) are a dead letter (Tan Wenfeng 1994, 224.). In addition to formal organisations, informal institutions have always had a place in society but are difficult to research since they differ widely from locality to locality (Liu Zuoxiang 1998).

Market economy, individualisation, property rights, and the role of the Party

A major theme of social change in the 1990s is the shift from decision making on the basis of discretionary (political) powers given to party and state officials to decision making on the basis of economic grounds, or simply on the basis of financial powers. However, the shift does not occur in a clear-cut systemic way as part of the transition from a socialist planned economy to a socialist market economy; rather, it takes place in a period where the new economic elites coexist in a symbiotic relationship with party/state officials. Quite apart from structural issues such as changing interactions between ordinary members of work units, cadres and the economic elites this raises the question of the party as the focal point of loyalty for party and non-party members, and the newly risen economic elites and their mutual relationship. This is also bringing about changes of attitudes of the vast majority of the population to this new composite, symbiotic elite.¹⁸ In the novel *Shanghai shige tan* by Li Chunping (1996), even the formal structure of the business company at the centre of the novel is circumscribed by the co-operation between government officials and entrepreneurs who make use of this relationship advertise their undertaking as an 'official' venture, hiding the fact that theirs is in fact a private company.

The increasing co-operation between party and economic elites thus creates a symbiotic relationship that gradually erodes the ability of party members to directly interfere in society, but the new types of relationships between party elites and other sectors of society remain difficult to analyse in sociological terms (Zhang Guohua 1999; Zhong Daoxin 1996, 6; Wang Anyi (1994), 12). This is the major reason why thorough studies on the development of the work unit system appeared only in recent years.¹⁹

However, the study of economic and business novels may provide clues (Zhang Ren 1998, passim). The accelerated, but lengthy, process of shifting functions from the party to other social institutions (such as enterprises) that leads to a redefinition of the role of the party in society has its roots in the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. While the individual was mobilised through permanent institutions, these very institutions were under attack, and individuals were also forced to participate in "ad hoc institutions" such as "movements" (yundong 运动).

The policy changes introduced since 1978, and the gradual introduction of "market mechanisms" especially since the early 1990s have brought about numerous enterprises and other organisations which did not belong to the work unit system, in many of which the party did not establish its own party cells. One important question arising as a result is whether it is the Communist Party, or the enterprise that assumes the main role in socialising the population during the rapid stage of economic, if not political, modernisation. The actual outcome of this contest for authority is likely to be complex forms of division of labour in which the party maintains the face of being the ultimate guarantor of (moral, social) order, while leaving the shape of this process of disciplining employees to enterprises of all kinds.

The creation of a new pattern of socialisation, the disciplining of employees, whether former state enterprise labourers or farmers, is an urgent task for society as a whole. Xu Jianbin (1996, 123) in the novel *Country Elite* indicates this confluence of state and enterprise roles: "Rules are to the enterprise, what laws are for the state."

In addition to managing the transition of the economic system, China has to educate

a pre-modern peasant class and lead them to the discipline required by globalised economics. However, workers, too, still carry the heritage of their “unpolished” past. Many workers of peasant origin do not simply swallow the authority of their boss. “We and the boss are equal (pingdeng 平等)” (Xu Jianbin 1996, 161). Like in other societies peasants were derided as being “behind the times” (Jia Pingwa 1996, 327; Zhou Keqin 1990, 178). The countryside is changing as well—there we now see the rise of a new type of peasant (Zhou Keqin 1990, 185). Qin Hui and Su Wen go so far to predict the future of a Chinese society with a large percentage of “post-modern peasants” (Qin-Su 1996). A new type of “provincial town with Chinese characteristics” is in the making (Xu Jianbin 1996, 47), “a process caused by historical necessity” (Xu Jianbin 1996, 89).

Next to the “workers,” the “peasant” occupied a prominent, if nominal, position in the official socialist Chinese order of things, as he had in the Confucian empire. Urbanites distinguishing themselves from “peasants” have created concepts of peasants that are surprisingly often removed from the complex reality of agricultural society.²⁰ The rise of peasants that are also (part-time) salary earners, coupled with fundamental changes in the structure of the Chinese family and its traditional property relationship, contributes to the increasing individualisation of consumers (Oi and Walder, 1999).

Self-descriptions by individuals themselves are not always helpful. In many cases people subjectively refer to themselves as “really” or “originally” peasants (*nongmin*) although their actual status in society is (already) far removed from the imaginary peasant of the first three decades of the People’s Republic. Moreover, the contemporary use of the word *nongmin* 农民 is a neologism that differs from the traditional concept of (lao)baixing 老百姓, ‘ordinary people’. In a pluriform country the size of China it remains impossible to make general statements about vast categories of people such as “peasants.”²¹ However, stereotype images remain in use. In other words, the normative and ascriptive use of “class” and “status” (*shenfen*) create social reality in China, rather than just describing social layers that developed in an unplanned way.

The new “individual economy” (*geti jingji*) is not necessarily identical with market economy, but refers to an individual running a business (Long Zhiyi 1999, 365, 374). It usually boasts strong links between local businessmen and city government (Long Zhiyi 1999, 339.) We note a strong self-consciousness among some traders or businessmen (*shangren*): “We are merchants” (Long Zhiyi 1999, 343). Business and the party often develop a symbiotic relationship, as described in the novel *Country Elite* by Xu Jianbin (1996). The factory owners continue to pay respect to the formal position of party leaders, even if the impression is that this is as much due to real power relations as to the conscious attempt by the factory owner to save the “face” of party officials.

Instead of commandeering stubborn peasants, a “modernised” management style is more appropriate for this new generation, answering to the challenges of internationalisation, yet globalisation and its “international standards” are not easily accepted. This is a central theme in the novel *Country Elite*:

“The change of generations causes a revolutionary change: in the enterprise this leads to the demands for a “Revolutionary Guideline of the Enterprise” (Xu Jianbin 1996, 234).

“Yet China must face the world, the world must face China, and countryside enterprises must also occupy a place on the world economic stage. Is father’s

generation able or not to carry our national flag into international markets?" (Xu Jianbin 1996, 128.)

When the son of a factory owner returns after studying abroad, he attempts to apply foreign principles of social management, but is soon forced to (re)learn the reality of Chinese society (Xu Jianbin 1996, 126, 128). He maintains that old style commandeering belongs to the past, but seems to overlook that modern company management requires a different style of strongly imposed discipline.

"Dad, workers are not slaves, the enterprise has a rule system that makes every single worker keep that system, workers are also people, also have a human side (renge) and deserve respect..." (Xu Jianbin 1996, 167).

"Our management system is necessarily different from that of abroad" (Xu Jianbin 1996, 168).

However, applying foreign style management does not equal "Westernisation." On the contrary,

"Su Jie pondered in detail what his father had said: 'Dad, selling off property is a crime towards your children, grandchildren and posterity! You are an entrepreneur, and an entrepreneur should embrace the whole world (tianxia 天下), and make prosperity of the state (guojia 国家) his own task! The state is a large family, and each and every Chinese is a child of our China (Zhonghua 中华)... Only if the state is strong can China's children stand up (yangmei tuqi 扬眉吐气)'. " (Xu Jianbin 1996, 199).

Although there may be formal separation between the political and economic elites, numerous small details demonstrate that the boundaries are blurred. On drives around the locality in his Benz a factory owner may well be accompanied by a police car with its authoritative blue siren...

"Ideology" is still a (rather sensitive) issue, and its impact on identity and human relations is apparent in literary sources. At the same time there are clear signs of the rise of "private" values. An individual ostracised by surrounding society (rightly or wrongly) may enjoy moral respect within the family that allows him to maintain moral self-respect as an individual (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 58).

Does "individualisation" lead to citizenship?

The late 1980s laid the foundation for "true" individualisation, giving rise to the first spate of genuine urban novels. Its major characteristic is the description of individuals who act and think independently, learning from personal experience. The changes of the nineties are clearly related to the introduction of a "market economy" that has systemic consequences, but there is no certainty as to what specific consequences this entails for the individual, or the system as a whole (Long Zhiyi 1999, 150, 208.). The ideology of market economics encompasses controls over the political power of the state, apparently providing more freedom for individuals to access the market (White 1996, 201). Let me add that the introduction of a "market economy" does not automatically engender "capitalist" attitudes in the strict sense throughout society, since they are linked to developing conscious strategies for investing and reinvesting capital not only for personal gain, but at the same time promoting technological change by reserving part of investment for innovation. This point is important for discussing

the impact of the introduction of market economy on the changing composition of classes and social strata in China.

The introduction of “reform policies” did not mean a radical and sudden departure from past practices. However, by the 1990s, the terminology of the former class system has largely disappeared.²² “Classes are now divided into strata, and there is no more class struggle” (Liang Xiaosheng 1997, 4). Urbanisation, widespread corruption and the impact of world-wide globalisation have brought about a general crisis of modern morality that is also affecting the capacity of the central government to act as the focus for moral leadership. The promotion of an economy run by individuals (getihu, and others) is sometimes seen as something morally bad by the elders (Long Zhiyi 1999, 127).

Needless to say, certain assumptions are shared by many groups in China’s complex society. One example with long historical roots is the idea that “ordinary people” (or “peasants”) are basically “good,” but that leadership is indispensable, and that the quality of the leadership decides the fate of the local community or the nation as a whole. “Civil society”, it may be remarked, is not equivalent to the notion of “all citizens”, but presupposes informal, non-appointed individual leaders and “private” organisations outside the “official” sphere (guan). It will be interesting to observe whether and how Chinese society will accommodate both concepts of moral leadership.

One consequence is that personnel management shifts from party control to specific business administration (Long Zhiyi 1999, 230; Zhong Daoxin 1996, 318). Another is the position and protection of private property by the state, which recent legislation has strengthened. This is likely to have a long-term impact on the social and class structure of society.²³ It is commonly believed that by now money decides nearly everything, and that includes the realm of human relations (Xu Jianbin 1996). In a culture that traditionally looked down on sheer “power” and “personal gain” (quan, si 权, 私) this must necessarily affect the status of “public-spiritedness” (gong 公) and predictable rule/order (fa 法) (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 49). Long Yizhi’s (1999, 208) novel *Politicians* also deals with the change of values and norms (jiazhi guilü) as a result of the transition to a market economy, but this is not described as an “automatic” process: human emotions do not change that simply (see also Qi Shuyu 1998). There are far fewer references to positive new values arising from the change of the system, such as when it is argued that the new system introduces greater equality. The language of values is tenacious, however. Literature contains frequent references to the rule of the land (the traditional empire)-such as “the way of the kings” (*wangfa* 王法) governing the empire/world (tianxia) (Zhong Daoxin 1996, 49; Xu Jianbin 1996, 154, 140). “Public order” (gongli 公理) is not just a term indicating social stability-it implies a sense of just social/political order which supposedly has not changed throughout history (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 11, 19).

It is important to realise that recent changes have led to a process of individualisation that is no longer defined or definable in traditional terms. In societies like China or Japan it used to be more common for the social environment to tell the “individual” what his wrong-doings are, and make him utter a declaration concurring with this judgement, often within the group, in more serious cases “in public.” Whether the individual concurs “privately” is a different matter, but it is of the utmost importance

that the judgement is pronounced by an entity that is socially legitimised to make such judgements—be they the company, the village, or “the party.” The notion of “public opinion” is an elusive term in any society, and in China is “made” by only a few people (Long Zhiyi 1999, 283.). Screaming slogans in a public place (*gongzhong changhe*) at the request of authorities, and actions of the individual are clearly separated, making it difficult to infer individual standards from behaviour in public places (Long Zhiyi 1999, 88).

It is easily seen that “judgements” of communities such as the Chinese or Japanese by a foreign country can only, if at all, be accepted with great difficulty. In China or Japan the “social identity” of an individual receives a well defined, often ritualised expression. Societies that emphasise “internalised” identities are likely to focus on “personal identities” in terms of a “self” that the individual seeks to “realise” more or less independently from the demands of society. Needless to add that such distinctions do not always occur in such a pure form. The latter tends to attach an intrinsic value to the “private” realm over the “public” one. In that case, “citizenship”—meaning an individual acting autonomously in the wider public realm—is clearly distinguished from acting at the behest of the public authorities.

Social engineering in twentieth century China: socialist feudalism or feudalist socialism?

The matrix of contemporary Chinese society is basically determined by *spatially* defined institutions such as the work unit, patterns of social *vertical differentiation* that include institutions such as the party, social classes and strata, and last but not least by the temporal division in five generations who each share characteristic patterns of life experience.²⁴ Individual as well as collective memory are defined by the pattern in which the “present” is perceived as a link between a remembered past and an imagined future. Religion and ideology are inseparable ingredients in this process; due to lack of space I will limit myself to only a few remarks on this last issue in my conclusion.

Following “theory” as preached by party dogma, during the first three decades of the PRC the party engaged in social re-engineering to impose a simple, schematic order on society that was basically divided into poor, middle, rich peasants, and other social groups characteristic for urban society. The ascription of such status not only applied to individuals, but also to whole families collectively. All members of an (extended) family might also be classified as “exploiters” or “progressives” (Long Zhiyi 1999, 11). Field research seeking to apply “class” as an analytical social category usually faces considerable difficulties, since the analytical concepts “class” or “social stratum” cannot easily be distinguished from ascribed status (White 1996, 219; Li Peilin 1995; Tang and Parish 2000, 127).

China’s history has since 1949 experienced violent upheavals under a one-party system in which the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960) and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (high tide from 1966 until 1971) signalled sharp ruptures. The forced integration of the individual reached its peak during the cultural revolution, and seemed to blur the distinction between the “individual” and the “masses”, between *ziwo yishi* 自我意识 (self-awareness, “identity”) and the *qunti* 群体 (“the masses”). Individualisation that had been the hallmark of modernising society in Europe and the Americas

since the eighteenth century, did not take place in China:

“in the course of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, this trend was reversed. The party-led mass movements undermined the state’s bureaucratic machinery and the legal system. The concept of the citizen never got a chance to develop to fullness... nor did the political and legal framework that might have permitted the individual to be separated from the attachment to and dependence on the organisation” (Lu Feng 1993, 85).

This phenomenon undoubtedly culminated during the Cultural Revolution—in which mutual isolation of rural communities reached a high point. This phase of disorder and anarchy led to doubt in the legitimacy of “authority” as such, sowing the seeds of the kind of pluralistic individualism that is now so conspicuous in China’s urban society. The regionalization and fragmentation that set in with the change of policies during the early eighties is of a different order, since there are relatively few obstacles now for communication between different localities and regions. Throughout this period the term “citizen” (*guomin*) was of little relevance, and for the average peasant the state remained at a distance.

In 1979, another turning point was reached when the use of labels such as “rightists” was ended. The formal ending of “rightist” labelling in 1979 meant in effect that a huge part of the population—depending on the period, up to 20 per cent, could now in principle commence enjoying full citizen’s rights. However, it goes without saying that social habits can clearly not be changed overnight (see Chi Li 2000, 20 ff.). Since the beginning of the 1980s, there has been a gradual and slow advance of concepts such as “people of the state,” *guomin* 国民 or “people as public” *gongmin* 公民 (usually translated as “citizen”). In its modern meaning this concept is of European origin, and carries connotations inseparable from European history. The question remains whether legal definitions of “citizenship” and citizens’ rights are able to replace existing forms of social belonging.

Urban and non-urban residents

In the early 1950s, in addition to cementing class distinctions, the party engaged in a radical programme of social engineering that created a barrier between “urban residents” and “countryside residents.” It virtually established two categories of citizenship. For many, obtaining a “city residency permit” was an ambition nearly impossible to achieve.²⁵ The introduction of reform policies since the eighties has led to gradual changes in patterns of political and social controls which were temporarily interrupted by the events of 1989. They significantly broadened the possibilities for autonomous developments.

Different from the European tradition of “citizenship,” where from the medieval age citizens kept (not always successfully) fighting for independence (usually from aristocratic rule), in pre-modern China “urban residence” was not associated with strengthened political rights (Xu Jianbin 1996, 124, 127). Needless to mention, the definition of “citizen” usually included only the smaller upper layer of people actually living in a city. From the twentieth century, however, some regions, especially the larger Shanghai region, display the kind of separate regional social cohesion that in fact, if not in name, has the potential of creating a separate political space. By 1975 Shanghai was consid-

ered the strong point of “revolutionary” China-twenty years later Shanghai journals proclaimed the arrival of the “new citizen,” whose main orientation was apparently the desire to become rich, evoking echoes of China’s cosmopolitan past when colonial powers exercised jurisdictions over various parts of the city in their respective “concessions.” (White III, 1978) Such and similar changes did not occur simultaneously, or to the same degree, in all regions of China. The relationship between cities in China’s Northeast, often still characterised by state-owned enterprises and their surrounding countryside is markedly different from the urban agglomerations of China’s South-eastern or Southern regions where the boundaries between urban and non-urban regions are difficult to discern.

Identity at the Regional Level

The complex history of China’s migrations has led to patterns of “cohabitation” of separate population groups that differ from region to region. Best known, is of course the complexity of settlement in South China. Coupled with the fact that differences between “urban” areas and non-urban areas are much weaker in Southern (especially coastal) areas of China, but more pronounced in other parts, it appears that even the definitions of what constitutes a “region,” and “regional identity” become a vexing problem.²⁶ At the micro-level it is often larger factories that are a focus of identity for the surrounding region. The factory is however much more than a mere economic actor-it also provides a focus of identity for nearby villages, and even a whole region in ways similar to many other industrialising, or industrialised countries. Moreover, China has always been a highly competitive universe in which regions compete with each other to gain supra-regional significance.

These days, the “Zhejiang Village” of migrants from Zhejiang province in the capital Beijing is only one example of the localisation of migrants from one particular province (He Zaijin 1995). As in other societies, the degree of distance placed between the in-group and outsiders is a co-determinant of identity, influencing the very structure of identity itself (Zhang Zhouren 1997; Honig 1992). China abounds in formal and informal associations of and for migrants. Shanghai is famous for the large number of migrants from Shaanxi province, as well as known for the rapid turnover in the composition of its population this century (He Zaijin 1995).²⁷

Shanghai is not just a “cosmopolitan” city; like many other large urban centres it tells the story of (un)controlled population influx. It has been claimed that the influx of such a “floating population” is in fact a vital element in the creation of any modern style urban society. Partly due to foreign intervention, partly due to internal chaos no Chinese (urban) region was able to guide the country’s nation building and modernisation over any extended period of time until the foundation of the PRC. This circumstance has deeply structured the vagaries of China’s modernisation process. Especially since the 1930s, Shanghai and the adjoining provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu attempted repeatedly to fulfil the role of spearheading modernisation, but it is only since the 1990s that leaders with a Shanghai background have determined the course of Chinese modernisation. This does not imply, however, that “Shanghai” has become able to set national standards at the different levels of politics, economics, and culture alike-in matters of political and linguistic unification it has usually been “Beijing” that

exercised control and leadership. China has developed its own array of regional (composite) identities (Zheng Fan 1997, 197), often reflected in linguistic differences that set dialects as far apart as Dutch and Danish are. Despite demands for the use of the standard language (putonghua 普通话), meetings at the local level are often conducted in the local dialect (Long Yizhi 1999, 218). Concepts of local and regional identity in their complexity defy simple definitions (Long Yizhi 1999, 219).

The demand for the creation of “one Chinese state” caused China to refer to local language groups as “dialects” of one national language, where linguistic analysis might otherwise speak of the existence of numerous separate languages belonging to the same linguistic family. Cities in China often differ substantially from each other. Shanghai, and not Beijing, that saw the rise of the first massive wave of urban literature (novels) during the 1990s, symbolising the arrival of a new kind of individualising and globalising Chinese social culture. Demographic, economic and social statistics are insufficient to catch important differences between cities. Collections of annotated court decisions from one particular city provide clues not obtained elsewhere (*Shanghai fayuan anli jingxuan* (2003)).

The time dimension of identity-The PRC's five generational identities

Next to *spatial* differentiation of identity we also have to take into account the existence of a complicated set of *temporally* defined generational identities, following Ortega y Gasset who stressed the importance of the difference of generational identities that coexist within one and the same society (Ortega Y Gasset). Identity in China is now no longer marked by clear cut “class interests” (“peasants,” “workers,” traders or business), but a complex and shifting set of social indicators, in which generational factors play an important role (Qiu Huadong (1999)). China is now in a transitory phase where five separate generations-in terms of life experience within Chinese society-coexist. Each of these generations shares separate systems of conceptualisations and belonging, and each interprets the tremendous changes of the nineties within its own frame of reference. These are the results of a rapid succession of changing political, social and economic environment of generations, those who grew up before 1949, those whose major period of socialisation took place in the fifties, concluded by the Great Leap Forward (1958–1960), the generation of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1971), the intervening periods and the different periods of the eighties and nineties. Each generation carries different conceptualisations about individual, society, party and state and their relationships.

Those who actually “joined the revolution” before 1949 became a privileged class who did not want to surrender their hard-won power by any process, including democratic processes. There are strong formal and informal institutional rights for the “old revolutionaries”, which did not simply end with the administrative act of 1982. Their existence is particularly noteworthy in former “liberated areas” (i.e., areas under communist control before 1949). These divisions are not merely based on “life experience.” Members of the Communist Party who joined the party before 1949 were formally given exclusive rights; the so-called “old revolutionaries” (lao geming 老革命) considered themselves founders of a new state (if not empire) enjoying a life-long special status (Long Zhiyi 1999, 25, 317; Lu Feng 1993, 17; Zhong Daoxin 1996, 312). Apart

from commanding material privileges they also demanded particular social respect. Families classified “revolutionary” transmitted their status to children who inherited that position without having worked for it. Being a member of a privileged group they attempted to ignore, or even conceal the fact that some relatives may have had a less than “revolutionary” past.²⁸

Echoes of the past

Younger generations may continue using discriminating labels of an earlier age—such as when modern businessmen are compared to “landlords of the past” (Zhong Daoxin 1996, 67). The memory of the former class system lingers on, and members of the new rich classes are careful in avoiding the impression that they are a “new landlord class” (Liang Xiaosheng 1997, 98). Terms from the period of the Cultural Revolution such as “capitalist roaders” (then applied to political opponents of Mao Zedong) still exist in the collective memory, and are sometimes applied to one’s opponent (Long Zhiyi 1999, 74, 355; Zhong Daoxin 1996, 38). Even terms related to a particular political movement of some significance, such as the “Four Cleans” (early sixties), still exist clearly in the memory of the older generation—not just as a reference to a past age, but as a reference to the kind of social behaviour and self-criticism demanded during that period (Long Zhiyi 1999, 15). Yet such collective memory is not sufficient to grasp the dynamics, or the details of the history of the People’s Republic or the Communist Party—in fact, “forgetting” is as much a part of the process of collective memory as the shaping of memories themselves. A number of books has appeared in China that function as textbooks for Chinese who attempt to know more about the extremely complex and rapidly changing history of society since 1949, and the effects it had on forming “generations” whose life cycle is rather short, roughly about a decade.

Globalisation: Chinese periphery, metropolis US?—Global citizenship?

Slogans such as market democracy, civil society, and the separation of society and state suggest a future in which the nation-state will gradually lose its pre-eminent role as a focus of identity and nationalist fervour (Radtke 2002). The United States has become the main exporter of such a vision, displaying features that it shares with other empires. True empires provide sets of policies and patterns of actions (“regimes”) that are actively exported, and either forced upon others, or voluntarily accepted by the “periphery.” For much of pre-19th century European history it was France that provided such examples. England supplanted France as an exporter of such “models,” in turn replaced by the United States. The meaning and function of concepts such as “citoyen,” “citizen” or “civil society” differs depending on whether we are talking about the continental European, the English or the United States model. Such concepts do not exist in isolation but are usually part of a “set” that shapes images of the structure of the Empire.²⁹

In some parts of the world religion provided a supra-regional focus of identity, as in the case of Christianity and Islam. In other parts of the world, such as China and Japan, the pre-modern state vigorously curbed any attempt by Buddhist monasteries and institutions that might have resulted in a rivalling locus of power. The complex, and not seldom self-contradictory tenets contained in “Confucian” classic and texts consid-

erably aided supra-regional integration within China, Korea, Japan or Vietnam respectively, but did not lead to the creation of a supra-national "Confucian commonwealth." Not once in the history of East Asia did Confucian scholars from various countries meet to reach a common understanding and interpretation of Confucian tenets. The function of "Confucianism" in creating a common sphere of belonging should not be confused with the ability of religions such as Islam or Christianity to unite peoples of different ethnic and linguistic groups.³⁰ In China (and Japan) there was an enormous variety of cults and religions which were often limited to only small regions, or even villages, and tended to be regarded as non-threatening "superstitions." There were attempts in Japan, especially in recent centuries, to transform "Shinto" into a supra-regional, "national" religion, leading to the suppression of local cults towards the end of the nineteenth century. In contemporary China, the Communist Party endeavours to prevent the rise and influence of any nation-wide religion. For a limited period, Mao Zedong himself acquired the function of a religious focus, in particular during the Cultural Revolution. Other kinds of religious activities as such have seen a revival in recent years, but the establishment of a nation-wide network such as the Falungong has met vigorous opposition from the Party and the state.

In this age of globalisation we may liken the export of forms of organisation in the political, cultural, social and economic sphere to the spread of a network of *franchise enterprises*, not "owned" by company headquarters, but bound to it in a complex set of relationships. As a consequence, debates on particular policy issues-discourses-tend to be structured by the pattern of the franchise headquarters, without regard for the specific local conditions. Scholars affiliated with the culture of franchise headquarters carry greater weight than those in the periphery. Not surprising, then, that patterns of notions of multi-ethnicity and diaspora dominant in the United States tend to shape the framework of discussions elsewhere. NATO and the US-Japan alliance set the framework for the creation of market democracies and civil society. "Asian" Macs do cater to a different taste, but ought to contain the same kind of beef and cheese.

To some it might appear that globalisation, rather than strengthening a civil society that gathers rich and poor alike, in fact replaces the notion of "citizen" with that of the "customer." What used to be political choices tend to be "privatised", that is transformed into economic choices. In the past, the state was responsible to look after the citizen in his old age, and pension policies were an important part of political bargaining. The "privatisation" of pension funds changes the political choice into a consumer choice. Throughout the world, customers are created that "identify" with "brands" such as Coca Cola or Gucci. The change of political choices into consumer choices seems to be an important characteristic of globalisation. It implies deep changes in the way individuals participate in decision-making in their societies, and thus alters the structure of their identity and belonging.

After several decades in which foreign influences on Chinese society remained relatively limited, ideology-inspired "globalisation" originating from the United States, and less so from Europe, has also been affecting China, in particular since the early nineties. Its effects coincide with endogenous change. Ordinary Chinese citizen tend to characterise the combined result of such changes in simplistic terms-"money" rules, where previously politics and ideology were in charge. Such "Westernisation" is

frequently equated with unbridled egoism. In the novel *Country Elites* the change of values appears in the shift from father Su who takes a “moral,” humanistic approach to the attempts of the son to organise all human relations in the company from the point of view of “efficiency.” As “Chinese” as this theme may appear in particular to the Chinese reader, the decay of morals in the face of economic and political change has been a universal, constant theme in history.

This is not to deny essential differences that separate societies even in this age of globalisation. This paper has emphasized the distinction between two different concepts of citizenship, namely participation in micro-society and acting in public as a citizen of the “state.” The twentieth century has seen many upheavals that destroyed the foundations of macro-society—such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and its belief systems. The continuity of the structure of societies even in the face of the collapse of the institutional framework of macro-society can only be adequately accounted for if “citizenship” is not simply seen as an element within the wider framework of a (nation) state. Micro-society provides the kind of redundant social structure that equips individuals and societies to survive, whatever the fate of the macrostructures. The structure of belonging does not depend on the creation of (artificial) nationalism.

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Footnotes:

- ¹ See Long Zhiyi (1999, 230). Although this source is presented as fiction, it reads like "reportage journalism" (baogao wenxue), see below.
- ² On the dual development of markets and civil society in premodern China, see Wang Rigen (1995, 2ff.), Zhou Yumin and Shao Yong (1993), and Gordon White (1996); for the importance in pre-modern China of commodity economy, see formulations by Cohen (1993, 162, 164).
- ³ The most recent overview is Goldman and Perry (forthcoming). I am grateful to Prof. Goldman and Perry for providing me a draft of that chapter. Gordon White (1993) provides an overview of discussions on citizenship and civil society in recent research on China. Mary B. Rankin (1986) approaches state-society relations in the Qing period in terms of "the state sphere (guan), the private sphere (si) and a distinctive public sphere (gong); see also Pye (1996, 25); Huang (1993); Hook (1996); Brook and Frolic (1997); Brook and Schmid (2000); White, Howell and Shang (1996). The huge amount of Western literature in recent years on the relationship between individual, society and state in China is in many cases exceptionalist, often ignores theoretical approaches by Asian scholars, and hardly ever compares China with Japan or other non-Western societies such as those of the Arab/Islamic world. In my book *Poetry of the Yuan Dynasty* I discussed the question whether Chinese popular literature during the period of Mongol rule may be interpreted as a general expression of a Chinese identity protesting against Mongol domination.
- ⁴ See also Turner (1993). The term "citizenship" itself has become a general term that includes sub-categories such as "social citizenship" (Ferge 1996).
- ⁵ Qi Shuyu (1998) attempted to link changes in contemporary literature and the arts to the introduction of a market economy in China.
- ⁶ The Chinese term is *guominxing*, in Japanese *kokuminsei*. For a recent Japanese view on Chinese Socio-psychology, see Sonoda Shigeto (2001).
- ⁷ For a general overview of Baogao wenxue, see Li Baojin (1994); Li Bing'yin and Zhou Baiyi (1998, 3); Zhang Ren (1998). Thematic anthologies of reportage literature abound. On the use of literature in social and legal studies, see e.g. Gaakeer (2000). Chinese literary works on rural legal issues include Yang Hao (2000). A similar approach was adopted by JaHyun Kim Haboush (2001) in research on Korean Modernity.
- ⁸ This is related to the issue of "class awareness" and "objective" definitions of class structure; see Ossowski (1973).

- ⁹ Feuerwerker (1998, 188). Of course, this does not mean that novels dealing with the countryside have ceased to appear; the genre *xiangtu xiaoshuo* (country novels) is still popular. For anthologies, see Shu-Xing(1995) and Zhuang-Shao (1997).
- ¹⁰ This phenomenon, of course, is not linked to any particular political system such as socialist China's, as the similar example of democratic India shows.
- ¹¹ Liu Jianjun's (2000) voluminous study of the work unit contains four accounts of field research, and extensively cites Chinese and foreign scholarship; while there are scattered references to the party, the authors focus on "state" and "government" rather than considering the role of the party separately.
- ¹² The topic "identity of party members" is notoriously difficult to research. See Leng (1989).
- ¹³ Long Yizhi (1999) repeatedly refers to "democratic procedures" (*minzhu chengxu*) in. Although the term is related to "rights," it must be distinguished from the concept of "inherent" or "natural" rights of all citizens. Procedures, laws and social customs are often associated: "Families have family rules, the state has the state's law, the party has its party disciplinary rules, and each has procedures" (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 50). Liu Fangwei (1997, 587, 589) indicates that a huge percentage of peasant are not aware of the fact that the laws of the state give them personal rights.
- ¹⁴ Although decisions reached within the party affect party and non-party members as citizens, their decisions are usually not open to review by the court (Zhang Ling and Xin Ruzhong 1998, 143). See also Alford (1993).
- ¹⁵ It can be doubted whether the internal appeals system managed by party disciplinary committees has any effect in maintaining party identity. See Zhongyang jiwei (1995) for cases in which transgressions against law and party rules were the subject of internal inquires by party committees. How to appeal against unjust judgements by officials is a core theme in the relationship between individuals and institutions; see Tu Sheng (1997) for a record of the experiences of an ordinary citizen, and Solinger (1999) for a broader analysis.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Chi Li (1999, 111): "State affairs are now no more our concern. Let's just keep to family matters."
- ¹⁷ See Lu Feng (1993, 4). The attempt to protect workers against the market created relations of patriarchy and dependency inside the unit, and stratification and immobility in society at large, in the end damaging the interests of those the regime was trying to serve.
- ¹⁸ The question has been raised whether there is a parallel between this symbiosis and the role of the comprador (i.e. Chinese partners in foreign companies) class in the Chinese revolution. See Liang Xiaosheng (1997, 16).
- ¹⁹ Lü and Perry (1997); Lu Feng (1993, 4).
- ²⁰ See Feuerwerker (1998) for an account of how the term was used during the past few decades and Liang Xiaosheng(1997, 401) for a discussion of "genuine peasants."
- ²¹ The flattering and idealising Confucian or Communist stereotypes of peasants must be seen in connection with the common perceptions of peasants as weak, cowering to government, or stubborn to the extent that physical force is needed to manage them.
- ²² It is doubtful whether under present conditions it still makes sense to talk about working class and peasant class in terms of the 1950s and 1960s. The term proletariat (*wuchan jieji*) is obsolete, but still scathingly echoed in the pun "powerless class" (*wuquan jieji*) (Zhong Daoxin 1996, 3).
- ²³ Oi and Walder 1999; Cohen 1992. Cohen (1993, 161) outlines the role of the family in this process: "Key to my own approach to Chinese economic culture is the fact that family organisation provided the common framework for the ownership, management, and exploitation of the enormous variety of income-producing assets present in... late traditional China. The characteristics of the Chinese family system were such that personal and *fang* (conjugal-unit) property was clearly subordinate to that owned by the *jia* (family) as a unit... "
- ²⁴ Li Peilin (1995). On the question of the usefulness of terms such as middle class in analysing Chinese society, see Chen Xuli (1992).
- ²⁵ On the difficulties involved in switching resident status, see Potter (1990), *passim*, and <http://www.usembassy-China.org.cn/english/sandt/peasantsuffering.html>.
- ²⁶ Honig (1992), *passim*.
- ²⁷ Part of this phenomenon has its historic origins in the presence of pre-modern Shaanxi "banks" in Shanghai.

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- ²⁸ Rights and responsibilities of the revolutionary elders appear in their ability to interfere in personnel matters. This also underlines the formal status of the early revolutionaries as a “class,” although their power is now rapidly eroding, also due to biological factors (Long Zhiyi 1999), 42.
- ²⁹ It may be worth considering that “civil society” has changed its use from a description of pre-modern social developments in Europe to a set of developmental norms under globalisation.
- ³⁰ A basic difference is that Islamic and Christian civilisations are carried by a “community of believers” in one central G'd, whereas “Confucian civilisation” does not have this kind of (imagined?) transcendental focus.
- See <http://www.usembassy-China.org.cn/english/sandt/peasantsuffering.html>, and Potter (1990), Sulamith Heins and Jack M., *China's Peasants: The Anthropology of a Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 296-312.