INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS:
1. Insert CD into CD-ROM drive.
2. Windows 3.1x users run "X:\win31\setup.exe" (where X is your CD-ROM drive letter).
3. Windows 95/98 users, the Setup program should start automatically, if not run "X:\win95\setup.exe" (where X is your CD-ROM drive letter).
4. Follow the on screen Prompts

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Socialist Spiritual Civilisation & the Modernisation of What it Means to be Chinese

Nicholas Xavier Dynon
socialist spiritual civilisation

the modernisation of what it means to be chinese

by

nicholas xavier dyonnon

A Master of Arts (Asian Studies) degree

Australian National University

Canberra, 31 July 2002

a submitted full-time memoir
this thesis is my own work
all sources used have been acknowledged
To my wife, Jing Melanie Yin...

my El Dorado
    my Timbuktu,
my Shangri-la
    my Xanadu
My interest in socialist spiritual civilisation arose during a stay in Beijing in the winter of 1996/97. At that time the promotion of spiritual civilisation was in full swing. Campaign propaganda was everywhere - on the street side, in the newspapers and across bus windows - and I couldn’t help but be intrigued by its apparent omnipresence. Initial curiosity gave way to a more considered interest, and the campaign subsequently became a core component of my Honours research topic. The resulting dissertation looked at both the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation and the “strike hard” campaign against crime. In it I argued that the simultaneous existence of these “campaigns” was evidence of an enduring Chinese social control continuum based on a dichotomy of Confucian-based morality (礼, li) and draconian legalism (法, fa). Almost five years later, I find myself again putting the final touches to a dissertation preoccupied with the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation. Naturally at this point I feel a driving desire to articulate some form of justification for my unusual – some may say unhealthy - interest in this somewhat curious campaign.

Why is the study of socialist spiritual civilisation important? A difficult question, and one to which the following dissertation should provide an adequate answer. It is interesting to think of such moral-ideological campaigns as the “software” of China’s modernisation. The Chinese Communist Party have demonstrated a certain degree of skill over the past two decades in developing the “hardware” of modernisation: the material and economic requirements for and manifestations of the modernisation program. The development of a corresponding “software” to meet the requirements of the new era has proven to be more problematic. Basic questions of morality, ideology and identity continue to confound an essentially post-communist society, and the dilemmas of “dialectical selection” – or learning from the West – remain unresolved. The Party’s promotion of spiritual civilisation ostensively constitutes an attempt to tie up these loose ends. As such, it may be seen as a software update – a revision of morality for the socialist market economy, a recoding of old ideology, and a new version of what it means to be Chinese in the 21st century. It is, ultimately, a software update which attempts to provide relevance to a political operating system defying obsolescence in an age of rapid change.

There are a number of people I wish to thank for helping me to complete this dissertation, and for helping me along the way. My journey in Chinese studies began when I commenced my studies of Mandarin in 1988 at the age of twelve, and the people who have inspired and helped me through its twists and turns are far too numerous to name. I would like, however, to indulge by singling out a few.

In the late 1980s, St. Ignatius’ College in Sydney was one of the very few high schools in the state to offer language instruction in Mandarin, and I found the possibility of learning Chinese
too intriguing to pass up. A life-changing decision. Little did I know at the time that Ruth Wong’s Mandarin class would be the precursor to all that has since become. But it has; and I am ever thankful to Mrs Wong for unwittingly packing my bags and getting me started on this crazy kaleidoscopic journey. It’s strange how things turn out.

My study of Chinese at the Australian National University (ANU) was made happier than it would have been by the positive teaching style of Yang Tiejun, Senior Lecturer in Modern Chinese. In the eyes of an undergraduate, lecturers are often a scary lot, but Mrs Yang was a true humanitarian. Her patience was undeserved, and her words of encouragement were highly valued at a time and place where such words were few.

Professor Bill Jenner, former head of the China and Korea Centre (ANU), is to blame for exposing me to the language of politics and power in contemporary China. His course Readings in Modern Chinese Society and Law covered issues of moral norms, deviance and social control, and provided me with a basis for understanding the complex relationships in China between party, state and society. Also of great benefit was his course Approaches to the Study of Contemporary China, which provided a crucial introduction to the methodologies of researching China through English, Chinese, paper and online sources. Professor Jenner was also one of my Masters supervisors, and provided key comments on early drafts before his departure from the ANU a couple of years ago.

I wish also to give special thanks to Dr Craig Reynolds, former head of the Centre for Asian Histories and Societies (ANU) (now Head of Centre for the Study of the Southern Chinese Diaspora). As coordinator of the Asian Studies Honours program and Lecturer in History and Theory, Dr Reynolds introduced me to the discipline of History. Things have never been the same since. His guidance continued after he gave me the job of tutoring his course History of Modern Southeast Asia to 1900, despite my lack of grounding in Southeast Asian Studies. I greatly appreciate his friendship and his faith, and have Dr Reynolds to thank for opening my eyes to – and giving me a real thirst for – historical theory.

As the last of the ANU credits, I wish to thank Dr Jonathan Unger, Head of the Contemporary China Centre and supervisor of both my Honours and Masters dissertations, for his patience and guidance. If only I had consulted with Dr Unger more regularly I am sure the quality of my dissertation would have been greatly enhanced. His comments on recent drafts were invaluable and his ongoing advice and generosity most appreciated.

My parents-in-law, Sun Guilan and Yin Qingyun made available to me their extensive collection of Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao) back issues. These provided a valuable resource for my research. They have also accommodated my wife and I – and spoiled us rotten - on each of our trips back to Beijing. Since 1993 they have been a most positive and treasured influence on my journey.
My parents, Richard and Margaret Dynon, have been there from the start. It’s really all their fault. My Mum gave me a keen interest in history and an interest in other places, my Dad gave me focus and a sense of academic rigour. I may be a little biased, but they truly are the best parents anyone could ever wish for, and their love and level of support are beyond mere acknowledgment.

Thank you to the ANU, for providing me with a Masters Scholarship to undertake my research. Thank you to Burton & Garran Hall, for providing a relatively stable and positive residential environment for two and a half years. Thank you to the American Field Service (AFS), an organisation which coordinates the Australian Young Scholars in China Program, which I was fortunate enough to be a part of in 1993. And thank you to St Ignatius’ College for setting the scene early on.

Lastly, I wish to thank my wife, Jing Melanie Yin. I feel guilty just thinking about how much house work I avoided in order to get this dissertation finished. She kept everything running smoothly while I would withdraw for hours on a daily basis into the parallel universe of socialist spiritual civilisation. Her assistance and advice on many translations were of particular significance, as was her encouragement and her general support. Jing provided a valuable sounding board for my ideas, and I appreciate her feedback regarding many aspects of the paper.

Had not this Chinese odyssey begun so many years ago, I would not today have this wonderful companion to share the continuing journey with. Thank you Yin Jing, with love. Thank you one and all.

Nick Dynon
Newtown, Sydney
Winter 2002

The method of Chinese language romanisation employed throughout this dissertation is the *pinyin* system. The Wade Giles system is used to romanise the names of certain individuals and literature titles where it has become convention, e.g. Sun Yatsen (*pinyin*: Sun Zhongshan), Chiang Kai-shek (*Jiang Jieshi*), etc.

The translation “socialist spiritual civilisation” (*shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming*) requires particular clarification. Some authors translate the Chinese expression as “socialist moral and ethical progress”, although the most literal and subsequently most widely adopted translation among scholars internationally appears to be “socialist spiritual civilisation”. I have therefore adopted the latter. This expression is often accompanied by the term *jianshe* (*建设*) to become *shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe*. In this context *jianshe* appears to find two popular translations: “construction” and “promotion”. I have decided to adopt the translation “promotion”, the expression therefore becoming “promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation”.

Throughout the dissertation I use the expressions “promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation”, “spiritual civilisation campaign”, “civilisation drive” and “the campaign” interchangeably.
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01. Introduction
The morality campaigns of the Post-Mao period have largely been studied as manifestations of a control balance between social order and economic reform. While campaigns have satisfied various political agendas they can also be seen as attempts to fill the perceived inadequacies of China’s moral culture in dealing with the contemporary realities of market reform. Recent Western scholarship tends to discuss the Chinese Communist Party’s morality campaigns in terms of factional politicking and ideological conservatism within a “Post-Mao” or “Post-Communist” society. It can be argued, however, that the perceived moral vacuum of China under Jiang Zemin is a phenomenon that is not as ahistorical as such scholars appear to suggest. This dissertation explores one such morality campaign, the promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation ( 社会主义精神文明建设, shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe). Among other things, a characteristic of this campaign has been an attempt by the CCP to promote a positive notion of Chineseness by redefining “civilisation” — or what it means to be civilised - along Chinese socialist lines. The CCP’s appropriation of “civilisation” (wenming) may be seen as an attempt at addressing a moral paradox that has existed since long before either the onset of market reforms or the apotheosis of the CCP itself.

“Civilisation” can mean many things, depending on where you are, and when. Historically, the Chinese have long lauded the idea of civilisation (as expressed by the character hua, 花), and to be “civilised”. To be civilised was regarded as a moral good, to be barbaric was a reflection of moral and intellectual inferiority. The Chinese scholars and officials who write about it are proud of the longevity and past achievements of their civilisation. For much of China’s past, the idea of “Chineseness” was akin to that of “civilisation” — the two ideas were inseparable. The more Chinese one was, the more civilised one was. China was regarded as civilisation itself. Prescriptively, to be civilised ought to be the goal of each Chinese, and to be more Chinese ought to be the goal of the uncivilised.

Today, “civilisation” is still regarded as a moral good, but the idea has undergone much change. Exclusively Chinese notions of civilisation have given way to a host of exotic and
hybrid ideas. There is no longer a logical link between the once synonymous notions of “Chineseness” and “civilisation”. Indeed, since the nineteenth century, many Chinese thinkers have argued that the torch of civilisation has been passed to “the West”, and that to be more civilised meant to learn from the West (and, by implication, become less Chinese). Western ideas of civilisation reinforced enlightenment notions of progressive history which conflicted wildly with the once dominant Chinese tropes of cyclical and regressive history. The Chinese idea of achieving civilisation by emulating golden ages of the immemorial past was challenged by social Darwinian notions of evolution and anthropogenic progress. This definitional change represented a severe fracture in the historical continuity of the Chinese thought-world. Ultimately, even the Chinese terminology for “civilisation” was to be replaced by an expression imported from a modernising Japan (having found its way to Japan from Western Europe) – an etymological change reinforcing the broader epistemic discontinuity.

The moral order had been shaken in this clash of civilisations as China had awakened to find herself in the mixing pot of a multi-civilisational world. At this point, it can be argued, the Chinese lost ownership of its history – past and future. By the dawn of the twentieth century, the “traditional” Chinese moral order began to be considered by many as entirely inadequate in facing the challenges of “modernity” and the future. China had found herself in a moral “no man’s land” between a tradition she had owned and a modernity she had very little understanding of. Chinese notions of civilisation came to be regarded as backward, and Chinese civilisation itself as stagnant. Conservatives clashed with evolutionists, iconoclasts, anti-Confucianists and eventually socialists, as various intellectual currents attempted to answer the question of “whither China?”. The debate within China over “civilisation” – and “Chineseness” – endured into the late twentieth century without resolution.

During the latter half of the twentieth century, various attempts have been made by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to address the ambivalence of contemporary China’s cultural self-perception. As mentioned above, this dissertation focuses on one such attempt – the long running promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation of the late 1990s. The most popular approaches to foreign reporting of socialist spiritual civilisation have tended to focus on Jiang Zemin, his world of factional tug-o-war, and the dissidents who have been marginalised by his enforced socialist norm. Some commentators choose to turn the
campaign into an almost farcical parody, making light of an ideologically bankrupt regime’s attempt to teach morality and ethics to its population; while others see it as Jiang’s personal attempt to bolster support from leftist conservatives within Party ranks – and to add to his own ideological prestige.

Launched as a morality campaign, the promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation is aimed, according to its rhetoric, at forging a morally resilient Chinese citizenry of the future. To do this the CCP has set about formulating and propagating its own redefined notion of “civilisation” and what it means to be “civilised”. It will be demonstrated that many of the strategies of the campaign have aimed at painting over the epistemic break which has long separated the once synonymous notions of “civilisation” and “Chineseness”. In doing so, it will be argued, the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation serves a two-fold function of maintaining civilisation and maintaining Party power. Specifically, these functions include:

(i) Civilisation maintenance: modernising the grand narrative of Chinese civilisation, and
(ii) Power maintenance: civilising the grand project of China’s modernisation, and thus affording legitimacy to the state through its successful exercise of moral authority.

This dissertation will consider the various semiotic devices and strategies employed throughout the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation to project this new ideas of civilisation onto the collective imagination of the Chinese citizenry. These strategies shall be conceptualised as “semiotic technologies”, and shall be examined using the classification of mythology, imagery and ritual. Their deployment in the construction of a discourse of Chinese past and future history that reclaims the achievement of “civilisation” as an altogether Chinese historical goal shall be analysed. It will be shown that the appropriation and modification of “civilisation” by the CCP has played a key role in the Party’s continuing effort to underwrite its own long term legitimacy in the absence of a revolutionary or charismatic leadership. The CCP’s success or otherwise in employing “semiotic technologies”, therefore, shall be shown to be representative of the semiotic capacity of the state to maintain political legitimacy. It shall also be argued that in providing for a prescriptive reworking of China’s collective self-image through a considered mix of teleological and eschatological constructs, the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation results in a blurring of the lines between self-perception and self-deception, Westernisation and what it means to be Chinese.
02. ideas(s) of civilization
This chapter will introduce traditionally Chinese and “Western” conceptions of civilisation, compare and contrast them, examine the historical dimensions of these ideas, and discuss their relative importance to both Chinese and Western perspectives. In doing so, it will be argued that both Western and pre-modern Chinese ideas relating to civilisation distinguish between two broad notions of civilisation: (i) civilisation as a collective identity or moral community; and (ii) civilisation as a normative progression from barbarism toward a civilised state of being.

According to the first notion, civilisation may be described as ideas relating to a unique collective identity – an imagined community characterised by a common morality or value system. It could be described as a collective mode of thinking – a type of software or operating system - that is common to a community and that distinguishes one community from another. Civilisation sits atop a hierarchical classification of human communities. As the terms “family” or “genus” describe basic classifications within botany and horticulture, “civilisation” relates to a wide grouping of essentially unique subsets of humankind. It refers to a title conferred upon members of the rather elite club of macro-cultures which, at one time or other are considered to have achieved an advanced state of development known as civilisation. Such collective entities as Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, China, “the West” and the like come to mind. In this sense, civilisations are historical as well as moral entities. They appear as the ships of history, carrying their respective cargoes of humanity as they navigate the vicissitudes of time – ultimately either staying afloat, sinking, or drifting slowly into oblivion.

The second broad notion of civilisation refers to civilisation as a process – a normative progression - which has as its terminus the actualisation of civilisation. In this sense, the achievement of superior levels of literacy and morality or the attainment of technological

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1 Chinese ideas relating to civilisation discussed in this chapter relate to traditional or “pre-modern” Chinese ideas of civilisation expressed by the character hua (華).
2 System of plant classification developed by Carl Linnaeus (1707 – 1778), Professor of Medicine, Uppsala University, Sweden.
skill and scientific knowledge have been seen as milestones punctuating the process of civilisation. Ideas about what civilisation entails, however, inevitably differ from one civilisation to another since these ideas are both agents for and reflections of a civilisation's identity – a civilisation's uniqueness. The groupings of people described as civilisations are epistemically unique, and they are oriented toward goals that are both reflections of and agents for their fundamental uniqueness.

From an historiographical perspective, civilisation describes ideas relating to a process of historical change, a discourse relating to the journey of a collective historical entity from its imagined beginnings to its intended endpoint. While one civilisation may view history as an inevitable progression toward the achievement of civilisation, another may perceive history as a process of regression away from such a state. For some civilisations, history may appear as cyclical or even timeless or ultimately irrelevant. Depending on the historical consciousness of a civilisation, the historical imperative or end-point of civilisation may be found in either the future, the past, or anywhere in between. These differing conceptions of history and civilisation may be graphically represented as follows:\(^3\)

![Graphical representation of civilisation progressions](image)

chinese ideas of civilisation

It is in the word *hua*, claims Wang Gungwu, that “the Chinese first captured the concept of civilisation”.\(^4\) The most common meaning of *hua* is to transform or to change, and, continues

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3 Key: The black dots represent a civilisation; the arrow represents the direction toward the goal of civilisation; P stands for the past; and F stands for the future.

Wang, “insofar as it meant to change people, customs, or ways of thought, there is something of the idea of the aggressive, expansionist idea of “to civilise”.

In a passage in the Book of Changes highlighting the importance of change, it is stated that, “change must occur when the existing way is no longer adequate, and only through change can a new workable way be found. As long as it works, the existing way lasts. Heaven protects those who change with the change of circumstances.”

Wang cites four aspects to the usage of hua: to “change for the better through moral authority”; to “change through metaphysical powers” (following the advent of popular Taoism and Buddhism); to “change through education and example (jiaohua)”; and finally, by the Tang dynasty, as a word used to refer to the Chinese world.

By the Tang dynasty, the Han Chinese elites had developed a notion of civilisation, like the English many centuries later, that distinguished themselves from less-developed “others”. There were some Han Chinese, however, who were also regarded as lacking the requisite qualities of civilisation: those who lacked a written language, were still engaged in hunting and gathering, tattooed their bodies, walked barefoot, lived in caves, followed shamans, or believed in superstitions.

China was the “Middle Kingdom”, a name that reflected a worldview in which the civilised Chinese were the centrepiece, and where barbarism increased towards the peripheries. The assimilative power of Chinese civilisation was such that the Mongol and Manchu barbarians who militarily conquered the Middle Kingdom inevitably adopted “superior” Chinese ways, writing her language and emulating her Sage-kings.

The Chinese commonly regarded the Sage-kings as pioneers of civilisation. It was Pao Hsi who created the Eight Trigrams in order to explain the dynamics of the universe, and the likes of Huangdi, Yao and Shun who established an order based on benevolence (仁, ren) and righteousness (义, yi). But it was the “Uncrowned King” (Su wang), Confucius, in laying down a system for later kings to follow, who was most revered for his services to “civilisation”.

According to Ku Chieh-keng, “in the period of The Spring and Autumn Annals, Confucius was a Chun-tzu (君子, junzi) or “Superior Man”; in the period of the

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5 Wang Gungwu, ibid. p.147.
6 Wang Gungwu, ibid. p.150.
7 Wang Gungwu, ibid. p.147.
Warring States he was a Sheng Jen [圣人, shengren] or a “Sage”; in Western Han he was a Chiao Chu (教主, jiao zhu) or the “Lord of Religion”; after Eastern Han he was again recognised as a Sheng Jen; and at present he is once more becoming a Chun-tzu”.¹⁰ Maybe it was the title conferred upon Confucius in 1645, that best acknowledges his role as a civilising force – “Great Perfect, Most Holy Culture Spreading Former Teacher Confucius”¹¹.

According to the words of Confucius in The Analects (论语, Lunyu), “if the people be led by laws, and uniformity sought to be given them by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame. If they be led by virtue, and uniformity sought to be given them by the rules of propriety, they will have the sense of shame, and moreover will become good”.¹² Confucian orthodoxy held that a system of education based on moral and behavioural precepts (礼教, lijiao) and exemplification of the “superior man” or “gentleman” (junzi) could “change others for the better”, to make them civilised. To become civilised meant adhering to a moral code or rules of propriety embodied in the notion of li (礼), to become aware of one’s own position in the social hierarchy, to properly manage the five relationships (五伦, wulun), and to conform accordingly.¹³ Adherence to li is what separated the “superior” from the “inferior man” (小人, xiaoren), the civilised individual from the barbarian.

li may be regarded as a civilising force, or as Xin Ren states, an “important factor in the cultivation of the human personality”.¹⁴ It held that through learning, the educated could achieve civilisation, while the lower echelons of society required more coercive forms of control. As a ritualistic moral code it entrenched power relationships by perpetuating the social inequities inherent within the five relationships. Li located moral authority with political authority through a ritualism that reinforced the notion that deference to authority

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¹¹ Da Cheng Zhi Sheng Wen Xuan Xian Shi Kong Zi. Cited in Chen Jingpan, ibid. p.18.
and maintenance of the norm were part of a natural order. Apart from constituting the centrepiece of an intrinsically Chinese moral code, *li* formed the basis of a state ideology spanning a number of dynasties. Such ritualistic measures as the “village compact” system, developed during the Ming dynasty, assisted in the dissemination of “civilised” values to China’s vast rural population. This system involved the reading of largely confucian-based instructions, such as the “Six Maxims” (*Liu yu*) and the “Imperial Sacred Edict” (*Sheng yu*) by local officials in various villages throughout China. Through such readings, rules of propriety were inculcated among the population, and local models of civilised behaviour were identified and publicly acknowledged.

Despite the varied discourses of change that can be found throughout dynastic history, the agency to effect change was afforded to only the most enlightened of sage-rulers, and the ability to achieve civilisation remained the exclusive domain of the literate, educated and elite in Chinese society. Any attempt on the part of a mere mortal to uproot the *status quo* was considered rebellious, even sacrilegious. The models of civilisation were part of a Confucian state ideology that monopolised the setting of China’s moral imperatives for millennia. Morality, power and the agency to effect change in pre-modern China were inextricably linked, and located at the apex of China’s social hierarchy.

Although the importance of change and the process of civilisation is recognised throughout China’s two thousand years of Confucian state ideology, the Chinese lacked a conception of history as progress towards an ideal future. It is widely held that the traditional Chinese view of history is a cyclical one, of timelessness and proximity to the past. A system of dating which was based on the year of an Emperor’s reign, for example, reinforced an historical consciousness devoid of a sense of change over the *longue durée*. John Fitzgerald notes how this consciousness is reflected in the distinction between the natural and built environment in Chinese garden design, commenting that “passing seasons added a cyclical dimension to this design, as patterns of death and rebirth shared sacred time with the vicissitudes of human

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If the Chinese were to put their faith in any historical locality, it was the past, not the future, that was idealised. In the popular and “high” cultures of pre-twentieth century China, writes William Jenner, “there is little sense of secular development or change, unless as a decline from imagined golden and silver ages of remote, pre-dynastic antiquity”.18 “In traditional China”, claims Vera Schwarz, “history took the place of religion”.19 A strong attachment to the past, she claims, was a “sacred commitment”, and references to the past became a major source of moral value. The past was regarded as a repository of everything good, an exemplification of virtue. Throughout Chinese history, the past was held aloft as a normative symbol, a goal of history, an example of the way things ought to be.

If any discourse of change can be discerned from such a view of history it would be one of regression rather than long-term progress. In 1895, Yan Fu stated that “the Chinese believe that to revolve from order to disorder, from ascension to decline, is the natural way of heaven and of human affairs”.20 This is, of course, reminiscent of the Confucian notion of yi zhi yi luan - a period of order followed by a period of chaos. Despite its level of order or chaos, the present was seen as a mere shadow of the perfection of antiquity; one could only attempt to emulate the golden ages of the remote past. The public examination system’s “eight-legged

17 John Fitzgerald, ibid. p.50.
essay" (baguwen), for example, is just one of the many literary and artistic conventions which were deemed never to become obsolete. China's moral tradition was such that to attempt change would be equivalent to swimming against the current of history or to disrupt the natural order of things. Although Chinese history is punctuated by some notable achievements, it may be characterised on the whole as a history of emulation rather than innovation. Developments during the nineteenth century, however, were to threaten and ultimately undermine the supremacy of traditional orthodoxy, the symbols it employed and the world-view and historical consciousness it perpetuated.

western ideas of civilisation

Although it entered the Western lexicon relatively recently, civilisation is a term which has attracted a menagerie of often disparate and contradictory definitions. The multifarious nature of the term is reflected in Ferdinand Braudel's suggestion that "the study of civilisation involves all the social sciences." And judging by the interest it has attracted throughout the twentieth century, the study of civilisations has become almost a discipline in itself. "Civilisation" is a term nestled between the realms of fact and value, and a distinction has been widely recognised between its normative and descriptive notions, or as Samuel P Huntington states, "civilisation in the singular and civilisations in the plural". Although it often describes a cultural tradition and collective modes of thinking and doing handed down from the past, many interpretations link the term to the future and to the development of humankind's collective potential.

According to Braudel, in about 1819 the word "civilisation" began to assume a meaning relating to "the characteristics common to the collective life of a period or group". "Throughout history", writes Huntington, "civilisations have provided the broadest


21 Ferdinand Braudel describes the term 'civilisation' as a neologism, having emerged in eighteenth century France. From France, states Braudel, the term spread rapidly throughout Europe. In England, for example, 'civilisation' replaced the long-established term 'civility'.


identifications for people”. To Durkheim and Mauss, a civilisation is a totality, “a kind of moral milieu encompassing a certain number of nations, each national culture being only a particular form of the whole”.25 Civilisations, it could be argued, represent imagined communities – a paradigm inherently more arbitrary than the model of the nation-state. Along these lines, “civilisation” could be defined as “moral community”, as opposed to “culture” (anthropological), “religion” (spiritual), “nation” (political), and “market” (economic). A rather concise definition is provided by Matthew Melko, who suggests that civilisations are “a number of exclusive, durable, mortal macrocultures”.26

The second notion of civilisation begins with the idea of civilisation as representing a singular ideal form - the opposite of barbarism - civilisation as opposed to nature, or what Durkheim may describe as “triumph over nature”. In *Civilisation and its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud laments the tension between a society which tells us to “love thy neighbour as thyself” and an inherent nature which encourages us “to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him”.27 Essentially, nature is what human beings are born with, and civilisation is the extent to which they “rise” above it. This is the civilisation of civility, morals, “high culture”, good manners and starched shirt collars. This very eighteenth century notion of civilisation was, in the words of Braudel, “confined to a few privileged peoples or groups, humanity’s ‘elite’”.28 It is a notion typified in some of the more chauvinistic Western writings of the time that were later critiqued by Edward Said in his *Orientalism*. In 1793, for example, the first English ambassador to Beijing, Lord Macartney, remarked of the Chinese officials, “they seldom have recourse to pocket handkerchiefs, but spit about the rooms without mercy, blow their noses in their fingers, and wipe them with their sleeves, or upon anything near them”.29

Apart from the stark dichotomy between “civilisation” and “barbarism”, there is also a distinction, albeit often ambiguous, between “civilisation” and “culture”. For the Germans,

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24 Ferdinand Braudel, op cit. p.6.
28 Ferdinand Braudel, op cit. p.7.
“culture” (*Kultur*) has tended to have more to do with spiritual or philosophical ideas, while “civilisation” (*zivilization*) referred to more scientific concerns. Hence the German concern that civilisation had the potential to destroy culture. Marx, for instance, states that the bourgeoisie “compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.”\(^{30}\) As far as the French and to an extent the British were concerned, “civilisation” and “culture” meant much the same thing, although “civilisation” hinted at a higher stage of development. In this sense too, civilisation has the potential to destroy cultures in-as-much as it swallows them up and changes them. In a recent *National Geographic* magazine, Joel Swerdlow writes of critics who “are convinced that Western - often equated with American - influences will flatten every cultural crease, producing, as one observer terms it, one big “McWorld”.\(^{31}\) This is the civilisation of “Westernisation”, “globalisation” and cultural obliteration. “Civilisation” thus becomes positivist and expansionist, destroying as it builds, denoting progress to a “higher” stage of socio-economic development.

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines civilisation as: “making or becoming civilised; state reached in this process... advanced stage in social development”.\(^{32}\) If to be “civilised” is a good thing, then to “civilise” is to be in the process of becoming better. While what is “better” is determined to a large extent by the learnings of the past (eg. the accumulated knowledge of a civilisation’s shared experience), it is also a hope that is projected onto the future. The evangelical endeavours of colonial Western missionaries, medieval morality plays, literacy programs and feats of engineering and architectural achievement may all be seen in terms of a “civilising” process. As an “advanced stage in social development”, civilisation suggests forward momentum, a journey into a brighter future. Civilisation becomes progress, and the story of civilisation becomes “history as progress”.

Progress is change, a progression from one state of affairs to another. It is generally held that progress is good. A belief in progress, states Sidney Pollard, “implies the assumption that a pattern of change exists in the history of mankind, that this pattern is known, that it consists

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of irreversible changes...towards improvement from a less to a more desirable state of affairs". Ultimately, progress is “change for the better” - a term situated at the nexus of fact and value, memory and promise, which according to Bury, “involves a synthesis of the past and a prophecy of the future”. Whatever specific pattern of change progress manifests, it follows a generic emplotment of “good, better, best”, where “good”, through change becomes “better”, tending ultimately to “best”. The point where “best” is located becomes history’s ultimate epoch, or in the words of Francis Fukayama, “the end of history”. In a discourse of progress, therefore, the plot has been set and the ending has already been written - all that’s left is to fill in the spaces. It becomes, if you like, “proforma history”.

In 1896, Lord Acton referred to history as a “progressive science”, stating later that “we are bound to assume, as the scientific hypothesis on which history is to be written, a progress in human affairs”. Acton is considered a proponent of cosmogenic progress, a view of progress which sees it as the design of Providence, or as the earthly manifestation of progress in the cosmological realm. Immanuel Kant, another proponent of cosmogenic progress, saw man “as a species of rational beings who are steadily progressing from the evil to the good”. In such views of progress, historical agency lies in the will of the divine, while man carries on, according to de Toqueville, as “blind instruments in the hands of God”. Contrary to the above, proponents of anthropogenic progress have tended to view progress as a result of man’s ability to reason, or as a result of the “transmission of acquired assets”. An advocate of the latter, Charles Perrault, through one of his characters in A Comparison of the Ancients and Moderns, states, “the latest arrivals have, as it were, inherited the estate of their predecessors, and have added to it a great many new acquisitions which they have acquired through their own study and effort”. In this same loose grouping of thinkers, as a proponent of “survival of the fittest”, Charles Darwin asserts that “as natural selection works solely by

34 E H Carr, op cit. p.122.
38 James Reeve Pusey, ibid. p.12.
and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress
towards perfection".41

The late-twentieth century West's love affair with futurism, as evident in the preference for
products that purport to be the 'newest', 'latest' or most 'technologically advanced', is
indicative of a continuing popular faith in anthropogenic progress. As the West enters a new
historical epoch, the so-called "information age", the "information superhighway" has come
to be widely perceived as a major thoroughfare to the future. The very idea of "the future"
conjures up images of a technocratic utopia, a brave new world of human cloning, "stealth"
weaponry and nanotechnology. Against a background of such technological determinism, it
seems that as long as Microsoft continues releasing newer and improved versions of its
*Windows* operating system, the West can rest assured that it is edging ever nearer to
perfection.

The idea of "progress" can, to an extent, be described as an attempt to give both meaning and
order to an otherwise perplexing and seemingly chaotic process of historical change. The
insignificant present moment and a past obscured by the sands of time find meaning as grid
references on a map of the future. An individual's actions, whatever they may be, can be seen
as steps toward (or away from) a final universally identified destination - that point where "x"
marks the spot. Neil Armstrong's "one small step for man", for example, becomes "one giant
leap for mankind". As "progress", history is no stumble in the dark. It becomes an ordered
march along a pre-plotted route; each footprint left behind pointing confidently forward. The
strange thing is though, that the point where "x" marks the spot, wherever that may be, is
more reflective of historical value than historical fact. In this context, historical destination
"x" is more akin to algebraic variable "x": a variable to which any value may be assigned.
Various prospective historical destinations have been identified in the eschatologies of any
number of religions, political regimes and schools of thought.

For millennia, Christianity has taught that history leads ultimately towards the Day of
Judgement and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. For Immanuel Kant, the climax of

p.39.
history occurs with the realisation of human freedom. Marx, through his notion of dialectical materialism, suggests communism as the goal of world history. In his highly controversial article, *The End of History?*, Francis Fukuyama argues that "liberal democracy may constitute the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution". For Arnold Toynbee, history would ultimately arrive at a "world civilisation", a *union sacree* transcendent of all traditional divisions. Others point toward modernisation, the perfecting of human nature, technological mastery and knowledge of the universe through science as historical niranas. Progress pays homage to a pantheon of gods, many at odds with each other. One only has to consider the motives of luddite Theodore Kaczynski, the so-called "unabomber", to acknowledge that "progress" often involves a clash of values. "The Industrial Revolution and its consequences", he argues in the introduction of his manifesto, "have been a disaster for the human race". Like Kaczynski, there are many others, though generally more subtle, who believe that history has been one big case of "from bad to worse". Freud, for example, sees civilisation as an oppressive force, and argues that as we "progress", our basic animal urges are thwarted and transformed into psychopathology. These proponents of "history as regression" suggest that an ideal future may in fact be found in the past. As an obviously eschatological and sometimes emotional and controversial venture, it is no wonder that "progress", in its various forms, has become known as the modern religion or curse.

the importance of civilisation

The above discussion serves to emphasise the notion that civilisation is essentially nothing but a collection of ideas, albeit a significant and potentially powerful collection of ideas. As discussed, the importance of ideas of civilisation to both pre-modern China and the West is two-fold. On the one hand, these ideas have created for these imagined communities a

42 Francis Fukuyama, op cit. p.58.
43 Francis Fukuyama, ibid. p.xi.
45 Theodore Kaczynski, "Industrial Society and its Future" ("The Unabomber Manifesto") at www.hotwired.com/special/unabom/list.html
46 Robert Wright, loc cit. p.64.
collective identity, and on the other hand these ideas have provided for these communities a conceptualisation of historical direction.

In both the Chinese and Western cultural traditions there exists a demonstrated correlation of civilisation maintenance – or the maintenance of certain ideas relating to civilisation - and the maintenance of political power. In both traditions, grand narratives of civilisation have served to create and maintain the legitimacy and power of political structures. The ability to draw lineage from an established moral tradition or cosmological order, and to equate its ambitions with the historical imperatives and currents of a broader civilisation, has been widely acknowledged as a determinant of political legitimacy for revolutionary and established regimes alike. The ability to appropriate and manipulate ideas of civilisation to fit its own ideological or political agenda has similarly been acknowledged as a determinant of a regime’s success in establishing for itself a sacred succession.

While there are many examples that demonstrate how ideas of civilisation have been used in “the West” to legitimise the existence or actions of a political regime, it cannot be said that the link between moral and political authority is entirely necessary. Indeed, the function of creating and maintaining moral norms and shared values has tended to be shared among the religious, academic, civil, legal and even commercial spheres in Western societies where an independence from executive political power exists. By contrast, the Chinese cultural tradition allowed no separation between political and moral authority, and inherent within the role of leading the Chinese people politically was – aided by a vast and coordinated bureaucracy - the role of leading China as a moral community and protecting the integrity of her “thought borders”. The state effectively held a monopoly over China’s moral sphere. For this reason China has been described by some Western commentators as a “civilisation-state”. 47

While traditionally Chinese and Western conceptions of civilisation distinguish broadly between the notion of civilisation as a moral community and the notion of civilisation as a normative progression, they differ wildly in terms of ideas relating to what it actually means to be civilised. Moral differences aside, the historical dimensions of these two broad

47 See Lucian Pye……., etc
conceptions of civilisation could not be more at odds with each other – their historical goals located at polar opposite extremes of a temporal spectrum. So what happened when the civilisations clashed? How did the civilisation-state respond to the breaching of her thought borders, the invasion of a new morality and an attack on her historical imperatives? As the proceeding chapters will discuss, the impact of Western concepts of civilisation on the Chinese cosmological and moral order since the mid 19th century has been massive. These concepts have both contended with, informed and ultimately transformed Chinese ideas of civilisation, with formidable implications for the visionaries and bureaucrats atop China’s political apex.
This chapter will examine how contact with the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century fundamentally altered Chinese ideas of civilisation. It shall be demonstrated how the synonymy between “civilisation” and “Chineseness”, embodied in the character hua and developed throughout China’s dynastic history, was erased within a matter of decades. In conclusion, it will be argued that this – aided by a corresponding failure of moral authority - ultimately resulted in a questioning of the value of the uniqueness of Chinese civilisation, its moral tradition, and what it means to be civilised in modern China.

The twentieth century has proven problematic for Chinese civilisation. As the sun set over the Qing Dynasty’s empire late last century, a new era was dawning. And it was new in every sense of the word. As barbarian gunboats and clippers began to ply Chinese coastal waters, and as new threats to the old order emerged, the Middle Kingdom came to the realisation that it may not actually be the centre of the universe. It was a rapid fall from grace. A handful of embarrassing military and diplomatic encounters with an aggressive West was all it took for the Chinese to realise that they had become merely part-players in the history of humankind. This particularly twentieth century problem came to be summarised by Hu Shi, who states that the “the problem of China...is the problem of how to bring about a satisfactory adjustment in a situation where an ancient civilisation has been forced against its will into daily and intimate contact with the new civilisation of the West”.

In an imperial edict to King George III, Emperor Qian Long asserted, “we have never set much store on strange or ingenious objects, nor do we need any more of your country’s...
manufactures". And in the space of only a few years, Feng Kuei-feng, a Qing official, writes of the Western barbarians, "Why are they small and yet strong? Why are we large and yet weak? We must try to discover some means to become their equal". It didn’t take the Chinese long to realise they were out-gunned by a materially advanced West, but it certainly wasn’t the first time that the Middle Kingdom was forced to acknowledge their military inferiority to an external barbarian force. Indeed, while the British may have seemed materially advanced, they remained nevertheless (for a time) barbarians, although, by 1861, Princes Gong, Guiliang and Wenxiang, in suggesting a new system for the management of "barbarian" affairs, cautiously noted, “the present situation is somewhat different from the past".

The founding of the Zongli Yamen, a proto foreign office, signified the beginnings of the “self-strengthening” (自强, ziqiang) movement, the first serious policy acknowledgement that things had indeed changed. A few years later the rhetoric had become heavier, with Jiangsu provincial treasurer Ding Richang stating that the situation was unprecedented since ancient times (qiangu wei chuang zhiju). Around this time, Ding, along with others such as Li Hongzhang, began officially calling for bianfa (变法, literally, to change methods), or reform, an iconoclastic term rarely used in the vocabulary of administration. What made the situation increasingly different was that a combination of military defeats, a crumbling dynasty, and challenges to the traditional cosmology were sowing the seeds of self-doubt and reappraisal, so much so that “by the end of the nineteenth century, it was widely discernible among the Chinese educated elite”. Not only had China’s territorial borders been compromised, but the integrity of her “thought borders” had come into question.

Hao Chang states that the reformism of the latter half of the nineteenth century was a clear demonstration of “the penetration of self-doubt from the periphery toward the centre of the

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traditional political order”. The post-Enlightenment notion of a secular state, humanism, and a Copernican view of the universe cast a shadow of doubt over the signs, symbols and meanings of the Chinese cosmos, posing a serious threat to the civilisation-state. Within this environment of increasing skepticism, rigorous textual scrutiny of Confucian scriptures by scholars, which had begun in the seventeenth century, was resulting in the desacrilisation and historicisation of scriptures - transforming the floundering state-ideology into a mere subject of study. And politically, the mystical title “Son of Heaven” was starting to lose its mystique as many reformers warmed towards the idea of a republic. “The majesty of an emperor”, writes Liang Qichao, “depends on mysterious historical concepts”, concepts which amounted to little with the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911. But above all, this invasion of new thought represented a decisive break in the continuity of the collective Chinese identity or, as Hao puts it, a crisis of “orientational order”. A cosmology based on such symbols as the five elements, eight trigrams and yin-yang was seemingly irreconcilable with the Western worldview. For many, adoration of the past was giving way to a love of the “modern” - itself a concept exotic to the Chinese thought-world.

new conceptions of history

A growing sense of progressive history was reflected in the proliferation of historical and scientific museums during the early twentieth century, marking, writes John Fitzgerald, a “transition from an ethical to a progressive historical consciousness”. Museums, continues Fitzgerald, “relegated the past to history and... hinted at what the future held in store”. Archaeological discoveries such as Peking Man (北京人, Beijingeren) contributed to an objectification of the past, transforming it into a field of scientific study based on Western evolutionary (and sometimes diffusionary) theory. In discussing the role of the National Central Museum in 1930, historian Gu Jiegang announced, “what we propose to do with history is a great act of destruction... Our acts of destruction are not cruel activities; we are only restoring these various things to their historical position... in sum we are sending them to

54 Hao Chang, ibid. p.7.
56 J G Andersson’s discoveries of neolithic painted pottery sites in the early 1920s supported the claims of diffusion theorists (such as Terrien de Lacouperie), since Mesopotamia and Russian Turkestan possessed painted pottery which predated those in China. See Wang Gungwu, op cit. p.143.
the museum". In a sense, museums were veritable mausoleums of the past, national treasures became national artefacts as glass cases separated their “traditional” contents from the increasingly “modern” world outside.

With the rise of the “modern” and the “Western” came a new sense of history which saw a departure from a traditional cyclical view of history to a new unilinear sense of time. This represented a break from the past, as history now became a “progressive continuum toward a glorious future”. “Oriental time” was superseded by “universal time” as China began to run off the same historical clock as everybody else. Time was moving forward, progressing towards modernity and away from the past. It is widely acknowledged that by 1895, reformers Kang Youwei and Yan Fu had each come to an “almost mystical faith in progress”, and by the 1900s, suggests Fitzgerald, the Chinese citizenry were becoming a “secular, historically-clocked, imagined community with a distinctly Chinese character”.

The image of an “awakening” China also reflected an idea of progress - as if China had just awoken from a long slumber to realise that the world had passed her by. In mass politics, notes Fitzgerald, “awakening” was used in either a “transitive form of awakening others (huangqi, huanxing)” or an imperative form, as in “Wake up! (xing! juewu!)”. Many calls for China to “wake up” were accented with a certain amount of immediacy, for the world through Chinese eyes had suddenly become quite Darwinian. Many of China’s intellectuals were recognising that change, or reform, was necessary for survival. “Why must our institutions change?”, asked Liang Qichao, “because of all things between Heaven and earth there is nothing that does not change”. Of all the theories of progress floating around turn-of-the-century China, evolution (jinhua) had become increasingly popular. Evolutionary theory was disseminated initially through *T’ien-yen lun (The Theory of Evolution)*, Yan Fu’s

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57 John Fitzgerald, op cit. pp.54-55.
58 Leo Ou-fan Lee, op cit. p.111.
60 John Fitzgerald, op cit. p.49.
61 John Fitzgerald, op cit. p.3.
62 Liang Qichao, “A General Discussion of Reform” (Pien-fa t’ong i) [intro], *Current Affairs (Shi-wu Pao)* Issue 1, 9 August 1896. Cited in James Reeve Pusey, op cit. pp.91-92.
paraphrastic translation of T H Huxley’s *Evolution and Ethics* published in 1898; and then through such publications as Liang Qichao’s journal *Shih-wu Pao (Current Affairs).*

In his essay *The Year 1916*, Chen Duxiu states, “to call yourself a person of the twentieth century; you must create a new civilisation of the twentieth century and not confine yourself to following that of the nineteenth. For the evolution of human civilisation is replacing the old with the new...constantly continuing and constantly changing”.

Sun Yatsen, while not a proponent of Social Darwinism, saw the development of society in evolutionary terms, dividing history into the four progressive epochs of prehistoric chaos, theocracy (*shenquan*), monarchy (*junquan*), and democracy (*minquan*). Out of all the theories of progress debated during the first half of the twentieth century, it was an appropriation of Karl Marx’s theory of dialectical materialism that would ultimately win out (through the barrel of a gun rather than in classroom debate). In the meantime, however, these new visions of the future would lead to criticism and a rejection of the past.

In intellectual circles, a changing vocabulary reflected this change in historical orientation. Just prior to the founding of the republic, the term *shidai* (時代, “epoch” or “era”), had slipped into the nomenclature of modernising intellectuals. Used invariably to refer to “the present time”, Lung-kee Sun suggests that *shidai* carried with it the “implication that it is a time of breathlessly rapid changes and incessant innovation”.

Later employment of the term by revolutionaries would ensure that *shidai* was to take a prominent place in nationalistic discourse. Another such term which took on new meaning among May Fourth iconoclasts was the word *xin* (新), or “new”. To be “new” meant to be opposed to the “old” (舊, *jiu*); to be “new” was to be modern and, by implication, anti-traditional. Leo Ou-fan Lee notes that “the proliferation of journal titles and terms composed of the word ‘new’ was striking”. Examples of this included: “New People” (*Xinmin*), “New Youth” (*Xin qingnian*), “New Tide” (*Xinchao*), “New Literature and Art” (*Xin wenyi*), “New Life” (*Xin shenghuo*), “New Society” (*Xin shehui*), and “New Epoch” (*Xin shidai*), “New Culture” (*xin wenhua*), “people

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of the new era” (xin shidai de ren).  

a new conception of civilisation

It was the Japanese who first used the characters that combine to form wenming (bunmei in the Japanese language) as a translation of the French word civilisation. In the late nineteenth century, the term was introduced to the Chinese language through Japanese translations of European works on history and society. For the Chinese, wenming denoted a higher stage in the progress of humankind, and its introduction ushered forth a whole new way of looking at progress and what it meant to be “civilised”.

Derived from the character wen (文), wenming (文明) conveyed the importance that the Chinese had always placed on literacy and education as keys to civilisation, but it also conveyed the idea of civilisation as a universal or mainly Western phenomenon. Having come from the West, wenming tended to describe development in largely Eurocentric terms, such as the forms of scientific and material progress embodied in the industrial revolution. Although the term could be used to refer to China’s own five thousand-year-old civilisation, it referred to other civilisations as well, and often referred to notions of progress that were completely foreign to China. The term would often be used in association with words such as renlei (人类), reflecting its inherently internationalist application. Its introduction to China itself a telling demonstration of the globalising forces it embodied.

Containing the character hua (花), wenhua (文化) on the other hand, now associated with the English term “culture”, referred to a more sinocentric definition tending to have more to do with thought and behaviour. The term wenhua (bunka in Japanese), like wenming, had been imported into China. But unlike the English “culture”, wenhua, carrying the character hua, was used in reference to China’s traditional moral order based on the concept of li. The association of this term with China’s cultural legacy is reflected in the distinction between the old and the new cultures made by reformers in their calls for a new ethical system through the

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67 Find reference for Leo Ou-fan Lee.
New Culture Movement (新文化运动, Xin wenhua yundong). While wenhua described a heritage considered by many Chinese to be obsolete, wenming described an exotic idea of progress that many were keen to adopt.

The apotheosis of these terms signaled the end of a singular notion of civilisation in China, and reflected the loss of moral consensus which had viewed China as the centre of civilisation. Consensus was to be replaced by debate and the emergence of a moral ambiguity that would remain unresolved for quite some time.

ambivalence & the failure of moral authority

According to Kang Youwei, despite the West’s material superiority, the Chinese were superior when it came to morality. The West could teach China nothing, he claimed, except science and technical knowledge. “In recent years”, Kang states, “the entire country has gone crazy: people discard every bit of China’s political, moral, and social tradition without finding out what is right or wrong”. Like many other reformers, Kang believed that China could successfully enter the modern world while still preserving its “national essence” (国粹, guocui), referred to also as “national soul” (国魂, guohun), “national character” (国民性, guomin xing), or “national situation” (国情, guoqing). According to Liang Qichao, national character was the force behind China’s historical continuity. “A nation has its character”, he states, “as an individual has his...To lose one’s character is to lose one’s essence. The same is true of a nation”. Yan Fu had similarly argued that as the source of China’s “national character”, Confucianism had helped China to evolve a strong single entity.

In 1907, Lu Xun wrote that it was almost inevitable for the Chinese, having been for so long surrounded by less advanced peoples, to “persist in their honoured tradition and eventually to become victims of Western aggression”. In China, many were recognising that a

68 Kung-Chuan Hsiao, op cit. p.539.
69 Chester C Tan, op cit. pp.36-37.
70 Yongnian Zheng, op cit. p.73.
71 Paraphrasing from Lu Xun, “Wen-hua p’ien-chih lun”, Lu Hsun ch’uan-chi, chuan 1 Cited in Kung-Chuan Hsiao, A Modern China and a Modern World: K’ang Yu-Wei, Reformer & Utopian 1858-1927, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1975. pp.558-559. This follows a reasoning...
progressive West, and Japan, stood in contrast to the apparent stagnancy of their own civilisation. This comparative perspective, resulting from decades of “foreign insult” (外侮, waiwu) - the Opium Wars, foreign concessions, and the unfavourable outcome of the Versailles treaty - led to a new phenomenon of anti-traditionalism, self-loathing and culture bashing. There was a growing sense of Chinese tradition’s incompatibility with the modern world it had been rudely awakened to.

The Chinese moral tradition, it seemed, lacked the elements required to build a modern nation-state peopled by a modern citizenry. Philosopher Feng Youlan, for example, reflecting the feelings of many, argued that China’s “subjective” moral tradition had left her ill-prepared for the “objective” rules of modernisation. Similarly, Liang Qichao noted that China lacked the public spirit or “public morality” (公德, gongde) necessary to produce the “citizens” a modern nation required. In his 1902 _Theory of a New Citizenry (Xinmin shuo)_ , Liang, in advocating a dismantling of China’s “tyrannical and confused” political structure, asks, “why is it only Confucian countries that are sunk in cowardly weakness?” Over twenty years later, May Fourth writer Zhou Zuoren exhibits a strong sense of “national shame” (国耻, guochi): “we need the courage to confront our own repulsiveness, to repent sincerely for the past, to reform our traditional erroneous way of thinking and evil habits so as to achieve some independence”.

One of the more concentrated critiques came from the damning words of iconoclastic intellectual Chen Tu-hsiu, first secretary general of the CCP, who described China as a “sick old man”:

> What strikes our eyes is the misrule of the soldiers, the emptiness of the treasury, the evanescence of productive enterprises, the sinking of moral

unrelated yet coincidentally similar to that of E H Carr, who states in _What is History_ that if he were to formulate laws of history, one such law would be that a civilisation which has come to dominate one historical period is unlikely to dominate the next. Such a civilisation, he argues, “will be too deeply imbued with the traditions, interests, and ideologies of the earlier period to be able to adapt itself to the demands and conditions of the next period”. E H Carr, _What is History?_ [1961] London, Penguin, 1990. p.116.


73 _China News Analysis_, ibid. p.5.

74 Liang Qichao, _Theory of a New Citizenry (Xinmin shuo)_ , 1902. Cited in Mark Elvin, loc cit. p.11.
standards, the corruption of the officials, the infestation of bandits and thieves, the tribulations of droughts and floods and epidemics, etc. The disdainful remarks about us by foreign observers, humiliating as they are, cannot, however, be denied. We are said to be profit-seeking and shameless, the big and sick old man, a country of vagrants and tramps, dirty as pigs, bribers and bribee, a nation of mandarins, pig-tailed people, gold-worshippers, skilled liars, afraid of might not right, befuddled and sordid.76

For republican reformers, cultivating a "sense of shame" provided an impetus for nationalism, while blaming tradition for China's relative weakness provided an impetus for fundamental change.

In *The National Renaissance*, Hu Shi states that East Asia is where the "grand finale" of the drama of world conquest by an aggressive Western civilisation is to be staged.77 He noted that China and Japan had vastly different responses to similar situations of cultural adjustment, which led to vastly different outcomes - success for Japan, and failure for China. While Japan's rapid Westernisation saved her from possible humiliation and subjugation, China's lethargy and internal malaise left her vulnerable and impotent. The unfavourable outcome for China at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 had not only triggered the May Fourth Movement, but was also confirmation that the civilisation-state was not yet considered a worthy member of a world order dominated by the West. Japan had proved her ability to successfully "borrow" from the West. Similarly, Rama IV, King of Siam, had pushed through reforms by the turn of the century to secure his vision of a state "that would express the highest ideals of Buddhist morality but at the same time measure up to the expectations and standards of the West".78 Many Chinese reformers believed that the Chinese moral tradition and "the West" need not be mutually exclusive.

Gu Hongming, an ardent critic of Hu Shih's ideas, argued that "the real, the most valuable asset of civilisation in the world is the unspoiled, the real Chinaman; and the real, unspoiled Chinaman is an asset to civilisation because he is a person who costs the world little or

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76 Wilfred Pennell, *A Lifetime with the Chinese*, Hong Kong, South China Morning Post, 1974. p.143.
77 Hu Shih, op cit. p.2.
nothing to keep him in order". According to Gu, a “real, unspoiled Chinaman” was one who couldn’t speak English and who had no time for foreign ideas much less than propagate them. It was the May Fourth iconoclasts in their preference for “idol smashing” (偶像破壞, ouxiang pohuai), not China’s cultural tradition, who were responsible for China’s moral predicament. Conservatives like Gu (despite his Western education) believed that China was better off estranging itself from the West altogether.

Various official responses punctuated the atmosphere of debate throughout the republican period. While Sun Yatsen’s Three Principles of the People (Sanmin zhuyi) addressed issues relating to China’s moral sphere, Chiang Kai-Shek’s New Life Movement (Xin shenghuo yundong) was perhaps the most notable official attempt at creating a new civilised sense of Chineseness. Launched in 1934, Chiang’s New Life Movement contained 96 rules relating to the improvement of personal hygiene and public etiquette, many of which reflected his disdain towards Western dissipations. States Theodore White:

The movement frowned on luxury, smoking, drinking, dancing, permanent waves, gambling, spitting in the streets. Every now and then the police tried to make the rules stick; they stopped pedestrians from smoking in public and told people not to throw orange peels in the gutters. States Theodore White:

Prasenjit Duara writes that the movement was a merging of traditional and modern (Confucian and Darwinian) morality as defining a nationalist narrative of Chineseness, or a uniquely Chinese character. Confucianism and other elements of Chinese culture categorised as “traditional” were appropriated and reorganised by the Guomindang in a discourse which attempted to offer a Chinese solution to the moral dilemmas of the day.

Although the apparent aim of the movement was to contest foreign imperialism, it paid deference, argues John Fitzgerald, to racist colonial Western observations about the faults of the Chinese. Helen Foster Snow goes further to argue that Chiang Kai-shek’s revival of

82 John Fitzgerald. p.105.
Confucianism and its four principles in the New Life Movement was an imitation of Mussolini's *Vita Nuova.* 83 She asserts that the movement was a form of quislingism – an attempt to instill in the Chinese populace a type of etiquette, even worldview, that conformed with foreign expectations. In the self-conscious aim to build a “better” brand of Chinese person, it was as if the movement represented an admission that the Chinese were second class or at least presented themselves as such – a kind of inverted orientalism. The movement ultimately proved to be hopelessly out of touch with the less lofty imperatives of the Chinese people, and like the ideals it embodied, it faded away behind the pressing realities and upheavals of republican China.

The failure of moral authority to adequately respond to the moral-cultural challenges posed by the West left the fate of Chinese culture in a state of suspended animation as the violent upheavals of twentieth century Chinese history unfolded. The heated debates of early twentieth century reformers were to be cut short by occupation and war with Japan and a brutal civil war between Nationalist and Communist forces. By the mid twentieth century, states Hu Shih, the Chinese had “wasted fully a century in futile resistance, prolonged hesitation, spasmodic but incoherent attempts at reform, and disastrous wars of revolution and internal strife, and today she is still displaying to the world the most pathetic spectacle of a once great nation helplessly struggling to stand on its own two feet again”. 84 The military victory of Communism, while bringing relative peace to mainland China, was to usher in a new age of cultural ambivalence and internal struggle.

Following the establishment of the Peoples Republic in 1949, Mao Zedong’s proletarian dictatorship and associated communist eschatology kept such debate silent while the ambiguous relationship between China’s past and future simmered in the background of a suffocating political atmosphere. The Maoist state fed on the ambiguities of history. While progressive in many respects, in other ways it possessed many of the characteristics of previous regimes. Mao was successful, it could be argued, in forging a relatively coherent national identity to the neglect and abuse of China’s ailing cultural identity. While Mao’s appreciation of the Chinese classics is widely acknowledged, his approach to politics as a revolutionary struggle – epitomised by the iconoclastic Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution

– kept the Chinese in a state of detachment from their cultural heritage and their cultural underpinnings. Mao’s death and subsequent ideological fallout, and a re-engagement with “the West” through opening reforms in the late 1970s, however, were to usher in a new round of debate. Like the reformers of the early twentieth century, the protagonists of debate in the 1980s were to again contest the relevance of China’s cultural heritage to a future from which it seemed far removed.

84 Hu Shih, op cit. p.3.
40. debating civilisation

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This chapter discusses the cultural and moral setting of the post-Mao period up to the mid 1990s. It examines the continuing perceived contradiction between China's "flawed" moral traditions (wenhua) and the new morality required by sweeping economic liberalisation and social change under Deng Xiaoping. It shall be argued that the inability of the Chinese Communist Party to adequately reconcile the Chinese moral tradition with its vision for a modernising China ultimately contributed to a moral ambiguity and cultural ambivalence that possessed obvious parallels to that faced by China early in the twentieth century.

Following decades of putting politics in command during the Mao period, the leadership of the CCP subsequently switched its attention to the economy. The catch-cry of the 1980s was "to get rich is glorious", and the catch-word was "modernisation". Rising levels of prosperity and the promise of an economically dazzling future were the major sources of legitimacy for a CCP that bore little resemblance to the party that had come down from the hills to liberate China in 1949. The impact of the Cultural Revolution had been disastrous. Grain production and GNP growth had suffered, birth control policies had slackened, foreign trade had been damaged, and the CCP's credibility had been irreparably tarnished. Restrictions of the commune system on labour mobility, and a growing demand for greater diversification, market liberalisation and higher wages had created a "social mandate for change". Within this setting, Deng Xiaoping extended the ambitious Four Modernisations program implemented by Hua Guofeng - a program of material advancement in the areas of agriculture, light and heavy industry, technology, and defence - and directed his policies according to the principle of "economic construction as the centre" (以经济建设为中心, yi jingji jianshe wei zhongxin).

Having kept her "thought borders" closed throughout the Mao era, China began a new period of engagement with the rest of the world with the onset of economic reforms under Deng. A call in 1978 to build "up a socialism with Chinese characteristics" which insisted on "the

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policies of reform, open-door, and giving vitality to the economy" set the tone of things to come, as the CCP divorced itself from the Maoist model of development as a political struggle, and attempted to re-establish its legitimacy through economic development based on rising living standards and material welfare. Fierce political debate raged throughout the following decade between conservative ideologues and second generation economic reformers as the extent, speed and nature of economic reform, and its implications for the Leninist political system and party legitimacy were thoroughly questioned.

According to scholar Xu Jilin, prior to the events of the Beijing Spring of 1989:

> Whenever the paradigms of social and cultural systems undergo a process of renewal or change, it is inevitable that there will be a period of disorientation... In China’s case, the cultural crisis is part and parcel of the dilemmas of the society as a whole. Cultural and moral models have lost their authority and are thus powerless to ameliorate the crisis.

The disowning of Maoist ideology and the erosion of previously enforced moral norms had created moral nihilism, cynicism, resentment and disorientation among China’s population. According to Xiaoying Wang, the economic reforms which paved the way for the capitalist market economy had not been accompanied by appropriate moral reform. “When there is a serious lack of fit between a society’s official moral code and its prevailing socio-economic reality”, states Wang, “public morality loses its very point and relevance.” It is not surprising then that a perceived “paradox of modernity” was thought to exist in China in which progress in material wellbeing was widely seen to be coupled with a corresponding “spiritual slide” (精神滑坡, jingshen huapo) or “moral decline” (道德沦丧, daode lunsang). The more China modernised, it seemed, the less moral it became. These contradictions in China’s moral sphere led ultimately to an intense questioning of the value of China’s cultural traditions in light of its perceived failure to respond to the moral challenges of the day.

This “new age” (新时代, xinshidai, 新时期, xinshiqi) of the reform era witnessed a so-called “cultural fever” (文化热, wenhua re), a climate of cultural debate in which, states Geremie Barme, “it was trendy to sift through the shards of the crumbling past and attempt to decipher from what one found some oracular message for the present”. For some, what they found in China’s cultural heritage were bleak signs for the future. For others, China’s unique characteristics ensured her ascendance to the centre of the world stage. Some reflected on a wretched modern history resulting from the impediments to development imposed by an ancient, introverted and overbearing past, while others reified such cultural baggage as a panacea for progress, drawing parallels, for instance, between the “Confucian development model” and the Protestant work ethic. The relationship between past and future was a complicated one reflected, for example, in the relationship between the avant-garde art movement and Chinese officialdom. “For its proponents”, state Julia Andrews and Gao Minglu, Western-style art “was an emblem of modernity and scientific progress. For its opponents, its challenge to traditional painting symbolised a threat to the foundations of Chinese culture”. On one level, this tension between the old and the new seems a product of its times, reflecting the unpredictable cycle of reform and repression which had come to characterise post-Mao politics. On another level this tension, along with countless others, illustrated what many saw as a widening mismatch between perceptions of where the Chinese had come from and perceptions of where they were going.

"Culture fever" and its protagonists took many forms at many levels. Neo-Confucians, traditionalists, authoritarian pragmatists, and elements of the socialist left - groups with widely varying views concerning the future of China - extolled the virtues of their various interpretations of China’s cultural heritage. Opposition groups were equally as disparate and disagreeable to each other. Iconoclasts, the radical left, radical reformers, and vocal members of the Chinese diaspora all had a bone to pick with their inherited Chineseness. What is clear is that throughout the 1980s there was no dominant discernible concept of “Chineseness” - it meant different things to different people. What was to ultimately result from the vicissitudes

89 Geremie R Barme, ibid. p.4.
of the cultural debates, however, was a dialectic without a synthesis, simultaneous currents of self-abasement and self-assertion - and no real resolution.

Such culturally-focused debate, although widely perceived as an encoded debate over political ideology, was not an entirely new phenomenon. It was, in a way, a case of *deja vu*, as many of the questions being asked had first been given a voice amongst reformers and dissidents a century previously. The preoccupation with “culture” (*wenhua*), especially amongst the urban intellectual elite, was not a novel phenomenon. The “cultural determinism” (文化决定论, *wenhua juedinglun*) of the debates was, however, criticised by some, including Beijing University Professor Luo Rongqu, who warned against the tendency of essentialising the many elements of social development under the analytical umbrella of “culture”. By this time, “Culture” had become an impossibly multifarious notion, having become synonymous with ideas as diverse as the past, Chineseness, morality, ideology, literature and the arts, and the spiritual life of the Chinese people. For the proponents of China’s moral traditions, culture symbolised moral goods inherited from the past that made the Chinese a civilised people. For its critics, culture was a hindrance to the achievement of civilisation. While the link between “culture” and “Chineseness” appeared to be widely acknowledged, establishing a link between Chineseness and “civilisation” continued to prove problematic.

Like *wenhua*, the term *wenming* had also developed a number of common usages. While *wenhua* could arguably be said to represent spiritual goods or groupings that were largely parochial, literary or artistic in nature, *wenming* could be said to represent those spiritual goods or groupings that were scientific and internationalist. Common usages of the terms implicitly placed *wenming* above *wenhua* in a hierarchy of values. The Chinese proudly laid claim to being the oldest existing civilisation, and one which had been the source of such crucial inventions as paper, gun powder, the printing press and the compass – the “four great inventions” (*sidafaming*). Although the Chinese widely regarded their homeland as the “cradle of civilisation” (*wenmingde yaolan*), it was as if critics of China’s cultural heritage questioned whether Chinese civilisation had actually ever left the cradle. While other civilisations, particularly the West, had grown up, China had been left behind to

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91 Borge Bakken, *The Exemplary Society: human improvement, social control, and the dangers of*
languish in a state of perpetual immaturity. Although China could be said to be an “ancient civilisation” (古代文明, gudai wenming), its detractors would assert that China could be said to possess a modern civilisation. The process of modernisation was itself associated with Westernisation (西化, xihua), or the active acquisition of a cultural “otherness” (它性, taxing) that was predominantly Western in character.92

The semantic ambiguity between wenhua and wenming was readily apparent in the context of the cultural debates. Wenhua, used in reference to the Chinese cultural tradition, represented a largely essentialised notion of Chineseness or “national character”. Wenming, a term as multifarious as its English equivalent, referred (among other things) to non-Chinese notions of progress. According to Ann Anagnost, “wenhua here refers to the notion of reclaiming a Chinese essence in the project of moving toward wenming, a state of civility closely identified with the advanced industrial cultures of Asia and the West”.93 Alternatively, in the words of Borge Bakken, “civilisation, in most debaters’” conception, lies in the improvement of the imagined flawed cultural character of the Chinese”.94 What could the Chinese hope to draw upon from the past to meet the new challenges of the present? A strong and enduring five thousand years of “civilisation’ (wenming)? A problematic and out-dated “culture” (wenhua)? And what expectations could the Chinese have for the future? To be regarded as civilised (wenming), yet culturally (wenhua) bankrupt? Indeed, could one be considered civilised without being cultured, or was culture itself an impediment to civilisation?

Chinese as Civilised

During the 1980s, China was making waves around the world. Deng’s program of economic liberalisation, under the banner of “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”, had made him

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the darling of the OECD. Time Magazine anointed Deng its “man of the year” in 1986 (later to be a source of embarrassment), and there was a sense that the Chinese were somehow getting it right. Even after the world had watched the violent suppression of the student movement in 1989, the Chinese economy was growing faster than its neighbours and trading partners. Many commentators claimed that such success could be explained by the so-called “Confucian development model”. A link was made between the Protestant ethic and the success-oriented work ethic of Confucian societies. Other identified characteristics included a strong *esprit de corps* due to a cultural preference towards harmony (*和, he*), a high regard for education, and an emphasis on charismatic leaders. Whatever the reasons for the strong performance of East Asian economies throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, economic success was a natural step towards the claiming of a moral victory not only for the Confucian cultural heritage but also for the Chinese civilisation-state. For once in the twentieth century, Chinese civilisation had scored points in the global arena - they had made the grade without “joining the club”.

The economic success of mainland China, Japan, and the four “little dragons” was evidence that Confucian-based culture was indeed suited to the modern age. The “Chinese cultural circle” (*zhonghua wenhua quan*) of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and the millions of overseas Chinese was perceived to be a cultural centre (*wenhua zhongxin*) of considerable strength. An answer to the supposed superiority of Western democratic capitalism had been conceptualised in the form of “Asian values”. The self-anointed spokesman of Asian values, Singapore’s Lee Kwan Yew, could now tell the West with confidence that concepts such as democracy and individualistic human rights were not the ingredients for success that had everyone thought. Chinese postmodernists too questioned Western modernist discourse which viewed development as a fatalistically linear process from the pre-modern to the modern. According to Zhang fa (et al), development holds unlimited opportunities, and “any civilisation can establish their own unique development

95 The two main points of socialism with Chinese characteristics are: (1) To insist on the four fundamental principles: (i) acceptance of the leadership of the Communist Party, (ii) adherence to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, (iii) the practice of democratic centralism, (iv) following the socialist road; and (2) To insist on the policies of reform, open-door, and giving vitality to the economy.
96 Find reference for Weber.
path and style.” In light of the emergence of non-Western discourses on economic and social development, assertions such as Fukuyama’s “end of history” seemed presumptuous.

At an international conference on *Confucian Thought and the Twenty-First Century*, one delegate noted that the tradition of Confucianism, “has proved to be a necessary condition in the industrialisation of East Asian countries”. Many in the Confucian camp also asserted that Christianity, the religion of the West, had an expiry date, because unlike secular Confucianism it was increasingly at odds with the scientism of modernity. Judging by the tone of some commentators, it seems that the West’s days at the top were also numbered, and that the new millennium was to be an Asian and predominantly Chinese one. This new atmosphere of self-confidence would eventually be reflected in such book titles as *China Can Say “No”* (*Zhongguo keyi shuo bu*) and *I Believe in China* (*Wo xiangxin Zhongguo*), the latter stating that, “the 19th century was the Englishman’s century, the 20th century is the American’s century, the 21st century will be the Chinese…people’s century”. For the Chinese leadership, all this was proof that “socialism with Chinese characteristics” was the right path towards modernisation. With Western culture as whipping boy, the Chinese propensity towards self-flagellation could be revised.

The “Asian values” argument - that so-called “universal values” that originated in the West are not so universal - had a specifically Chinese equivalent. *Guoqing* (国情, literally “the country’s situation”) is an essentialisation of the “realities” of China’s situation - realities which distinguish Chineseness from cultural “otherness”. Used originally at the turn of the century, as discussed earlier, to refer to China’s “uniqueness”, *guoqing* has come to embody the notion that the Chinese world operates according to parameters and standards that are incongruous with that of the non-Chinese world. Within this framework, even China’s problems are unique. An enormous population, unique social issues, and China’s state of economic development all point to an exclusivity that requires a fundamentally “Chinese” solution. Indeed, the imported ideology of socialism is seen only to respond adequately to

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99 China News Analysis (No. 1522), Hong Kong. p.9.
Chinese conditions in the guise of “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” (中国特色社会主义, Zhongguo tese shehui zhuyi). And in doing so, it too becomes a symbol of China’s exclusivity. States Barme, “It is now Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, as well as Deng Xiaoping’s Four Basic Principles, enshrined in Party dogma, that are claimed to be inherent elements of Chinese exclusiveness and to which the nation must cleave if it is to survive”.

Within this discourse, those elements - good and bad - which set China apart from the rest of the world become arguments for adopting uniquely Chinese solutions rather than looking to the West for inspiration.

Much of this talk of guoqing, “Chinese characteristics” or “Asian values” versus Western values presupposed that the late twentieth century signaled the beginnings of a Huntington-esque era of civilisational clash. As far as many Chinese commentators were concerned, the very content of Huntington’s article The Clash of Civilisations bore testament to the West’s moral inferiority. Western civilisation was barbaric because it was a civilisation based on conflict and, like the animal kingdom, survival of the fittest. According to Sheng Hong, the spread and success of a social Darwinism-based Western civilisation was achieved through advanced weaponry as opposed to peaceful free trade. Chen Lai, a Beijing University philosopher, comments on the violent spirit of the West from a religious perspective. “The Christian ‘love thy neighbour as thyself”’, she argues, “necessarily presupposes a belief in God”, thus allowing for intolerance towards non-Christians. “From the crusades to modern imperialism”, Chen states, Christianity has proven that “it lacks the spirit of harmony”. What makes Confucian-based culture civilised is its cosmopolitanism (天下主义, tianxia zhuyi), and, by implication, its preference for peace as opposed to violence. Thus, despite its material and technological superiority, the West has remained fettered by its animal instincts and therefore incapable of “triumphing over nature”.

The cosmopolitanism or universalism of Chinese culture, it is argued, gave it not only the flexibility to accept other cultural values, but also the ability to adopt and assimilate such values and to make them Chinese. According to anthropologist Fei Xiaotong, the endurance

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101 Geremie Barme, loc cit. p.
103 China News Analysis (No. 1509). p.9.
of China’s cultural tradition can be explained in terms of its “acculturating power” or syncretic character. This has provided the Chinese, he argues, with a “hidden compass” which has allowed them to assimilate an array of foreign cultural imports while retaining a strong moral consensus. The idea and practice of “making foreign things serve China” (洋为中用, yang wei Zhong yong) could, in this sense, be viewed as an example of China’s ability to “borrow” without compromising her own identity. Such views suggest that Chinese culture is more than capable of assimilating aspects of Western – or indeed any other - culture while maintaining its own distinctive “Chinese characteristics”.

chinese as uncivilised

Alongside arguments depicting the positive aspects of “Chinese characteristics” were intellectual currents in China and abroad highlighting the negative aspects of Chinese culture. The Chinese “national cultural psychology” (民族文化心理, minzu wenhua xinli), “national spirit” (民族精神, minzu jingshen) or “national character” (民族性, minzu xing) were viewed, particularly among reformists, as flawed and as the source of “deep-rooted bad habits” (裂根性, liegenxing). Such views, to a large extent, were old wine in a new bottle. Having gained momentum as a result of the events of the nineteenth century, a cultural cringe had continued throughout the twentieth with continual attacks on “feudal” and Confucian tradition by reformers of various political hues. During the Mao years, many of Confucius’ teachings, for example, were seen as part of a feudal past, and therefore incongruous with the ideals of a radically anti-traditionalist regime who were aiming to lead China to communist utopia. After Mao, iconoclasm fuelled by disparate motivations and grievances emerged throughout both popular and official cultures.

With Mao’s death, following a rule marked by such disasters as the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and a subsequent reinterpretation of socialist ideals, the Mao years were also to become a source of self-loathing for a jaded population. A “belief crisis” (信念危机, xinnian weiji) had permeated China’s “lost generation”. There was a

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104 Although various elements of Confucian teaching were seamlessly co-opted into CCP doctrine when and where it suited, such as ideas relating to human improvement and moral/political rehabilitation.
sense that China’s past, both distant and recent, had handed present-day Chinese a raw deal. In his article *China’s Cultural Slide* (republished in 1996), Yuan Wenzai notes an “inferiority complex” (自卑的心理, *zibei de xinli*) due to China’s difficulties in dealing with foreigners, had contributed to a decline in traditional values.\(^{105}\) One student, in a 1979 *People’s Daily* article, wrote, “we see from television the skyscrapers, modern facilities, parks and cultural centres in foreign countries. Compared with that our country is backward. How can you expect us to turn our thinking around to continue believing in the superiority of socialism?”\(^{106}\)

Wrote conservative He Xin, “whenever traditional values [either Confucian or Marxist in this case] break down, or when a culture goes through a period of crisis, an attitude surfaces that casts doubt on, satirises and calls for a reevaluation of basic values, culture and even life itself”.\(^{107}\) The post-Mao “Chinese enlightenment”, seen by many commentators as a descendant of May Fourth iconoclasm, inherited many of its sentiments, not least a reevaluation of “basic values”. The controversial and oft-mentioned 1988 television series *River Elegy* (河尚, *Heshang*), for example, criticised the Chinese disposition to view the past as a “repository...of society’s ideal form”, attacking many aspects of Chinese “tradition”, such as overcentralised power, insularity, and deference to authority.\(^{108}\) The six-part documentary series, says Barme, “introduced a mass audience to debates about politics, culture, and economic reform that had previously been restricted to intellectual circles”, implicitly equating socialist orthodoxy with state Confucianism and “traditional” culture.\(^{109}\) Criticising “Yellow River” culture, *Heshang* advocated the embracing of the “culture of the Blue Ocean” (the modern West), arguing that neither Confucianism nor socialism held the answers to China’s destiny. Its criticisms of many cultural “givens”, including the most renown symbols of Chineseness - the Great Wall and the Yellow River - attracted criticism from non-mainland traditionalists and Party ideologues alike. Tacitly encouraged by Zhao Ziyang, the series was eventually banned following Zhao’s demise in the post-June Fourth

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\(^{105}\) pp.104-105.


\(^{109}\) Geremie R Barme, op cit. p.23.
purges.

Many critiques of China’s cultural heritage pulled no punches. Taiwan writer Bo Yang, in his highly controversial *The Ugly Chinese* (丑陋的中国人, *Chouloude zhongguoren*), summed up Chinese culture as follows:

> Every culture flows on unceasingly like a great river. But as the centuries go by, cultures accumulate all sorts of flotsam and jetsam, such as dead fish, dead cats, and dead rats. When this detritus piles up on the river bed, the river ceases to flow and turns stagnant. The deeper the river, the thicker the layer of sludge; the older the river, the more thoroughly the sludge rots, until the river turns into one huge fermentation vat, a stinking repository of everything filthy and disgusting under the sun.\textsuperscript{110}

Bo refers to China as the “land of the Soy Paste Vat”, a stagnant bucket of sludge that represents an environment in which even good seeds cannot help but go bad. He must have struck a chord. In 1991, *The Ugly Chinese* was the third most popular book among Chinese youth.\textsuperscript{111} Bo Yang left little of Chinese culture unmentioned in his criticisms. His many anecdotes emphasised negative cultural traits, such as bureaucratism, in-fighting, suspicion, lack of creativity, happiness in the pain of others, and a distinct lack of public morality and civic awareness – “Sweep the snow in front of your own dwelling” says a Chinese maxim, “but don’t bother about the frost on the roof of other homes”. These criticisms, seen possibly as a breath of fresh air by China’s youth, appear strikingly similar to those raised by the likes of Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, and Hu Shih earlier this century.

Some critics of Chinese civilisation have attacked the way in which it achieves its “triumph over nature”, asserting that China’s “culture of simulation” is but a “culture of hypocrisy”. In the ongoing debates of “culture fever”, the Chinese tendency to emphasise outer form, states Bakken, “has been associated with order and stability, but also with “falseness” or “hypocrisy”.\textsuperscript{112} Emphasis on an “outer form” developed through the imitation of exemplary moral precepts has the effect, it is argued, of turning the Chinese into actors (*yanyuan*) whose level of morality could be measured by the strength of their “performance”. Criticising


what he sees as the Chinese “traditional personality” (传统人格, chuanton renge), Zhao Tiantang similarly argues that the practice of behaving correctly “is only for other people to see” (做给人看, zuo gei ren kan). Under the heading “Don’t act morally, just do what’s right”, Bo Yang writes that, “in a soy paste vat culture, only seeking fame and fortune is considered proper behaviour”. This “other-ruled” behavioural character is ultimately an exercise in being seen to be doing good in the eyes of others, and especially in the eyes of those others who matter - gaining face for oneself through giving face to others.

In his short article, Culture sans civilisation?, Hu Juren attempts to clear up the ambiguity between the terms “culture” and “civilisation”. Arguing that culture and civilisation are “inextricably linked, and mutually dependent”, Hu questions whether there can be such a thing as Chinese culture if the Chinese lacked “civilisation”. If etiquette can be taken as a manifestation of civilisation, he argues, the Chinese compare poorly to Americans, Japanese, and Koreans. “What is the use of boasting about your ancestors’ extinct culture”, concludes Hu, “if you don’t behave in a civilised manner? Can you have culture without civilisation? You may think you have culture, but it’s a bastard culture at best. And yet some insist on calling it Chinese”. The question of whether or not saying your “please’s” and “thankyou’s” constitutes civilisation is certainly debatable given the premise that what it means to be “civilised” in one particular civilisation will differ from what it means to be civilised in another. Hu is, after all, a member of the Chinese diaspora writing for a Los Angeles based Chinese language publication. What such sentiments do reveal, however, is that some believed that the Chinese had much to learn from the West as far as being “civilised” was concerned. And in the context of China’s dealings with the West, with Western civilisation having come to resemble a “world civilisation”, many saw the actualisation of civilisation dependent on such concepts as democracy, human rights, and the “rule of law”.

112 Borge Bakken, op cit. p.337.
113 Borge Bakken, op cit. p.342.
114 Bo Yang, op cit. p.80.
official responses

The official response to China’s post-Mao cultural crisis was, by many accounts, part of the problem itself. The abovementioned inability of the Party to replace obsolete Maoist moral idealism with a new ideology to suit the realities of its market reforms had assisted in the creation of a moral void. Inhabiting this void was a population which had adopted what Xiaoying Wang refers to as a “post-communist personality” – characterised by moral nihilism, hedonism and a distinct cynicism towards the moralising endeavours of the ideologically bankrupt CCP. According to Wang, the post-communist personality is manifest in the everyday actions of people,

…from habitual littering in public spaces to massive, knowingly perpetrated pollution of the environment, from wining and dining at public expense to bribery and embezzlement of epidemic proportions, from indifference at scenes of rape and murder committed in broad daylight, from prostitution to the de facto revival of concubinage on a national scale, from the issuing of all manner of fake certificates to the manufacturing of fake products including those that put life at risk, such as liquor made from industrial alcohol.

The vices and immorality evident throughout society were typified by the abuses of power amongst the political elite. Token exposure of corrupt officials did little to instill confidence in a bureaucracy that was widely seen to be systemically afflicted by graft and corruption. As the Party lost its moral authority, the study of revolutionary heroes and idealistic socialist models, such as the legendary Lei Feng, seemed obsolete at best, and at worst hypocritical. The tried and true formulae of campaigns and purging that had come to characterise the Mao period had lost their resonance, and such measures as the “clearing spiritual pollution” and “anti bourgeois liberalisation” campaigns had little effect. The Party’s propaganda machine had been guilty of propagating conflicting values which confused the distinction between material progress and self-interested money worship while advocating a morality based on altruistic socialist models. Material progress, it would be argued, had been encouraged, while the spiritual realm had been left to stagnate. Both the CCP’s ideological messages and the technologies employed to deliver them no longer struck a chord with a population confused

116 Xiaoying Wang, loc cit. pp.6-10.
by the leadership’s apparent ideological schizophrenia and consumed by a desire for material advancement.

Far from reflecting on the existence of demons within, the CCP presented China’s cultural crisis as the result of the invasion of corrupt foreign values - an inevitable consequence of opening reforms. In adherence to the idea of “learning from the West and using Chinese culture as the base”, the Party had endorsed the appropriation of key Western material concepts, but had been careful to vet the influx of Western political and moral values. While Western technologies and economic strategies were parroted en masse, a perceived crime wave and “moral slide” was blamed on the influence of Western thought and the loss of Chinese values. As the 1980s and 1990s ushered in an “information age” in which cultural values could be transported through the air into millions of television, radio sets, and computer screens, a need to filter “spiritual pollution” was recognised. In April 1994, the State Council banned the unlicensed ownership of satellite dishes for the purposes of “propagating the people’s patriotism, [and] preserving the superior tradition of the Chinese race”. But the media frenzy surrounding the suppression of the 1989 student movement had already demonstrated that halting the flow of electronically transmitted information was near impossible. It was one thing to label unhealthy tendencies as “money worship” (白金币, baijinzhuyi) and “egoism” (利己主义, lijizhuyi), but another to come up with an attractive and meaningful moral alternative.

“Chineseness”, to an extent, found itself competing with “Western values” in the socialist market economy as the demand for such acquirements and entertainments as foreign television programming and the latest American films rocketed. In a speech at a 1985 CCP representative conference, Deng Xiaoping stated, “Ideology, cultural, education and hygiene departments must all adhere to social benefit as the fundamental principle of their activities...Ideology and cultural circles must produce quality goods, and resolutely curb the production of evil goods, their import and circulation.” The high demand for imported

119 Deng Xiaoping, Speech given at Chinese Communist Party National Representative Conference (中国共产党全国代表大会, Zhongguo Gongchandang guangong daibiao huiyi) 23 September 1985, quoted in Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin on the Building of Socialist Morality
cultural goods meant that the CCP’s propaganda machine no longer enjoyed the relative monopoly they once had. The period witnessed a commodification of culture as officially endorsed “cultural products” (文艺作品, wényì zuòpìn), in the form of books, magazines, television, music and film, constituted an officially sanctioned response to the cultural bombardment of the entertainment market by an information-rich and “morally destitute” West. Propagators of Chineseness were forced to improve the quality and distribution of their product, and it wasn’t long before Chinese cultural goods were available on Compact Disc, Laser Disc, VCD (Video Compact Disc), DVD (Digital Video Disc), CD-ROM and the internet, along with their pirated foreign competitors. If anything, such developments served to highlight the confused messages of a Party which based its economics on materialism and the pursuit of riches yet still clung to a morality based on ostensibly communist principles.

China’s cultural crisis was not so much a “post-Mao” phenomenon but a manifestation of the enduring cultural woes that had been first identified a century earlier. A questioning and devaluation of China’s cultural heritage and moral character, equivocation in the moral sphere and the inability of the political leadership to provide its people with appropriate ethical guidance and thus a positive reflection of its collective moral self are elements that characterised both periods. The existence of parallel trends of self-assertion and self-abasement emphasises China’s twentieth century dilemma of how to emerge from the past to face the challenges of the future, how to view itself in light of significant “others”. The defenders of the civilisation-state, it seems, have spent much of the century at war with each other, purging or denouncing each other in their attempt to answer this dilemma. While the cultural debates of the 1980s posed interesting questions, the Chinese continued to devalue a cultural heritage they perceived as incapable of assisting them in the achievement of civilisation. Indeed, “civilisation” itself remained a notion that corresponded to Western rather than Chinese characteristics. As illustrated above, debates on cultural heritage, “Chinese characteristics” and the building and promotion of moral values remain inseparable from political ideology - thus is the nature of the civilisation-state. While such circumstances have endured, ambiguity and contradiction appear to have flourished in China’s moral sphere, the dynamism and syncretic character of Chinese culture has been called into question, and China’s “hidden compass” seems more hidden than ever.

(毛泽东邓小平江泽民论社会主义道德建设, Mao Zedong Deng Xiaoping Jiang Zemin lún shèhuìzhìyì Hàode)
05. redefining civilisation
This chapter will discuss the CCP’s redefinition of “civilisation” through the theory of “two civilisations”. It will be demonstrated that the development of the theory mirrored the ebbs, flows and ambiguities of wider political and social currents throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In creating a dialectical relationship between “material” and “spiritual” civilisation, the “two civilisations” theory shall be considered as an attempt to reconcile the tension between money and morality, and ultimately wenming and wenhua within a socialist framework.

Deng Xiaoping mentioned the dual ideas of material civilisation (物质文明, wuzhi wenming) and spiritual civilisation (精神文明, jingshen wenming) as early as October 1979 at the 4th Chinese Literature and Arts Workers Representative Conference. In September 1982, in his report to the 12th National Congress of the Party, Hu Yoabang stated:

In the process of transforming the objective world, people also transform their subjective world, and the production of spiritual values and the spiritual life of society also develop. The latter achievement is what we call the spiritual civilisation, as manifested in a higher educational, scientific and cultural level and in higher ideological, political and moral standards, the transformation of society or the progress of a social system will ultimately find expression in both material and spiritual civilisation. As our socialist society is still in its initial stage, it is not yet highly developed materially. However, the establishment of the socialist system makes it possible for us to build a high level of socialist spiritual civilization while striving for a high level of material civilization.

Slogans reflected the inseparability of the material and spiritual aspects of civilisation, stating that the building of civilisation was to be “grasped with two hands” (两手抓, liang shou zhua): “with one hand grasp the building of material civilisation, with the other hand grasp the building of spiritual civilisation”. Twenty years on, the doctrine of the “two civilisations”

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120 Zhongguo wenxue yishu gongzuozhe disici daibiao dahui.
121 Bakken, op cit. p34.
(两个文明, liangge wenming) has become a recurring theme in Party publications, from magazines to youth handbooks, newspapers to billboard posters.

As used in association with “material civilisation” (wuzhi wenming) and “spiritual civilisation” (jingshen wenming), the term wenming is translated into English most frequently as “civilisation”, and occasionally as “progress”. In the English language version of the resolutions\footnote{123} of the October 1996 Sixth Plenum of the 14th Central Committee of the CCP, for example, “individual mentions of ‘civilisation’ are rendered as ‘progress’”.\footnote{124} Having entered the Chinese lexicon only relatively recently, both material civilisation and spiritual civilisation are terms that have become recognised in major Chinese dictionaries.\footnote{125} The inclusion of these expressions as standard Chinese language input options in recent Microsoft Word releases highlights their increasingly common usage. Their respective definitions and translations into English reflecting their emphasis on progress.

**material civilisation**

Initially, rhetoric relating to the two civilisations reflected an emphasis on the attainment of material civilisation in line with Deng’s focus on market reform. Although the attainment of spiritual civilisation was also stressed, it was done so largely as an after-thought to the focal economic message. In April 1983, Deng stated:

> In a Socialist country, after coming to power a genuine Marxist Party must definitely be devoted to the development of productive forces, and on this base raise the people’s living standards step-by-step. This is the building of material civilisation. For a long time in the past we neglected the development of productive forces, therefore we must now be especially concerned with the building of material civilisation. At the same time, we must also build socialist spiritual civilisation, most fundamental is that we

\footnote{123} “Resolutions concerning a certain number of important questions regarding the strengthening of the building of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation” (关于加强社会主义精神文明建设若干重要问题的决议, Guanyu jiaqiang shehuizhuyijingshen wenming jianshe ruogan zhongyao wenti de jueyi).


must enable our vast people to have communist ideals, morals and observance of discipline.126

Although a reflection of the material preoccupations of the market reform program, Deng’s emphasis on material civilisation constituted an obvious interpretation of classical Marxism. In his Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Karl Marx asserts that “in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of their material productive forces”.127 Society is thus divided into classes which differentiate between those who control the means of production and those who are enslaved by production. “The history of all hitherto existing society”, writes Marx, “is the history of class struggles”.128 Marx’s idea of history as a class struggle is based on a materialistic determinist interpretation of Hegel’s dialectic - itself based on the Aristotlian process of thesis - antithesis - synthesis. According to Marx’s historical evolutionary process of dialectical materialism, antagonisms arising from unequal economic relations between superior and inferior classes result in history-changing revolution.

Marxist historiography claims that material forces shape history, and modes of production define historical epochs. The mode of production, or economic system, constitutes a society’s substructure - the basis upon which everything else is built. Of less consequence to the course of history is the “superstructure” - the political, legal, spiritual, philosophical, and academic realms. While it supports the substructure, the superstructure is defined by the substructure.

“Man’s ideational life”, argues Marx, are ideas that “arose out of and were determined by the material conditions of production” - a case of matter over mind.129 The thoughts of


individuals and the cosmologies of societies are thus shaped and bounded by the material conditions in which they are situated. Echoing the ideas of classical Marxism, Chinese Communist Party doctrine asserted that it is material conditions which form the foundations for spiritual development. According to Deng Xiaoping, “matter is the foundation, when people’s material wealth progresses, their cultural aspects will rise as well [and] their spiritual aspects will change considerably” 130... “spiritual civilisation stems from material wealth”. 131 Deng’s approach to the building of the two civilisations thus reflected the economic priorities of his building of a socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Journalist Jiang An views material civilisation as a relationship between man and nature. States Jiang, “it shows man’s understanding of nature, the adaptations he has to make, as well as how he has changed nature.” 132 This idea of material civilisation has similarities to that of the German zivilisation, an aggressive material force possessing the potential to destroy culture. Material civilisation, like zivilisation, is by implication an anti-traditional notion, denoting globalisation and such attainments as increasing levels of international trade, foreign cash reserves, skyscrapers, white goods, automobiles, industrial capacity and technological prowess. Visual propaganda throughout the period depicted a New China resplendent with such unmistakably foreign symbols of material advancement as monorails, bullet trains and space shuttles. 133 Commercial advertising envisioned a lifestyle of convenience and comfort through the purchase of electrical appliances. Both official propaganda and commercial advertising contributed simultaneously to the promise of a better China through technological and material progress. One could well imagine that this was the type of “civilisation” that Japan had in mind when her scholars first adopted the term bunmei in the late nineteenth century. Many, if not all, of the goals associated with the achievement of material civilisation were goals that the developed West was seen to have already achieved, the economies and societies of the West becoming quasi-models in the achievement of these goals. By equating progress with the mimicking and harnessing of

133 Chinese Propaganda Posters ref.
technologies originating outside of China, it can be argued that the pursuit of material civilisation was about pursuing ideals that were ultimately more foreign than Chinese.

spiritual civilisation

Although “Deng Xiaoping Theory” stipulates that material conditions determine spiritual progress, Deng also states that “without strengthening the building of spiritual civilisation, the building of material wealth will be damaged, and a more zig-zag route in the building of material wealth will be followed”\(^\text{134}\). At some point after the CCP’s 12th National Congress, Deng commented on his concern that the great successes in material civilisation were not being matched by similar success in the spiritual sphere - one hand was tough while the other was soft (一手硬, 一手软, *yi shou ying, yi shou ruan*). According to Deng:

> We have had considerable success in economic construction… but if the atmosphere were to turn bad, what meaning would our economic success have? It is possible that a change for the worse in another area could turn around and influence a worsening of the whole economy, and that this could [ultimately] develop and change shape into a perverse world of corruption, theft and bribery.\(^\text{135}\)

In 1986, the 6th plenum of the 12th Central Committee of the CCP approved the “Resolutions on the guiding principles for developing a Socialist Spiritual Civilisation”, and the slogan of “in grasping with two hands, both hands must be firm” (两手抓,两手都要硬, *liang shou zhua, liang shou dou yao ying*)\(^\text{136}\) was adopted.

The 1980s had been punctuated by any number of “civilisation” and “morality” campaigns, which, by all accounts did little to enrich the spiritual realm of the Chinese people. Amid China’s perceived “paradox of modernity” an ideological debate was fought out between advocates of material civilisation on the one side and proponents of spiritual civilisation on


the other. Spiritually correct “Free service” campaigns and activities, for example, were considered by some reformers as economically wasteful.\textsuperscript{137} Socialist morality, as discussed in the previous chapter, was perceived by many as a moral code belonging to an economic system that had held China back for decades. The political events of 1989 and the ousting of key liberal figures, however, ultimately came to represent a turning point in the dualistic struggle between material and spiritual civilisation as the balance of power swung in favour of conservative party factions.

The early 1990s and the rise of Jiang Zemin witnessed a perceived need to resolve the persistence of an increasingly disparate dualism of materialism and spiritual values. Increasing levels of material wealth did not appear to be providing the preconditions for a corresponding growth in spiritual richness, and ideological work was thought to be lacking. Indeed, He Ji (et al) notes that a neglect of “spiritual civilisation” which led to a lack of ideological and political education (思想政教育, \textit{sixiang zhengzhijiaoyu}) was “the biggest mistake of the past ten years”.\textsuperscript{138} Education in national characteristics (国教, \textit{guoqing jiaoyu}) was pushed by Jiang as CCP general secretary following the Tiananmen incident. From his conservative platform of “talking politics” (讲政, \textit{jiang zhengzhii}), Jiang oversaw the implementation of initiatives that focused on many areas within the broad realm of spiritual civilisation and on the importance of learning from the ‘fine traditions of Chinese culture’ (中国文化的优良传统, \textit{Zhongguo wenhua de youliang chuantong}). Hong Kong journalist Qu Tao even goes so far as to suggest that Jiang secretly opposed Deng Xiaoping’s principle of “economic construction as the core”.\textsuperscript{139} Jiang himself stated specifically that attention needed to be directed to the simultaneous building of both material and spiritual civilisation in order to correct the “one hand tough, one hand soft” situation. By the mid 1990s, Party rhetoric stressed that only a simultaneous promotion of both civilisations would do:

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\textsuperscript{137} Borge Bakken, \textit{op cit.} p.347.
\textsuperscript{139} Qu Tao, “Spiritual Civilisation Committee a Gathering of Leftists” (精神文明委员会左派聚会, \textit{Jingshen wenming weihui zuopai yunjji}), \textit{Cheng Ming} (争鸣), Hong Kong, Pak Ka Publisher (百家出版社, \textit{Baijia chubanshe}), November 1996. p.26.
\end{flushleft}
in the building of modernisation, [we] cannot seize only material civilisation without seizing spiritual civilisation; also [we] cannot firstly seize material civilisation and then seize spiritual civilisation afterwards; [we] cannot pay the price of spiritual civilisation in exchange for momentary economic development.  

As Jiang’s conservative ideological platform swung its focus towards politics and away from economics, a corresponding emphasis was placed on the promotion of spiritual civilisation. In his speech to the fifth plenum in October 1995, titled, “Correctly Handle Some Important Relationships in the Construction of Modern Socialism”, Jiang increased Mao Zedong’s “Ten Major Relationships” to twelve, a new relationship being that between material and spiritual civilisation. By 1996 the “promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation” had become an ideological campaign in its own right, and the doctrine of “Two Civilisations” – with specific emphasis on the building of spiritual civilisation - was publicised accordingly. This emphasis was spelt out in the resolutions of both the 14th and 15th CCP Central Committees. The 6th plenum of the 14th Central Committee made the two civilisations an integral part of the 9th five year plan and a requirement of the 2010 “long range goals” – a veritable blueprint for the future. While material civilisation stood for progress in economic development and wellbeing, spiritual civilisation was to represent the modernisation of the Chinese citizenry itself, focusing on moral, cultural and ideological “advancement”. The future success of China, trumpeted Party mouth-pieces, requires simultaneous progress in each of the “two civilisations”. According to one such mouth-piece, “construction of socialist spiritual civilisation is significantly related to the actualisation of the blueprint for the next century and the prosperity of our socialist development”.

The promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation was envisaged as an exercise in human improvement through social engineering - an exercise in the modernisation of China’s ideational life and an attempt to shape a Chinese citizenry of the future. According to Jiang

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142 The Theory and Practice of Building Socialist Spiritual Civilisation (Shehui zhyi jingshen wenming jianshe de lilun yu shixian), op cit. p.99.
An, spiritual civilisation “involves religion, morality, culture, and human ties. It depends largely on the Confucian idea of individual cultivation of the self.” Under the banner of spiritual civilisation, the promotion of public morality (公德, gongde), patriotic spirit (爱国主义精神, aiguo zhuyi jingshen), collectivism (集体主义, jiti zhuyi) and the ‘four haves’ (四有, siyou) have been undertaken through numerous strategies involving schools, work units, and party and state organs. According to Ni Liya, there were three types of morality (三德, sande) that were to be pushed through the building of socialist spiritual civilisation: social morality (社会道德, shehui daode), occupational morality (职业道德, zhiye daode), and household morality (家庭道德, jiating daode). The push for civilisation was broad in scope, focusing on societal attitudes towards such things as public morality, etiquette, education, hygiene, the environment, service, entertainment and past-times.

Based on what could be described as a blend of Confucian and communist ideas relating to self-improvement, spiritual civilisation is charged with the mission of changing the way people think - collectively and individually. The message of self-improvement is one that goes well beyond a mere modification of behaviour, it is concerned, rather, with a shifting of values and the adoption of a new and positive version of what it means to be Chinese. It is described as a ‘new wind’ (新风, xinfeng), bringing with it the aim of building civilised cities (建文明城市, jian wenming chengshi), creating civilised townsfolk (文明市民, wenming shimin), making civilised districts (文明小区, wenming xiaoqu), developing civilised households (文明家园, wenming jiayuan), moulding civilised workers (文明职工, wenming zhigong), transforming individuals into ‘new people [who embody the principle of] the four haves’ (四有新人, siyou xinren), and turning people into ‘qualified citizens’ (合格的公民, hegede gongmín).

144 Jiang An, loc cit.
145 The “Four Haves” include: ideals (理想, lixiang), morality (道德, daode), culture (文化, wenhua) and discipline (纪律, jilu). The Theory and Practice of Building Socialist Spiritual Civilisation (Shehui zhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe de lilun yu shixian), op cit. p.39.
146 Ni Liya “Comprehensively Strengthen the Building of Socialist Morality” (全面加强社会主义道德建设, Quanmian jiaqiang shehuizhuyi daode jianshe) The Theory and Practice of Building Socialist Spiritual Civilisation (Shehui zhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe de lilun yu shixian), op cit. p.167.
147 For some examples, see Gong Yongquan (龚永泉), (抓基础抓基层抓典型江苏精神文明建设城乡联动, Zhua jiechu zhua qiceng zhua qidi zhua dianxing Jiangsu jingshen wenming jianshe chengxi liandong), 08 February 1999, Nanjing, Beijing University Computer System Engineering Company – Universal
The Chinese Communist Party's ideal of a materially and spiritually rich China is one in which money and morality co-exist in symbiotic bliss. Material acquirements such as better public toilets, for example, may elevate the level of spiritual wellbeing because they may smell more pleasant, and provide partitions for a degree of privacy. Similarly, an increase in the number of public telephones would have the effect of reducing queues, thereby minimising one of the frustrations of life. The building of modern high-rise accommodation would also improve residents' quality of life, thus increasing their spiritual well-being. One *Beijing Evening News* article cites a department store’s installation of customer seating as an example of “placing emphasis on the building of spiritual civilisation”.

The basic premise here is that a wealthier China results in a higher standard of living, and that a higher standard of living results in a better quality of life. Such arguments make the assumption that there exists an inherent social contract between a rising entrepreneurial class and the peasant and proletarian masses who make up the bulk of China's population, and cite such examples as the well known “Project Hope” as evidence of this. The other, potentially more problematic assumption is that higher living standards provide for a higher level of spiritual civilisation—a departure from the austere morality of the likes of Lei Feng.

In an article from a series celebrating fifty years of New China, journalist Yang Ruichun draws a positive relationship between increasing levels of disposable incomes and the cultural level of the population. He argues that increasing disposable incomes result in increased expenditure on goods and services of a “cultural” nature. “Cultural expenditure” states the article, “affects people's ideas and helps to raise their spiritual level.” Yang writes, for instance, that many companies would prefer to invite their clientele to a “high class” performance in the belief that it would boost the company’s image

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150 Yang Ruichun (杨瑞春), “Fifty Years of New China Series Report: Cultural Expenditure will be Greater Tomorrow” (中新五十年系列报道:文化消费明天更好, *Xin Zhongguo wushinian xilie baodao*).
more than the usual practice of inviting the client out for a long session of eating and
drinking. The article also notes that increasing cultural expenditure is reflected in the
numbers of youths attending music concerts, and the number of performances and exhibitions
in Beijing’s Music Hall and Art Gallery - material and spiritual civilisation progressing hand­
in-hand. With wenhua as one of the key elements in the modernisation drive, the goal of
“making [China] a culturally great country” (作为一个文化大国, zuowei yige wenhua daguo) is
inexorably tied to making China a wealthy country.

Many arguments similarly point to the importance of spiritual civilisation in the attainment of
higher levels of material civilisation. The most fundamental of these arguments is the
assertion that adherence to the principles of spiritual civilisation will ensure that the market
economy will develop in a way that reflects the goals of socialism with Chinese
characteristics. Since the promotion of spiritual civilisation incorporates improvements to
education, other arguments point to future economic benefits derived from an emphasis on
developments in the teaching of science and technology. Through providing for such
improvements in rural education, argues Wang Manchuan, “the building of rural socialist
spiritual civilisation can constitute a powerful ideological guarantee for the increased
development of the rural economy and society”.151 Within the area of occupational morality,
adhering to the principles of spiritual civilisation, it is argued, could prove profitable as a
business is more likely to profit financially if it provides polite customer service “with a
smile” as opposed to service with a grunt.

Commentators outside of China are not so convinced. Xiaoying Wang argues that since the
discrediting of socialist values (largely as a result of market reform) is responsible for
China’s state of moral nihilism, the attempt to rectify the situation “through a project of
spiritual civilisation that appeals to those very values is a self-contradictory endeavour from
the very start.”152 Such views suggest that the relationship between the dual pursuit of
material civilisation and spiritual civilisation represents a paradox rather than a synthesis.

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wenhua xiaofei mingtian genghao), 10 September 1999, China News Agency (中新社, Zhong xin she).
151 Wang Manchuan (王满船), A Civilised Homeland (文明的家园, Wenmingde jiayuan), Nanchang, Jiangxi
According to Party ideals, material and spiritual civilisation represent two sides of the same coin – a yin and yang of progress. They are sometimes inimical and sometimes symbiotic, but ultimately two necessary halves of a developmental whole. Together they constitute the CCP’s current definition of “civilisation”. It is as multifarious a definition as the many ideas it attempts to replace, but what makes it different is that it is a definition that is ostensibly both socialist (albeit with Chinese characteristics) and Chinese. It is also a definition which attempts to allow notions of socialism and Chineseness to sit comfortably within a framework of economic and social development measured by perceived Western and international benchmarks. It is a definition which attempts not only to erase the notion of the Chinese cultural character as ultimately flawed, but suggests that retaining an essentially Chinese character is a necessary ingredient in the successful pursuit of economic and social development. It is, in other words, an attempt to restore the long lost link between ‘civilisation’ and Chineseness and reconcile the similar yet contradictory ideas of wenming and wenhua.
This chapter will discuss the CCP's promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation as an attempt both at reclaiming an essentially Chinese notion of what it means to be civilised and at underwriting the continuing legitimacy of the CCP as moral authority. Borrowing from the model of the civilisation-state, the promotion of spiritual civilisation shall be viewed as an attempt at "civilising" the process of modernisation through a "modernising" of the grand narrative of Chinese civilisation. It shall be argued ultimately that the ability of the Party to convince the people that the achievement of "civilisation" has been reclaimed as an altogether Chinese historical goal has a direct impact on its continuing pursuit to underwrite its own long term legitimacy in the absence of a revolutionary or charismatic leadership.

The suggestion that retaining an essentially Chinese character is a necessary ingredient in the actualisation of a strong future China posits the "two civilisations" theory within a framework of civilisation maintenance. According to author Luo Wendong, in a passage reminiscent of Huntington, the promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation is an important factor in ensuring that China will fare well in a potential clash of civilisations (文明冲突, wenming chongtu). States Luo:

Some political scientists write that the "future conflict will be the conflict between civilisations". The gaps between civilisations will be history's battleground, and civilisational boundaries will be the battle lines of the future... Americans assert that they must shape a new "American civilisation", Singaporeans also state that they must progress "to a high level of civilisation". In support of the long history and magnificent civilisation of the Chinese peoples [we must] make socialist spiritual civilisation an important feature of socialist society and an important goal in the building of modernisation.153

Luo comments that the different peoples of the world, based on their disparate value systems and cultural traditions, will have differing levels of regard for the fate of their respective civilisations. The implication is that there is a need for the Chinese to foster such a concern,
which should manifest itself through the promotion of the principles of socialist spiritual
civilisation or, at least, effective management of the material-spiritual civilisation
relationship.

The CCP's redefinition of civilisation and the associated promotion of socialist spiritual
civilisation may be considered in terms of a process of "cultural management." Such a
process involves the effecting of desired changes in the consciousness of individual members
of society, thereby changing the very nature of society into an ideal form. According to
Christel Lane, while it exists in all societies, "cultural management is more pronounced in
societies with a one-party system, sustaining a single ruling elite unified by the urgent pursuit
of a number of clearly defined general goals for their society, such as modernisation,
industrialisation...or the building of socialism."¹⁵⁴ The goal of cultural management is the
achievement of the social and ultimately the political imperatives of a ruling elite. This
framework of cultural management is useful to the study of the CCP's promotion of socialist
spiritual civilisation in that it separates the allied forces of top-down positivist cultural change
and the maintenance of political authority.

My contention is that the CCP's redefinition of civilisation and its associated promotion of
spiritual civilisation serves a two-fold function of both "civilisation maintenance" and "power
maintenance". Specifically, these functions include: (i) modernising the grand narrative of
China's civilisation, and (ii) civilising the grand project of China's modernisation, and thus
affording legitimacy to the state through its successful exercise of moral authority. The first
function - "modernising civilisation" - is performed through the creative manipulation of
China's traditional and socialist heritage, resulting in a new and improved version of
Chineseness. The second function - "civilising modernisation" involves separating
Westernisation from the historical process of modernisation, and replacing it with this new
improved version of Chineseness. The second function succeeds only to the extent that the
first achieves its objective. In short, what will be discussed is the aim of socialist spiritual
civilisation in contributing not only to the continuing relevance of the Chinese cultural

¹⁵³ Luo Wendong 罗文东, New Age Occupational Morality Reader 新时期职业道德读本, Xinshi qi zhi ye
daode duben 新时代职业道德读本, Beijing, Chinese Legal System Publishing House 中国法制出版社,
Zhong guo fazhi chubanshe, 1999 p1.
¹⁵⁴ Christel Lane, The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrialised Societies the Soviet Case, Cambridge,
heritage (albeit interpretations thereof), but also to the continuing relevance of Jiang Zemin’s Chinese Communist Party itself. States Jiang Zemin, “The success or failure of the building of spiritual civilisation will determine the success or failure of socialism, and it will [also] determine what kind of China will enter the 21st century.”

modernising civilisation: civilisation maintenance

Throughout the twentieth century, the most resounding criticism of Chinese civilisation had targeted its apparent stagnancy and obsolescence – its lack of “fitting with the times” (时代性, shidaixing). The promotion of spiritual civilisation as a vehicle for “civilisation maintenance” goes straight to the heart of the wenhua-wenming nexus, and may be viewed as an attempt to develop a narrative aimed at reconciling the exclusivity of Chinese civilisation with its ability to accommodate and adopt. The October 1996 resolutions of the CCP mentions this aspect of the role of the promotion of spiritual civilisation, stating that it is “the way to inherit and carry forward the fine traditions [of Chinese culture] and embody the spirit of the times, on the basis of setting our feet in China and facing the world.” It is a narrative aimed ultimately at creating a natural progression – a teleology - linking the fruits of China’s cultural heritage with the intended and unintended challenges of the CCP’s modernisation program, and it does this in two ways:

(i) highlighting certain “positive” aspects of China’s cultural tradition, and
(ii) demoting certain “negative” aspects of China’s cultural tradition as “un-Chinese”, and promoting aspects of essentially foreign culture as having Chinese proto-equivalents.

The October 1996 resolutions state that, “only by striking roots deeply in the history-making activities of the people, inheriting and carrying forward the fine national culture and revolutionary cultural traditions, actively absorbing the outstanding achievements of world culture, can our own cultures develop in a healthy way and prosper with each passing day”. The digging up and selection of ‘fine’, ‘outstanding’ or expedient aspects of Chinese tradition

157 ibid.
had been long practiced in such fields as “national studies” (国学, guoxue). 158 “Advocates of “national studies”, states a *China News Analysis* report, “are prompt to claim that theirs is no nostalgia for things long past and that their main concern is for the future of China”, yet at the same time they insist on “genuine patriotism” and “Chinese characteristics”. 159 Party historians were well versed in the appropriation of elements of the ‘national heritage’ (国古, guogu) to assist in the shaping of politically palatable histories. As the CCP had assigned a new definition to “civilisation”, new – or at least more specific - meaning was given to what actually constituted Chinese “civilisation”. The Party’s labeling and classifying of both past and present ideologies and practices as either “civilised” or “uncivilised” reflected this new definition. This definition of civilisation embraced both what it considered to be the best of China’s traditions and the absorption of the “outstanding achievements of world culture”, placing them within a new nomenclature of progress.

Those cultural traditions that fall under the new definition of civilisation are classified as being “scientific” or “socialist”. The promotion of spiritual civilisation stresses the strengthening of China’s “scientific culture” (科学文化, kexue wenhua). “In the history of China’s nationalities”, states Jiang Zemin, “many great scientists and innovators have been produced, creating a magnificent ancient Chinese scientific civilisation”. 160 From such a base, it is asserted, China has the ability to produce modern-day innovators who can excel in all areas of technological development. Jiang also points out, however, that “we must not stop studying the outstanding achievements of all the world’s civilisations”. 161 There is an explicit acceptance in the CCP’s spiritual civilisation rhetoric of the superiority of the West in terms of scientific and technological achievement.

Winning the battle of civilisations meant inheriting not only Chinese culture’s outstanding achievements, but also its ability to embrace the outstanding achievements of others. “Civilisation”, therefore, included the learning from certain foreign practices and experience and making them Chinese, especially in such areas as science, technology, economics and

158 *China News Analysis*, No 1522. p.8. find refs.
159 Ibid. p.8.
finance, and environmental protection and management. Implicit in this post-'90s definition of civilisation was an acceptance of the scientism of the West not just in terms of the natural and physical sciences but also in terms of Western scientism as it related to other areas, such as economic and legal structures. The aim was to provide these cultural imports with specifically Chinese precedents so as to prevent their adoption becoming part of a more general adoption of cultural “otherness”. Traditionally treated with much ambivalence by the Party, new readings of Confucius locate his theories within the framework of market reforms. One article, for instance, highlights those teachings of Confucius that are of relevance to the socialist market economy and goes so far as to suggest that the teachings of the sage form a theoretical basis for Deng Xiaoping’s “two civilisations” theory.162

Those manifestations of Western culture which are rejected by the Party as uncivilised tend to be labelled “feudal culture” (封建文化, fengjian wenhua) or “vulgar culture” (庸俗的文化, yongsude wenhua). Feudal culture is an expression that tends to relate to Western political systems such as constitutional monarchies, colonialism and religious institutions. Vulgar culture, in contrast, relates more to a popular culture that is perceived to be characterised by individualism, unbridled liberalism, hedonism, and moral abandon. The manifestations of this type of popular culture is labelled as “rubbish” which promotes “unhealthy tendencies” and a lowering of the spiritual quality of the people. While “absorbing and drawing on all achievements of human civilisation”, therefore, the October 1996 Resolutions state that stress should be placed on “fighting against the remnant influences of feudalism, and resisting the corrosive influence of capitalist decadent ideas”.163

Along with China’s “scientific culture”, “socialist culture” is also regarded as an important aspect of civilisation. The legendary deeds of Lei Feng, for example, are held aloft as a paragon of civilisation at a time when there is a perceived paucity of the virtues he embodied. In developing socialist material and spiritual civilisation together, states Jiang Zemin, “[we must] continue to carry out national study of Lei Feng’s activities...and his whole-hearted

161 Jiang Zemin, ibid. p.2.
162 Find ref.
163 October 1996 Resolutions.
spirit of serving the people".  

Extensive attempts to apply socialist morality to contemporary family, occupational and professional contexts through handbooks and the print media are indicative of the CCP’s efforts to provide socialist culture with an appropriate shidaixing.

While some aspects of “traditional” culture were integral to the CCP’s vision, other elements of the past which could not be twisted to serve the present were labelled as inimical to the success of the modernisation process. This is most evident in the distinction between what is labeled “superstitious culture”, “socialist culture” and “scientific culture”. Clanism, shamanism and secret societies, for example, are seen as backward (落后, luohou), feudal (封建的, fengjiande) or superstitious (迷信的, mixinde) elements of old society (旧社会, jiu shehui). A 1991 report on rural arbitration noted that disputes between neighbours in some regions often escalate into deadly clan-based battles. “Superstitious” religious practices have often been targeted by law enforcers, as too secret societies or so-called ‘black society’ (黑社会, heishehui). The Party’s reaction to the Falungong phenomenon is a recent illustration of official attitudes toward organised superstition. A 2001 Zhongshan Daily article, for example, makes reference to the Falungong under the heading “oppose evil religions, worship civilisation.” These ‘negative’ aspects of China’s cultural heritage do not get a billing in the discourse on spiritual civilisation. Although they are indigenous to China, they are considered to be ‘uncivilised’ and by implication akin to being ‘un-Chinese’.

The October 1996 Resolutions stated that socialist spiritual civilisation “serves as an important objective and guarantee for the modernisation drive.” I would argue that this idea of spiritual civilisation as a “guarantee” possesses both cultural and political dimensions. As

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164 Chen Guangsheng (陈广生), et al, The Story of Lei Feng (雷锋的故事, Lei Feng de gushi), Beijing, Peoples Liberation Army Arts and Literature Publishing House (解放军文艺出版社, Jiefangjun wenyi chubanshe), 1990. p.2.


stated previously, “civilising modernisation” involves separating Westernisation (xihua) from the historical process of modernisation, and replacing it with a new improved version of Chineseness (zhonghuaxing). The ability of the Party to successfully achieve this has a direct bearing on the legitimacy of its leaders as possessing moral – and therefore political – authority. This political “guarantee” constitutes an underlying goal of the campaign which has as its motivation the maintenance of political power. In this sense, the role of the campaign in “civilisation maintenance” may, in fact, be seen as a means to assist in the objective of “power maintenance”.

In tracing the origins of Chinese ideas of civilisation to such landmarks as Pao Hsi’s creation of the Eight Trigrams as a model to explain the dynamics of the universe, it is apparent that “civilisation” is fundamentally linked to notions of pattern or order. Civilisation relates to the human ability to rise above nature, to bring order to his environment and to create models to explain that which cannot be ordered. Spiritual civilisation has been described as the moral component of the modernisation drive or, more specifically, an attempt at providing a moral order to the unruly and chaotic process of modernisation. The events of the Beijing Spring of 1989 had demonstrated to the CCP leadership the need to stem the flow of bourgeois influences and cultural garbage, and to provide the people with a moral framework backed by strict laws. An emphasis in moral education has accordingly been placed on such aspects as habit formation, regularity and discipline. For these very reasons spiritual civilisation can be viewed as representing control and balance to the pursuit of material civilisation – a method of keeping the modernisation program on the “straight and narrow” and perceived threats to the leadership of the CCP in check.

In the Book of Changes it is stated that “change must occur when the existing way is no longer adequate” - a point reiterated by Song philosopher Zhu Xi in his assertion that “one must reject rules that are burdensome and superfluous, and retain those that are practicable and essential to the maintenance of the social order”. In the contemporary Chinese moral sphere we find the similar argument that moral education should have the “character of fitting to the times” - that ideology and morals, like economic development, should be a goal of modernisation. And as with the Sage-kings of China’s ancien regime, it is up to those at the

168 Borge Bakken, op cit. p.72.
apex of political power to effect required change and to ensure that moral ideals fit the realities of the day. In contrast to China’s dynastic past, however, a widening gap in the late twentieth century between antiquated and irrelevant moral precepts and the realities of the day not merely casts doubt on the moral authority of those in power. As discussed in the previous two chapters, in a multi-civilisational world the inability of an indigenous moral code to “fit the times” calls into question the integrity of the Chinese moral community itself. Effecting a digestible notion of Chineseness that neglects neither the collective heritage nor the prospects of the civilisation-state is, to a large extent, a matter of survival for those at the top of the politico-moral order. Heaven protects those who change with the change of circumstances.  

At a time when socialist ideology had waned in appeal for many people, especially the youth, Jiang Zemin’s ideological agenda was heavily laden with jingoistic nationalism. In May 1995 Jiang had stated, “the Chinese people are a great people who have 5,000 years of splendid history, culture and traditions”. If the Chinese people were to neglect the moral teachings of such a past, he argued, China would become “a vassal of foreign, particularly Western, culture”.171 The October 1996 resolutions on the building of socialist spiritual civilisation had called for the Party to “carry forward the cream of our traditional culture, prevent and eliminate the spread of cultural garbage, [and] resist the conspiracy by hostile forces to ‘westernise’ and ‘split’ our country”.172 In promoting “the renaissance of the entire Chinese race”, writes Hong Kong journalist Willy Wo-Lap Lam, “Jiang laid claim to being the embodiment of the guohun, or the country’s soul”.173 Jiang’s promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation, it could be argued, represented his most concerted attempt at assuring a prominent berth in the pantheon of Party ideologues alongside Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.

Like the “clearing away spiritual pollution” and “anti-bourgeois liberalisation” campaigns of the 1980s, the spiritual civilisation campaign has been seen by some as a political strategy

169 ibid, p.72.
aimed at gaining the higher ground over liberal reformers within the Party. Others argue that
the campaign is an attempt aimed at appeasing Party conservatives. According to one
Western diplomat, “by launching a spiritual civilisation campaign, he [Jiang] is saying to the
old guard, ‘Look we still care about ideology’ while at the same time providing a safe cover
to push ahead with economic reform”.174 Journalist Qu Tao places Jiang’s promotion of
spiritual civilisation within the context of factional conflict between the CCP left and right.
Qu Tao notes that Jiang’s stacking of the Spiritual Civilisation Construction Guiding
Committee (精神文明建设指导委员会, Jingshen wenming jianshe zhidaoweyuanhui) with
Leftist ideologues demonstrated the importance that Jiang placed on the Party Left in
preserving his personal power and that of the Communist Party.175 Whatever the factional
politics, what is clear is that Jiang’s promotion of spiritual civilisation may be viewed as an
attempt to inspire a picture – both within the Party and among the populace - of Jiang
Zemin’s CCP as the legitimate moral authority.

173 Willy Wo-Lap Lam, op cit. p.53.
Service, China News, 06 August 1996.
175 Qu Tao, loc cit. p.28. For example, two prominent members of the committee selected by Jiang
were Shao Huaze and Zhang Yunsheng, editor and deputy editor of the People’s Daily (*Renmin ribao*).
70 selling civilisation
This chapter will discuss the CCP’s campaign to promote socialist spiritual civilisation, and in particular the semiotic strategies employed by the Party in delivering the messages of the campaign to the masses. It will be shown that the symbolism employed in the campaign reflected the Party’s intention to promote an image or narrative of Chineseness that was congruous with its vision for China’s future. The Party’s semiotic strategies in promoting this narrative shall be conceptualised in terms of the deployment of “semiotic technologies”.

Few scholars beyond mainland China have taken the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation seriously. It has been viewed with a degree of wariness and cynicism that one would expect to be directed towards what is one in a long and seemingly repetitive line of “spiritual campaigns” launched by the CCP since the onset of market reform. The implementation of this particular campaign, however, is a particular source of interest in itself, and there is much evidence to suggest that the promotion of spiritual civilisation has become something of a state-inspired phenomenon. The messages disseminated throughout the campaign have been given a highly pervasive and recurring presence through all forms of media by the propaganda machinery of the CCP. Indeed, if the 1980s can be characterised as a period of unofficial “culture fever”, I would argue that the late 1990s can be alternatively characterised, in the political realm at least, as a period of official “civilisation fever”.

towards a semiology of civilisation

A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be part of a social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *semeion* ‘sign’). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them.¹⁷⁶

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Ferdinand de Saussure, in suggesting that linguistics was part of a general science of semiology, is widely regarded as the European founder of semiology. In his deconstruction of mythology, Roland Barthes describes language and myth as semiological systems. 

Semiology, writes Barthes, “is a science of forms, since it studies significations apart from their content”. In a semiological system there is a sign (representamen), which is the associative total of a signifier (signans), or form, and a signified (signatum) or concept. To explain this, Barthes uses the example of a bunch of roses, writing that the roses, as signifier, signify his passion, or conversely, that his passion is signified by the bunch of roses. The sign is the combination of content and form, of signifier and signified, and can only be properly understood by distinguishing between its constituent hemispheres. Unlike language, myth is a second-order semiological system, constructed from a previously existing semiological chain. The first chain Barthes describes as a linguistic system, or as the plane of denotation. The second system, or the myth itself, he terms metalanguage, or the plane of connotation: denotation referring to the use of language to mean what it says, and connotation referring to its use in meaning something other than what is said. Writes Barthes, “that which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second” [see table below]. In mythology, therefore, what once had meaning now only has form, its meaning impoverished and superceded by its appropriation as a signifier through which to express another exogenous message.

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Barthes, in arguing the importance of the science of semiology, points to its application in relation to the media and the codification of behaviour:


178 ibid. p.114.
The development of publicity, of a national press, of radio, of illustrated news, not to speak of the survival of a myriad rites of communication which rule social appearances makes the development of a semiological science more urgent than ever. In a single day, how many really non-signifying fields do we cross? Very few, sometimes none. Here I am, before the sea; it is true that is bears no message. But on the beach, what material for semiology! Flags, slogans, signals, sign-boards, clothes, suntan even, which are so many messages to me.\textsuperscript{179}

In a study of the imaginative technologies deployed in the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation, one may well echo Barthes’ exclamation “what material for semiology!” What I term the imaginative technologies of the campaign – myth, ritual, and visual symbolism – may be analysed as semiological systems. Within such a conceptual framework, one may bifurcate the signs of rhetoric, narrative, codification and propaganda into their constituent signifying and signified components – the content of their intended message and the physical form of its expression. The relationship between signifier and signified has obvious, one may say significant, implications with regard to the meaning of signs, and in particular, the meaning attributed to a sign by its reader, audience, spectator or participant.

While Barthes writes of a duplicity of systems, some literary structuralists suggest a potential multiplicity of systems along the semiological chain. Through an infinite progression of denotations becoming connotations, higher orders of possible meaning are arrived at – demonstrated in the table below. In any event, this provides a useful framework with which to view the role of civilisation maintenance as a strategy of political power maintenance. To illustrate this I shall use the example of narratives which argue the relevance of Confucius to the socialist market economy. As a first order semiological system, what is denoted by such narratives is that Confucius had a number of teachings which correspond to the propagation of values which are considered to be important in a contemporary context. As a second order system, the apparent relevance of Confucius’ teachings signifies the intended meaning that the Chinese cultural tradition is a valuable resource for a modernising China – that it is possible for the process of modernisation to progress along Chinese as opposed to Western lines. This intended meaning, however, conceals another meaning that is both intended and implied. The signification of a durable Chinese culture becomes the signifier of a third order

\textsuperscript{179} ibid. p.112.
meaning: that of the necessity of a strong central moral-political authority – of enlightened rule - to steer the modernisation process. Deconstructing official Chinese myth making in this way allows us to posit power maintenance as the end of a semiological chain which begins with the appropriation of China’s “fine traditions”.

Wideing the scope of the above example, we see that the concept of the CCP’s continuing relevance is based on such signifiers as public order, economic prosperity, international prestige; fulfilment through self cultivation, heroism and neighbourliness, and respect for China’s “outstanding” culture traditions. Within the semiological chain, such symbols as Confucius, Lei Feng and Li Suli become significant because of their implied meanings. Their meaning comes not from who they are but from somewhere else. Where once there was a concept of Confucius, for instance, now there is mere form – the outer shell – providing an unladen vessel for the carriage of an altogether different concept. In other words, Confucius becomes a means to an end, in the same way that further down the semiological chain, civilisation maintenance also becomes a means to an end. In the context of the Chinese civilisation-state, I would argue that the success or otherwise of the various strategies employed by the CCP in the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation rests in their semiotic capacity to assist in the maintenance of the political legitimacy of the CCP’s leadership through civilisation maintenance. That is, the Party’s success in “civilising modernisation” is dependent on its effectiveness in “modernising civilisation”. These strategies shall be examined in terms of their semiotic capacities as “semiotic technologies”.

With almost religious fervour, the various organs of the Chinese state have promoted Jiang’s discourse of progress embodied in socialist spiritual civilisation (SSC). The major guidelines and objectives in the promotion of SSC, according to the resolutions of the 6th plenum of the 14th CCP Central Committee, are as follows:
adhere to the basic line and policies of the Party, strengthen ideological and ethical progress, develop education, science and culture, arm people’s minds with scientific theories, guide them correctly in public opinion, mould them with noble spirit, inspire them with excellent literary works and train socialist citizens who have lofty ideals, moral integrity, a good education and a strong sense of discipline, raise the ideological, ethical, scientific and cultural quality of the entire nation, unite and motivate the people of various ethnic groups to build China into a modern socialist country, which is prosperous and strong, democratic and civilised.\(^{180}\)

The “guiding”, “moulding”, “inspiring” and “motivating” of the people required the coordinated deployment of a wide range of promotional strategies by the state’s various propaganda bodies.

A study of the strategies employed by the organs of the Chinese state in promoting spiritual civilisation has an expansive and diverse corpus of established literature to draw upon, much of which has focused on the formation and maintenance of power relations within a society. Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, for example, focuses on ideological domination by the state through such vehicles as schools, the media and religious and political institutions. In his treatment of the “microphysics” of power, Foucault asserted that each society has its regimes of truth, and that these discursive truths define a society’s power relations. In his study of nineteenth century Balinese society, Clifford Geertz developed a model of the “theatre state” in which “the state drew its force, which was real enough, from its imaginative energies, its semiotic capacity to make inequality enchant”.\(^{181}\) According to Geertz, the symbolism, or theatrics of power, employed by the state, not only conveyed the power of the elite but indeed enacted it. In an account of state-sponsored ritual in the Soviet Union, Christel Lane writes that the state may “press into service education, political ideology, religion or a new “revolutionary art” as tools of cultural management.\(^{182}\) The common thread linking these approaches is in their preoccupation with the study of the employment, consciously or otherwise, of semantics or semiotics in the state-sponsored creation of truths, norms, cultural


\(^{182}\) Christel Lane, op cit. p1.
“givens”, patterns of established thought and behaviour or, in short, a desired status quo within a given society.

Symbols assist in providing order and meaning to a reality which is undeniable, yet at the same time inexplicable. Order and meaning are transmitted through the medium of symbols. In a discussion on sacred symbolism, Clifford Geertz comments that such symbols, “dramatised in rituals or related in myths, are felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it”. The function of semiotics in providing a medium or code for the transmission of order and meaning finds an early Chinese example in such cosmological symbols as Pao Hsi’s Eight Trigrams.

The selling of a “modernised” version of Chinese civilisation required creative marketing strategies. The dissemination and adoption by the masses of China’s revamped cultural heritage necessitated something akin to what Eric Hobsbawm refers to as the ‘invention of tradition’. The invention of tradition, states Hobsbawm, constitutes “a process of formalisation and ritualisation, characterised by reference to the past”.183 “Making the past serve the present”, states anthropologist Jun Jing, “requires the constant employment of cultural inventions to turn a combination of hallowed myths, historical distortions, and imagined realities into collective beliefs”.184 History becomes internalised as belief only after it is accepted and internalised to the point that to not accept it would seem instinctively unnatural. According to one expert, the transmission of the ‘national heritage’ to future generations requires, “a careful analysis which will extract the best of tradition and apply it to the concrete realities of the day”.185 One would assume that the successful marketing of a new Chineseness to the point that it is internalised by the masses would necessarily involve the deployment of technologies congruous with the realities of the day.

Correspondingly, in civilising the process of modernisation, the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation was intended to constitute the creation amongst the masses of a new moral and ideological “atmosphere” (qifen). To this end, the campaign has constituted a

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massive marketing venture through such vehicles as public activities, behavioural rules, national and public occasions (ritual and ceremony); visual propaganda and art (visual symbols and imagery); literature, the press, publishing, electronic media, and the social sciences stories and myth making). It was an effort that required "macro-control" and reform of China's media and cultural sector. "Comrades working on ideological, cultural and educational fields", states the October 1996 resolutions, "should all be ‘soul engineers’ of humanity".186 Rituals, visual symbols, and myths, in varying guises, have been long used by the CCP in securing mass support for its goals and policies. And just as imaginative technologies are employed to popularise ‘official memory’ of China's cultural heritage, they have been similarly employed in using this version of Chineseness to popularise the moral component of the modernisation program.

Using the ideas of semiology as a broad framework with which to discuss and analyse the semiotic technologies of the civilisation drive, it may be possible to evaluate the success of the CCP's efforts to articulate, visualise and enact their narrative for a civilised future. As the "soul engineers" of society, the various practitioners of state propaganda and ideological education are armed with messages (or, *signatum*) which must be represented to the masses through appropriate forms of narrative, ritual and iconic expression (or the *signans* of a second-order semiological system).187 It is certainly not my intention in this dissertation to engage in a study of the promotion of spiritual civilisation through a rigorous application of semiological precepts. If the success or otherwise of the various strategies employed by the CCP in the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation rests in their semiotic capacity to assist in the maintenance of the political legitimacy of the CCP's leadership through civilisation maintenance, then surely it is worth considering the effectiveness of these strategies in terms of what they represent, and how they represent it to their intended audiences.

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185 China News Analysis, No 1522, Hong Kong. p.8.
Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the ‘beginnings’. In other words, myth tells us how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality...  

Myths find their form in the literal expression of cosmologies and assumed and discursive truths through oral tradition, histories, works of non-fiction and fairy tale. According to Roland Barthes, myth is the representation of a body of socially determined material that has been manipulated or inverted so as not to appear as a cultural artifact. Although myth is characterised by its attempt to make its meaning appear unintended, it is ultimately defined by the intention it denies. “Myth”, states Barthes, “consists in overturning culture into nature or, at least, the social, the cultural, the ideological, the historical into the ‘natural’.”

Central to myth is a transcendent power not dissimilar to that possessed by ritual which is delivered not through the semiotics of spectacle but through syntax, emplotment and the deployment of various literary devices. It is widely acknowledged that many Western historical narratives, for instance, rely on the symbols and mythical plot structures derived from classical and Judaeo-Christian religious literature to “endow unfamiliar events and situations with meanings.” W Cronon writes that the narrative is said to succeed “to the extent that it hides the discontinuities, ellipses and contradictory experiences that would undermine the intended meaning of its story.”

Myth, like ritual, has many applications, from the creation of historical fact and the legitimisation of the unfamiliar to the modeling of norms and the promotion of pattern maintenance.

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Since its early days in the pre-1949 revolutionary period, the Chinese Communist Party has created no shortage of myths. Such nostalgic periods and events as the Long March and the Yan’an Period, for example, have been given sacred dimensions through the mythologising endeavours of the CCP. From the creative writing of history to the creation of models of proper behaviour and ideological and economic development, the Party has employed mythology extensively as a mechanism to influence the behaviour and thoughts of the Chinese people.

Mythology has played a significant role in the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation through such ubiquitous forms the promotion of socialist models and revolutionary and historical heros. In order to ‘improve’ the quality of what is seen in print and on television, the Party specifically advocated an increase in ‘outstanding’ home-grown content. Television series which brought to life many famous and necessarily ‘civilised’ historical characters, such as the Song dynasty judge Bao Qingtian, reflected this sinification of the entertainment world. Home-grown exemplar of socialist morality, model Lei Feng, found new freshness in digital form, and other models from the past, such as Confucius, were also given much airplay and press, albeit in revised form. Through a manipulation of popular mythologies, the spin-doctors of spiritual civilisation could create the necessary continuities linking the the past with the promise of a ‘civilised’ future.

Although the 1996 resolutions call for publishing circles to “carry out the principle of letting a hundred flowers blossom and letting a hundred schools contend”, the same resolutions state that “publication units which have constantly violated the rules, and repeatedly caused problems...should be earnestly overhauled, and those who can not meet the requirements should be closed”. In line with the state directives, the media, art, and publishing worlds have released a flood of work that has given “positive publicity in favour of unity, stability and boosting the morale of the people”. The mythology of socialist spiritual civilisation and its noteworthy protagonists has accordingly been built up through the coordinated efforts of the press and electronic media. Local do-gooders and tried and true models, such as Party cadres Jiao Yulu and Gu Wenchang, soldier Su Ning, and bus conductor Li Suli, have, for

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194 Ibid.
example, been made heros overnight through relentless media exposure. In the animated world, the call for the creation of more Chinese cartoon heros, answered by such cartoons as From Ancient Times Heros Start Young (Zigu yingxiong chu shaonian), has provided younger audiences with their own home-grown models. In cyberspace, a number of regularly up-dated sites, such as *Spiritual Civilisation News* (Jingshen wenming bao), has brought a Y2K compliant version of the civilisation drive’s myths and heros to the growing number of computer monitors across the civilisation-state.

**ritual**

Ritual symbolism may attach to an otherwise unsubstantial activity an order of meaning that transcends the inherent meaning of the activity itself. Commenting on the semiotic quality of ritual, Richard Bauman states:

> In their union in ritual, then, the most abstract and distant of conceptions are bound to the most immediate and substantial of experiences. A remarkable spectacle is revealed to us at the end: the unfalsifiable supported by the undeniable yields the unquestionable, which transforms the dubious, arbitrary, and conventional into the correct, the necessary, and the natural.

While such views point to the legitimising or transcendental power of ritual, others emphasise the role of ritual in “pattern maintenance” or “value reinforcement”. The function of pattern maintenance, states Robert Bocock, involves “reminding people of the basic values which the group rests upon, and renewing commitment to these values on the part of members.”

The ideological campaigns and purges that have dotted the Chinese political landscape of the past fifty years can themselves be seen as rituals - the tools of a Party well practised in the art of spectacle and political theatrics. Borge Bakken discusses Chinese society – and the state’s ritualistic attempts to order it – in terms of social theatre. He draws from the arguments of He Xin who conceptualises individuals within Chinese society as “actors” who play a part in the maintenance of a ritualistic “orthopraxy”. Within Chinese society, argues He Xin, there is an

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emphasis on being “seen” to be behaving correctly rather than the actual internalisation of an ideological or moral norm. Campaigns, it is argued, represent critical periods in which increased importance is attached to being seen to be demonstrating exemplary behaviour. As stated previously, the concept of li located moral authority with political authority through a ritualism that reinforced the notion that deference to authority and maintenance of the norm were part of a natural order. The formalistic conformity embodied by the classical concept li, it is argued, places emphasis on outward “appearances” (表情, biaoxian) rather than inner thought. The question is, therefore, does such ritualism result in an internalisation of values through transcendental meaning, or does it result in mere lip service being paid to an enforced norm?

Rituals and ceremonies, such as flag raising ceremonies and the commemoration of historical events, have been a notable and increasingly frequent fixture on the state’s calendar during the latter half of the 1990s. Significant commemorations included the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War Two (1995), the 60th anniversary of the Long March (1996), the return of Hong Kong (1997) and Macao (1999) and, of course, the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic (1999). According to the October 1996 Resolutions, “important commemorative days, major historical events and social activities, and national flag-raising ceremonies and singing of the national anthem” were to be employed to “vigorously promote patriotism”. The mnemonic symbolism inherent within the state-sponsored ritual of commemoration, contributes, argues Hobsbawm (et al), to the manipulation of a society’s memory. In the case of the Chinese collective memory, such rituals were clearly aimed at creating a sense of solidarity based on apparently shared experiences, or more precisely, a shared historical consciousness. These national-level rituals commemorating significant historical events have been mirrored on a smaller grass-roots level by rituals specific to the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation.

Rituals and ceremony, in such forms as award ceremonies, songs, and poems, have played a prominent role in the promotion of a more civilised China. Award ceremonies that acknowledge ‘civilised’ individuals and groups, for example, can themselves be viewed as

199 Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (ed), loc cit.
ritualised microcosms of the societal order advocated by spiritual civilisation. Poems and songs codifying the message of spiritual civilisation have also been widely reported. According to one report, authorities in Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Xiamen and Hainan were “reported to have written songs’ to indoctrinate people about morality.” 200 The enacting of Liturgical performances, writes Richard Bauman, “establishes conventions - understandings, rules, norms - in accordance with which behaviour is supposed to succeed”. 201 Through a ritual sanctification of moral precepts and exemplary behaviour, the aim of such award ceremonies and songs is to make exemplary behaviour the norm.

imagery

Visual symbols have played a significant role in the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation through such ubiquitous forms as billboard and big character posters, streetscapes and electronic media. Visual propaganda has been employed by successive Chinese regimes as a mechanism to transmit social and moral norms for centuries. It is the visual propaganda published by the various publishing houses of the CCP however that have represented a Chinese regime’s most ambitious and far reaching attempts to influence the behaviour and attitudes of its people. According to Stefan Landsberger, “this visual propaganda usually played a supportive role in campaigns waged through other mass-media, and was part and parcel of a mechanism of rectification that had been developed by the CCP during its stay in the Yan’an area in the 1940s.” 202 While visual forms of propaganda were used to great effect during the Mao period, it has been widely argued that they have lost much of their resonance since the onset of the modernisation program under Deng Xiaoping.

Whereas the proponents of the cultural revolution advocated a future through the smashing of the past in toto, the visual propaganda of civilisation has placed symbols of both history and modernisation side-by-side. Images of the Great Wall, the Summer Palace’s Suzhou Street

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chineseness, v5.1  selling civilisation  78

(Suzhoujie, Suzhoujie), and Beijing’s famous huabiao (华表), for example, are placed in tandem glory with contemporary and futuristic images of socialist modernisation. In linking the past achievements of Chinese civilisation with symbols of modernisation, such propaganda creates the impression of historical continuity between past and present - that past success or development naturally leads to more of the same. In what can be described as a culturalist message, past success is necessarily a notion of success that was achieved in the absence of foreign values and technological input. A developing New China is thus portrayed as a work-in-progress that is built upon the former achievements of Chinese civilisation - achievements that are both congruous to and prerequisites for success in the twenty-first century.

The imagery and visual symbolism of the promotion of spiritual civilisation can be characterised by its apparent emphasis on guiding the imagination of the people, rather than the giving of clear-cut instructions. The common feature of billboard posters depicting socialist spiritual civilisation which distinguishes them from other, especially earlier propaganda posters, is their reliance on vague imagery rather than concrete and definitive representations. In reflecting the policy goals of civilisation, poster images reflected the freshness and purity of “the new age”, often taking the form of luminescent spring flowers, picture perfect virgin forests, and glistening new cityscapes. Such scenes often had little or nothing to do with the text they accompanied, possessing instead the symbolic potentiality to make the CCP’s vision of a civilised future utterly desirable. Indeed, many billboard images seemed represent larger than life postcards from utopia. To visit a large Chinese city during the late 1990s and not see at least several billboards and big character posters related to spiritual civilisation, would have been near impossible. It was almost as if socialist spiritual civilisation had become a highly visible and inseparable part of the landscape itself.

The state’s success in employing imaginative technologies to create a collective sense of promise in its vision of the future is dependent on its ability to sculpt China’s collective memory accordingly. A nationalistic discourse of progress that envisioned a civilised China through the transmission of largely traditional/socialist values, necessarily relied on an interpretation of history which portrayed China’s cultural heritage as the repository for such values. The adoption of this new consciousness about China’s past and future would correspondingly result in a new (and overwhelmingly positive) version of what it means to be Chinese. In espousing an official sense of collective memory and promise, however, how
successful were the state’s imaginative energies in galvanising the unofficial or popular memory and in permeating popular ideas about the future? How successful has the state’s employment of imaginative technologies been in making its new, and overwhelmingly positive, sense of Chineseness a reality?
This chapter will discuss those aspects of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation that may be characterised as mythology. Nowhere are the two functions of “modernising civilisation” and “civilising modernisation” as seamlessly performed than by the myth makers of the civilisation drive whose challenge it was to effectively compose a revised edition of China’s past that was compelling enough to make it part of a blueprint for the future. These mythical components of the campaign will be examined by focusing on a number of discursive strategies which appeared throughout the campaign. These included the promotion of traditional, socialist and contemporary heroic and model individuals, the parading of model work units and localities, and various narratives of Chinese and Western civilisation expounded through the media. The semiotic qualities of these strategies will be studied with a view to determining their effectiveness in assisting the achievement of the campaign’s objectives and the promotion of a uniquely Chinese brand of civilisation.

What I describe as the use of mythology throughout the promotion of spiritual civilisation relates primarily to the creation of historical narratives, discursive truths and teleological constructs intended to give contemporary relevance to China’s “traditional” and “socialist” cultures. This pursuit of “relevance” may be seen as a key factor in the attempt to provide modernisation with an essential “Chinese character” (中华性, zhonghua xing). Myth making also centered on traditional, socialist and contemporary models – model citizens, such as the legendary Lei Feng, and model localities, such as the “civilised” city of Zhangjiagang. The implicit message behind the parading of such models is that these home-grown Chinese models represent the type of civilisation that people should be striving for. In the main, such myth making has found expression through calls for enhanced patriotic education and through feature articles in Party-sponsored newspapers and websites. While such features are aimed at a wide readership, the main focus of much of the discourse, evidenced by the content of many press articles, and the wide publication of behavioural and educational handbooks, is toward a youth or parent/teacher audience.
The October 1996 resolutions called upon those within the cultural, education and media sectors to use China's own heritage and cultural traditions as a source of inspiration for the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation. According to the resolutions:

The great achievements and the grand goal of the modernisation drive, the history of modern and contemporary China, the history of the Chinese Communist Party and basic national conditions, the fine traditions of the Chinese nation and revolutionary traditions...should be taken as the main contents of patriotic education in the new era.¹

China's inherent Chineseness was to be presented not only as good, but as a necessary prerequisite to the type of social and economic development that would reflect the potential of the Chinese people. Work units involved in the shaping of public opinion, therefore, were directed "to enhance in the whole society the national spirit of self-respect, self-confidence and self-support, which regards devotion to building and defending the socialist motherland as the biggest glory and damage to national interests and dignity as the biggest shame".²

Writings on spiritual civilisation and its models tend to trifurcate Chinese history, essentialising time into three major, albeit temporally skewed, epochs: pre-1949 China (traditional or "old" society), the Mao era, and the post-1978 reform era. This historical ordering is also obvious in corresponding distinctions made between "traditional", "socialist" and "scientific" culture. The spin-doctors of the civilisation drive have been careful to locate and promote exemplary citizens and heroes from each of these epochs in their attempts to provide meaningful models to the citizens of the future. This trifurcation is of significance in itself as it can reveal much about the valuation afforded each epoch by contemporary socialist teleology, and how examples of civilisation from the past fit into contemporary discourse on socialist spiritual civilisation. What is, for example, the current value of Confucius and Mencius, or Lei Feng? What aspects, or interpretations, of these historical relics give them currency and relevance within the socialist market economy? How do these models contribute to the signification of an officially promoted vision of twenty-first century Chineseness?

¹ October 1996 Resolutions.
² ibid.
Each of these three historical periods is labeled in a number of ways. Pre-1949 China is referred to as “traditional” (traditional, chuantong) or “old” (old, jiu) society, the Mao era as “revolutionary” (revolutionary, geming), and the post-1978 period as the “modernising” (modernising, xiandaihua), “opening up and reforming” (opening up and reforming, gaige kaifang) or “contemporary” (contemporary, dangdai) era. The most simplistic distinction between the three periods, as evidenced by their labeling, is that the first is presented as archaic, almost backward, while the second and third are presented as exhibiting some form of forward historical momentum. This reflects a basic conceptual dichotomy between modern and pre-modern, or “old” and “new” China. According to official historiography – as the slogan states – “No Communist Party, No New China” (没有共产党，就没有新中国, Meiyou gongchandang, jiu meiyou xin Zhongguo). In official discourse, “New China” is unequivocally distinguished from “Old China” by the existence of the Chinese Communist Party as political and moral authority. How then does the CCP incorporate a somewhat alienated cultural heritage into a modern and uniquely Chinese narrative of what it means to be civilised?

civilisation and the “traditional”

The discourse on civilisation and traditional Chinese culture tends to focus on two major relationships: that between “traditional” (traditional, chuantong) and “scientific” (scientific, kexue) culture, and that between “traditional” ethics and the type of morality required in the market economy.

In his book, The Theory and Method of the Promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation, Miao Qiming develops a model to map the relationship between “traditional” and “scientific” culture, and how both contribute to the formation of a “socialist civilisation with national characteristics”. He does this through a rather complex diagram titled “Relative effect and evolutionary law of science and technology and the national traditional civilisation” (see diagram on page 84).³ China’s “traditional civilisation”, writes Miao, is made up of three

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³ Miao Qiming (苗启明), The Theory and Method of the Promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation (社会主义精神文明建设的理论与方法, Shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe de lilun yu fangfa), Yunnan Education Publishing House (云南教育出版社出版发行, Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe chuban facing), Kunming, 1996. p.171.
essential factors: the “national material environment” (民族物质环境, *minzu wuzhi huanjing*), a “national subjective quality” (民族主体素质, *minzu zhuti suzhi*) and a “national ideological concept” (民族思想观念, *minzu sixiang guannian*). The national material environment refers to environmental and labour resources, communication linkages, construction, implements and productive capabilities. Both the national subjective quality and national ideological concept relate to non-material characteristics; the first referring to individuals’ intellectual, technical and social knowledge, the second referring to ideational preoccupations with values and ethics. According to Miao, these three factors not only combine to constitute a uniquely Chinese traditional civilisation but also determine appropriate science and technology. Technology in turn has an effect on the elements of traditional civilisation, the synthesis resulting in the development of a “new” civilisation. This civilisation, tempered with elements of socialist modernisation – including socialist material and spiritual civilisation – leads ultimately to the formation of a “socialist civilisation with national characteristics”.

Miao’s model clearly identifies three necessary interrelated components for the creation of a “socialist civilisation with national characteristics”: China’s traditional civilisation, appropriate science and technology, and socialist modernisation. While Miao makes a distinction between elements of traditional civilisation and science and technology, he maintains that appropriate technologies could not be determined without traditional civilisation’s material, intellectual and moral resources. At the same time he implies that traditional civilisation is not a stationary entity – it is dynamic, evolving through the constant interactions between scientific developments, material and economic factors, and intellectual and moral progress echoing Fei Xiaotong’s emphasis on the “assimilative power” of the Chinese cultural heritage.
图 6 适用科学技术与民族传统文明的相互作用与演变规律
甲 民族传统文明与现代文明相互作用图
乙 适用科技与民族传统文明三要素相互作用图
丙 民族特色社会主义文明的成长和内在机制图
In an article titled *Did Ancient China Have Science?*, author Li Shen questions the notion that "science from abroad" (外来科学, *wailai wenxue*) should be regarded as the only real
science. He attacks definitions of science influenced by eighteenth century French materialists which discount the validity of the scientific endeavours of the past (other than those of the ancient Greeks). Li, adopting Hegel’s notion of truth, argues the merits of a dynamic definition of science as historically relative, i.e. science developed throughout history, so that what is regarded as science in one period is likely to differ from what is regarded as science in another. Given this type of definition, states Li, “even an ancient herdsman’s view of the endless sky is a valid argument about space”. Similarly, it is argued that Chinese civilisation, in its attempt to find answers to the mysteries of the natural world, possessed a form of science that, although different to science found in the West, should be regarded as science nonetheless.

In contrast to Li Shen’s view, a tension between the scientific and traditional cultures represented by “Old” and “New” China is expressed in the following quote from a morality handbook published in 2001 titled The New Era’s Citizen Morality - New Images:

China possesses two thousand years of feudal tradition. In the wake of the establishment of New China, particularly since China’s opening reforms and development in science and technology, feudalism’s few old traditions have already been broken.

Although contemporary historical discourse acknowledges that China’s cultural heritage gave rise to “good” and sometimes “scientific” traditions, it also criticises the maintenance of wasteful or harmful traditions described as “feudal” or “superstitious”. While the Party worked hard to find contemporary relevance for many of China’s neglected “fine” traditions, it also emphasised the obsolescence of re-emergent “wasteful” and “harmful” traditions.

Wasteful traditions included such practices as extravagant weddings, funerals and gift giving, and immoral activities that reflected poorly on the quality of the people. Wang Manchuan states that such practices were “leftovers from the feudal period, are outdated, are not in line

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5 ibid.
with the spirit of the times, and are even wasteful in terms of resources and money." Commenting on the re-emergence of immoral traditions in the countryside, he writes,

The ugly phenomena of pornography, gambling and drugs are reemerging from their burnt ashes. These were phenomena of Old China, and they disappeared as a result of effective enforcement by the Party and government after the founding of the [People's Republic]. From the late '80s, however, they have come back to life in a number of villages. Concubinage is even still practiced in certain localities.

Such traditions were viewed as uncivilised because they represented a Chinese equivalent to the "vulgar culture" and "cultural garbage" of the West. They reflected poorly not only on the Chinese people, but on Chineseness itself. To use the oft' mentioned quote, "if you are backward you will take a beating" (luohou jiu yao aida). In the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation, it is little wonder that such traditions are presented as uncivilised.

"Harmful" traditions are essentially those that the CCP views as in any way potentially harmful to its position of absolute power, particularly those traditions relating to alternate power structures such as secret societies and illegal religions. These legacies of old tradition are painted as exploitative of the people, scientifically backward, and a threat to social order.

"It is worthy to note", state the authors of *The New Era's Citizen Morality - New Images*, "that some feudal superstitions drape over their shoulders the cloak of 'propagating traditional culture', and swagger down the street murdering people for their money." Labeled as "uncivilised" were feudal superstitions such as *fengshui* and "evil religions" (*xiejiao*) such as *falungong* - and its leader Li Hongzhi. The *falungong* phenomenon is of particular note as its following within China and abroad made it a perceived threat to the Party’s moral authority. The media was deployed as a powerful weapon in the Party’s holy war against evil religions. A powerful example of this was the wide media coverage of a December 2001 murder case involving a follower of falungong who had murdered his wife and mother in their Beijing apartment.

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2. ibid. p.45.
This case was used as an opportunity to demonise the Falungong philosophy, presenting it as against reason and as against basic human decency. The story was covered extensively in the electronic media, with many gruesome accounts by investigators and vox populi-type programming in which common folk expressed their repeated collective disgust toward the crime committed. Other programming featured interviews with rehabilitated ex-practitioners of Falun Dafa. These interviewees would reveal what they had been subjected to as followers of the philosophy, in a media effort to reinforce popular indignation towards the Falungong. The extent and nature of the programming carried the symbolism of a struggle between good and evil – the government, law enforcement and the people on the one side versus the cult-like Falungong and its shady practices on the other. The discursive power of the media allowed the Party to present Li Hongzhi’s philosophy as uncivilised not because it was a political threat but because it was evil.

Concurrent with the imperative to reconcile tradition with science was a concerted attempt to reconcile China’s cultural tradition with the market economy. According to an article titled Market Economy & Cultural Tradition, ancient Chinese culture was built on the basis of the “natural economy” (自然经济, ziran jingji). Since the opening reforms of the 1990s, states the document, “the natural economy that had endured for thousands of years was damaged with the development of the commodity economy [商品经济, shangpin jingji] in the cities and countryside”. According to the document, the “good traditions” of Chinese culture were not limited to the natural economy. Self-strengthening, resilience, patriotic moral courage and humanism, for example, are all characteristics of traditional Chinese culture cited as being “worthy of emphasis and promotion”. “In the process of building the socialist market economy”, it continues, “the good traditions of Chinese culture should still be adopted and promoted”. In arguing the existence of market forces in pre-modern China, the document noted the development of certain aspects of the market economy throughout various dynasties. By the Han and Song dynasties, states the document, trade had become quite developed. The importance of trade was evidenced, it claims, by philosopher Ye Shi’s

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9 Programs of this nature appeared on television for weeks following the crime. The author watched such programs on television stations China Central Television (CCTV) (中国中央电视台, Zhongguo zhongyang dianshitai) and Beijing Television (北京电视台, Beijing dianshitai).


11 Ibid.
promotion of government support for merchandising and manufacture in his *Xi xue ji yan* (Study Notes). This emphasis on and valuation of trade and the bourgeois classes in pre-modern China constitutes a narrative that stands in opposition to historical narratives propounded thirty years previously.

Other good traditions within the pre-modern Chinese economy were those of “genuine products and honest pricing and... a lack of lying and cheating”. Commercial reputations were highly valued, and retail stores often displayed a plate which stated “do not cheat women or children”. Idealised images of commercial activity in pre-modern China are compared with the not so ideal practices found in the more recent times, such as inflated pricing, false advertising and bogus products. Similarly, Wu Qiantao, vice-professor at the Research School of Moral Science at the Chinese People’s University, writes that the traditional Chinese values of righteousness and benefit are “the spiritual treasures of mankind”. According to Wu, standards and regulations that existed in the past should be reactivated in the self-serving present, and should form an integral part of education “into the new century”. In the push to civilise transactions within the market economy, the Chinese cultural heritage finds its relevance in the identification of these sanitised and skewed images of China’s past.

The reform era was characterised as an era of increasing regulation, standardisation and codification. According to Professor Li Ping and Associate Professor Xia Jimei of Zhongshan University, “in market competition, there is a trend to overemphasise the pursuit of practical utilitarianism. There [tends to be] a lack of moral education and cultivation of character, and more of a focus on method.” Both professors argue that regulation, however, is only a starting point in the cultivation of morality – to overlook morality and focus merely on regulations is “like water without a source”. Their perspective finds parallels with

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12 Ibid.
14 “Twenty First Century People’s View of Moral Value” (*Ershiyi shiji ren de daode jiazhi guan*), *New Mankind*, http://www.nmk.edu.cn/nmk/9806/g980605.htm
15 Ibid.
Confucian morality, and particularly the work of Tang dynasty Confucian scholar Han Yu. Commenting on human nature, Han Yu wrote,

There are three ranks of human nature: upper, middle, and lower. The upper is that which is only good. The middle is that which can be led upwards, the lower is that which is only bad. The upper degree by learning becomes intelligent, the lower by being in fear of authority reduces its offences. Therefore, the upper grades can be taught and the lower grades can be controlled.16

The implications of Professors Li and Xia’s argument is that while regulation is necessary, regulation without moral cultivation potentially produces a population of deficient moral character which cannot actively distinguish right from wrong. Regulation through moral cultivation, on the other hand, has the capacity to educate a more civilised morally superior population. Other authors point to the teachings of the Confucian Great Learning (Daxue), indicating that it can offer a model of progress from inner cultivation to outer participation in the ordering of the world.17 The message is clear: moral cultivation is necessary to develop a civilised society, and the cultivation of morality is an element of China’s cultural heritage that has particular relevance in the reform era. Moral cultivation could indeed be described as a cornerstone of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation.

The “good traditions” of Chinese culture are, unsurprisingly, those that serve the present. Only through the interpretation and extrication of these “good traditions” can such ideological enemies as Chinese socialism and Confucianism, for example, appear so complementary. Despite their traditionally antagonistic relationship, the CCP has promoted an interpretation or “memory” of Confucius that would effectively make him one of the earliest Marxists in history. In its latest reincarnation as state-ideology, “morality, dialectical method and materialism” are the ideas that Confucianism brings to a modernising China.1 A renaissance of Confucianism (儒家, rujia) noted during the reform era, is seen by Chinese authorities alternatively as a “renaissance of Confucian studies (儒学, ruxue). As an object of study rather than a belief system, Confucianism becomes an academic artefact as opposed to a living philosophy, allowing a surgical “picking and choosing” of certain parts of “value”. It becomes a body of work from which certain elements may be drawn and skewed while others

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rejected. Thus, the three main features of this most important ingredient in “national character” become “morality, dialectical method and materialism”. Through its obvious bastardisation of Confucian thought, this “doctrine of Confucius” is an attempt to reconcile an aspect of “tradition” with the requirements of modernisation.

The article *Market Economy & Cultural Tradition* discounts the idea that Confucianism and commerce are at odds, stating, “one of Confucius’ students was the merchant Zi Gong. Confucius was never against his business career”, indeed, “Zi Gong might also have financially supported Confucius’ travels to many states”.18 Quoting Guan Zi, the article draws parallels between Confucius’ theory of statesmanship and Deng Xiaoping’s doctrine that “economic development is the necessary foundation for cultural education” insofar as Confucius believed that education followed the attainment of a requisite level of wealth – “when one has stores he possesses courtesy, when he has enough food and cloth he is aware of what pride is”.19 Through a knowledge of the “good traditions” of Chinese culture, one is able to come to the understanding that wealth (富, *fu*) and benevolence (仁, *ren*) can be positively related. The author of the article concludes by stating that “benevolence is spiritual civilisation, wealth is material civilisation. Now that a lively new socialist economic system has been established, material civilisation will develop dramatically and spiritual civilisation will also develop into a new stage”.20 A link is thus fabricated between the past and the future according to the dictates of the present - a virtual memory is created that provides a seemingly foreign and altogether new economic system with a basis in an immemorial Chinese past. The “original character” of Chinese civilisation is thus not threatened by the materialism of a market economy because materialism is represented as an integral part of Chinese civilisation itself.

civilisation and the “revolutionary”

19 ibid.
20 ibid.
What constitutes good socialist values in contemporary discourse on spiritual civilisation obviously differs from what constituted good socialist values during the Mao era. Periods within post-1949 or “New” China are often distinguished and labeled according to who was in power at the time and the brand of Chinese socialism they espoused. Hence we can speak of the Mao, Deng and Jiang eras, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory. Similarly, the forms of Chinese socialism espoused during the Mao period and after are often distinguished by adjectives such as “revolutionary” and “contemporary”, and actions such as “revolution” and “reform”. While revolutionary socialism is by no means devalued in contemporary socialist discourse on spiritual civilisation, it is certainly the case that certain elements of revolutionary socialism are emphasised while others are manipulated or buried. The great battle between socialism and capitalism in Maoist rhetoric had been replaced by Deng’s time with a more pragmatic approach – it didn’t matter whether the cat was red or black, as long as it caught the mice. Mao’s call, for instance, to “eliminate the rich-peasant economy and the individual economy in the countryside so that all the rural people will become increasingly well off together” had stood in total opposition to Deng Xiaoping’s call to “get rich quick”. Contemporary Chinese socialism, although tempered by the conservative approach of Jiang Zemin, has adopted an idea of progress vastly different to that envisaged by Chairman Mao. The “revolutionary/contemporary” distinction historicises Mao Thought, relegating it to the pages of history – rather than an eschatology in itself, it becomes an integral ingredient in the bloodline of a new vision for the future of the Chinese people.

At a glance, it could be argued that Mao’s China has found itself situated in an awkward historiographical juxtaposition between “traditional” and “contemporary” China. Largely inimical towards tradition, it also espoused an eschatology ultimately at odds with post-Mao China’s Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. Although the Communist revolution had ushered in a “new”, historically forward thinking China, it was one which viewed capitalism as both morally corrupt and historically obsolete. Socialism with Chinese characteristics continues to stipulate Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought as the guiding political ideology of the Chinese state, but with capitalism embraced within the framework of the socialist market economy. In providing a socialist morality for what could be described as an

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essentially post-communist society, China’s civilisation makers were faced with the challenge of giving relevance to the morality and models of revolutionary socialism within a society which had long since grown weary of making revolution and was more interested in making money. One such model was the most legendary of all Mao devotees and do-gooders, Lei Feng.

Lei Feng spirit (雷锋精神, *Lei Feng jingshen*) is invariably defined along the lines of “to serve the people wholeheartedly and to offer oneself selflessly to the cause of the people”. While this type of spirit had found meaning - and a following - within the ideological setting of the Mao period, its meaning was less decipherable within the context of capitalist market reform. He had come to embody the lost ideals of – and nostalgia for – a bygone era. Jiang Zemin, however, personally pushed and argued the relevance of the study of Lei Feng. At a meeting of the Lei Feng Association (*Lei Feng tuan*) in October 1990, Jiang had stated:

> there is a type of saying which has emerged under the conditions of the opening reforms and commodity economy: that to get things done all you need is money, and that there is no need to study Lei Feng. This is a mistake. What we have is a socialist planned commodity economy, [and] the opening reforms serve the completion of the socialist system.

The CCP set itself the task of invigorating Lei Feng spirit under the “new historical conditions” of the opening reforms, and Lei Feng spirit was promoted heavily in association with the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation.

A *People’s Daily* report published in early 1998, marking the 35th anniversary of Mao Zedong’s decree to study Lei Feng, asks the obvious question: “under the new historical conditions, how should we study Lei Feng?” In its answer to this question, the report’s author argues that it is in fact the “historical conditions” of the modern age themselves which

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24 Chen Guangsheng, ibid. “Introduction”.
constitute the reasons why Lei Feng’s example maintains significant relevance. According to the report, of most fundamental importance in the study of Lei Feng is the use of Lei Feng spirit to raise one’s “personal quality” (zhishen suzhi). Given the rapid pace of development in modern society and the requirements of socialist modernisation, states the report, “we must be like Lei Feng [in terms of] assiduous study, the study of theory, technology and knowledge, especially modern economic and technological know how”.

This incarnation of Lei Feng presents him as a temporally transcendental renaissance man. His legendary work ethic becomes representative of the type required to take China successfully into the ultra-competitive world of the twenty first century. One is encouraged to “play hard” like Lei Feng, especially if it means playing hard at the capitalist game.

In February 1998, the _People’s Daily_ carried a report titled “Lei Feng Pedicab”, the Banner of Civilisation”. Operated by female employees of Lianyungang City’s Xinpu Long Distance Bus Service, the popularly dubbed “Lei Feng Pedicab” transports passengers and their luggage the 500 metres that separates the city’s train and bus stations. According to one anecdote, on one stormy night the female operators of the pedicab came across a disoriented and elderly man in the rain. He had traveled to Lianyungang to visit his brother whom he hadn’t seen in many years. The old man was carried around town in the pedicab until after two o’clock in the morning in the hope of locating his brother’s residence. After being carried six kilometers to the west of the city, the old man spotted one of his relatives. The old man gratefully cried out, “Good ladies, you embody Lei Feng!”

Over its 35 years of service, the fame of the “Lei Feng Pedicab” has spread, but according to one soldier patron, “over ten years, people change, vehicles change, but the Lei Feng Pedicab does not change”. The moral of the story is that such good deeds assist in the dissemination of Lei Feng spirit, and influence others to perform similarly charitable acts. In the words of one of the pedicab bearers, “we believe that people whom we have helped will also go on to help others”.

Although dated and slightly kitsch, Lei Feng maintains a sacred aura. While his relevance may suffer in the detail, it continues to prevail when he is painted in broad brush strokes as the quintessential do-gooder. It may well be argued that his star shines more brightly when he

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26 Ibid.

is viewed as simply a symbol of good socialist values rather than as a subject of rigorous study.

civilisation and the “contemporary”

Official rhetoric reminds its audience repeatedly that contemporary China finds itself within an unprecedented age shaped by the new “historical conditions” ushered in by the program of opening up and reform. The Darwinian flavour of the socialist market economy, propelled by economic reform and fuelled by such rhetoric as Deng Xiaoping’s “to get rich is glorious”, had made the idea of revolutionary heroism appear a distant echo from the past. Opening up and reform and increasing integration within the international economic system brought with it the new tensions inherent within embracing some elements of non-Chinese civilisation and vehemently rejecting others, and the need to become internationally competitive. Within this setting, the Party faced the challenge of breathing life into new moral imperatives and ethical models that reflected the necessities of these unprecedented times.

Closely linked to the promotion of spiritual civilisation throughout the 1980s and 1990s has been an official emphasis on “population quality” (人口素质, renkou suzhi). “From the 1980s”, writes Zhou Defan, “the central government has posed the question of raising the quality of the Chinese people, and to clearly stipulate that the basic task of education reform is to raise the quality of the nation, to bring out many talents, and to bring out good talents”.28 Official interest in population quality through education in science, ideology and morality reflected a perceived need to develop a population equipped to take on the unprecedented historical conditions of the period. In defining “population quality”, Mao Jiarui (et al) divides the concept into the following constituent parts: physiological quality (生理素质, shengli suzhi), scientific and cultural quality (科学文化素质, kexue wenhua suzhi), ideological and moral quality (思想道德素质, sixiang daode suzhi), and psychological quality (心理素质, xinli suzhi).29 The parallels with spiritual civilisation are obvious. The September 1986 CCP Central Committee Resolutions Concerning the Guiding Principles of the Promotion of

**Socialist Spiritual Civilisation** itself discusses socialist modernisation in terms of the raising of “the Chinese people’s ideological and moral quality and scientific and cultural quality”. In broader literature and journalism, the link between “civilisation” and “quality” is further developed and expanded upon.

Implicit within the civilisation narrative, and embodied in such slogans as “behave in a civilised way, raise quality”, is the idea that quality equates to civilisation. This synonymy is manifested, for example, in the promotion of quality goods as opposed to fake and shoddy goods, quality service as opposed to poor service, and cultural quality as opposed to cultural garbage. From an economic perspective, while Maoist socialism had focused its productive energies along the lines of mere quantity, the post-Mao period had witnessed an increasing regard for quality. The world economic system was demanding “quality” from Chinese industry, and evolving domestic consumer preferences were echoing this demand. Seemingly in response to these new twenty first century “rules”, the civilisation narrative called for “increasing quality” (提高素质, tigao suzhi) as opposed to “increasing production”. In terms of population, this translated as a declining population growth rate coupled with the creation and development of better (and more internationally competitive) citizens. The development of better – and more internationally competitive – citizens required the creation of narratives, and indeed models, that would inspire them to be such. Unlike Lei Feng’s revolutionary China, the world of the contemporary Chinese citizen was a much larger and economically competitive place.

The discourse on population quality presented China as a human resource system of 1.2 billion people in which different social groups could be ranked along a developmental hierarchy in terms of their quality profiles. The present was regarded as the period of the "knowledge economy" (知识经济, zhishi jingji). Certain social groups were identified by the

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29 Mao Jiarui (et al), ibid. pp.57-60.
31 (举止文明提高素质, juzhi wenming tigao suzhi). From a poster published by the CCP Beijing Committee Propaganda Bureau (中共北京市委宣传部, Zhonggong Beijingshi wei xuanchaunbu), Capital Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Committee Office (首都精神文明建设委员会办公室, Shoudu jingshen wenming jianshe wei yuanhui bangongshi). From a photograph taken by the author in Beijing in September 1999.
state as requiring more quality improvement than others, but when compared internationally, China as a whole was regarded as possessing a "relatively backward scientific culture". According to Jiang Zemin’s *On Science and Technology*, "Cultures differ from one another, but science does not. There is only one system of science in the world”. Jiang indicates that the popularisation of science is a way of catching up to the world scientific standard.  

The new age had introduced new ideas relating to progress and what it meant to be civilised, and as the relevance of such models as Lei Feng was questioned, new heroes were promoted with the aim of creating models which satisfied the criterion of "fitting the times". The fundamental significance of model behaviour within this setting was the way in which it could demonstrate a positive relationship between material and spiritual civilisation, leading ultimately to some sort of positive social outcome or service to the people. The promotion of models and exemplary behaviour which possessed an essential "time character" was effected through various awards systems, official praise and wide media coverage. Of these new generation models, bus conductor Li Suli was to become arguably the most widely acknowledged model of socialist spiritual civilisation.

Li Suli, a thirty four year old female bus conductor from Beijing’s No.8 Route Bus Team, became a household name in 1996 as the recipient of China’s “National May First Labour Medal”. According to one report, “for the past fifteen years, outstanding ticket attendant Li Suli has loved her work, mastered her profession, contributed to her post, showed sincerity towards passengers, [expressed] genuine unity, and assisted and promoted the progress of her comrades”. From 25 September 1996, the *Beijing Evening News* commenced publishing *The Story of Li Suli (Li Suli de gushi)* in installments. Workers, especially those within the transport sector, were also urged to “study Li Suli” (学习李素利, *xuexi Li Suli*). Throughout 1996 and 1997, in fact, the majority of Beijing’s buses and taxis prominently displayed “study Li Suli” stickers on their windows, and before long Li Suli had found her place within the pantheon of socialist models and heroes. Her name became the embodiment of civilised

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32 (江泽民科学和技术学习读本, *Jiang Zemin<On kexuejishu>> xuexi duben*). loc cit.
33 ibid. p.139.
service, just as Lei Feng had embodied diligence and service to the people. Newspaper articles reporting on the education of transport workers in the standardisation of service, for example, referred to such activities under the banner of “study Li Suli”. Other reports called upon workers of all professions and industries to study Li Suli.

On 19 September 1996, a set of resolutions to encourage professional ethics were announced by the spiritual civilisation committee representing Beijing’s construction organisations, calling for workers to study the good deeds of Li Suli. Less than one month later, these resolutions were accompanied at the national level by the “Chinese Communist Party Construction Bureau Party Committee Resolutions Concerning the Study of Comrade Li Suli’s Advanced Deeds”, announced at a meeting held in Beijing’s Great Hall of the People. A *Beijing Evening News* report paraphrases Central Propaganda Bureau deputy Yu Guangchun at the meeting, stating that the requirements of studying Li Suli were:

- Firstly, to study her loyalty to her post and spirit of respect for her profession.
- Secondly, to study her fine quality of genuinely treating others. Thirdly, to study her unceasing and forward-moving consciousness of the times. Fourthly, to study her moral character of willingly contributing [to society].

Indeed, it was her apparent “consciousness of the times” (时代意识, *shidai yishi*), or more correctly her “time character” (时代性, *shidaixing*), which made Li Suli a Lei Feng for a modern citizenry. Writes one journalist, the spirit of Comrade Li Suli is “necessary in the current building of socialist modernisation, necessary in the current waging of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation, and is the expectation of the people and the times”. While Lei Feng was a product of the revolution, Li Suli is a child of not so ideologically nostalgic times. The media had fashioned a Li Suli who was a representative Chinese “everywoman”

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of the modernisation era, and the heroine of a new form of market economy morality. Unlike Lei Feng, who represented the notion of remuneration-free voluntary service to the people, Li Suli represented the ideal of professional service to consumers within a user-pays society. Unlike Lei Feng, a soldier in the People’s Liberation Army, Li Suli was one of a growing class of faceless service industry employees – a segment of the population which was rapidly expanding as a result of market reforms. Unlike Lei Feng, Li Suli was a consumer and, like most citizens of 1990s China, knew the value of a yuan. She was, in effect, representative of the CCP’s own search for moral relevance within an increasingly capitalistic economic system.

The reform era had been accompanied by a perceived crime wave which was responded to through draconian anti-crime campaigns and strong measures of deterrence. Within this new and alarming setting the roles of the model crime fighter and vigilante hero gained significant official promotion. On television, police personnel and criminals played a constant game of “cops and robbers” in such series as *Heroes Never Tire* (英雄无累, *Yingxiong wu lei*), which repeated the same messages to audiences across the country week after week. While television criminals represented an unsavoury flip-side of the modernisation program, their pursuers represented the maintenance of order, the surveillance of moral boundaries and the struggle for civilised modernisation. The celluloid world of black and white, however, contrasted with the realities and ambiguities that characterised life in the reform era. Heroism, to an extent, was an artefact from the Mao era which seemed out of place, so much so that *Beijing Evening News* journalist Bai Wei was prompted to ask “why is it this difficult to be a good person?”

Bai recounted the story of a taxi driver who stopped his vehicle to assist an elderly lady who had fallen in the middle of the street. Before helping the lady to her feet and driving her home, the taxi driver, mindful of cautionary tales told by his colleagues, asked the lady to sign a declaration stating that her injuries had not been inflicted by him. The taxi driver was haunted days later when the lady’s son visited him to thank him. Her son stated that his mother, while thankful for the taxi driver’s actions, had cried daily since her accident, bemoaning the fact that she had not been trusted by him.

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The hero was vulnerable, and in danger of being driven out of the market by personal greed and the threat that their actions carried adverse consequences. In October 1997, The Chinese criminal code was revised to remove criminal responsibility for those acts causing death or injury to an individual performing a criminal act, such as murder, robbery, rape or kidnapping. This legislative change, in the view of one journalist, “will be beneficial in protecting the righteous actions of those who fight for justice”. Rhetoric glorifying the people’s heroes was now backed up by unequivocal legislation that stripped the offender of basic legal rights. According to a People’s Daily report published in May 1998, the good treatment of heroes is the responsibility of society, and this treatment “indicates the level of civilisation of a society”.

Reportage of model individuals was accompanied by accounts of model work units and enterprises across a range of industries. A People’s Daily article of early 1998 reported on the provision of “spiritual fast food” (精神快餐, jingshen kuai can) on the Red Flag train service between Beijing and Zhengzhou. According to journalist Ma Yimin, when passengers board the train, “they are greeted with a special present: that day’s Zhengzhou Evening News”. States Ma:

I met Zhang Lei, from a provincial bureau, who was on a business trip to Beijing. He said, “The Party newspaper boards the train, spreading spiritual civilisation. It opens up a window for people to understand Henan. This is a good idea”.

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41 Mao Lei, ibid.


43 ibid.
How does this type of commercial activity constitute promotion of spiritual civilisation? Certain activities are regarded as adding value to human capital, or population quality (renkou suzhi), more than others. The reading of party-endorsed newspapers is obviously perceived and promoted as an endeavour more likely to spiritually enrich the lives of passengers than alternative activities such as playing cards or other games, or staring blankly out the window. According to railway staff, the cost of providing newspapers is 165,000 yuan per year, but the passengers do not pay a cent. “When our service is thorough”, states the train’s captain, “occupation rates increase, and so the benefits to rail services will rise too”.  

The above story also reveals an aspect of spiritual civilisation which alters and contemporises the idea of “free service to the people”. While activities such as the provision of free newspapers by the railways to their passengers may appear as a “free service”, the exercise ultimately possesses a more market-oriented flavour of “investment” or “value adding”. The provision of free newspapers is ultimately designed to win over more passengers and to increase market-share and/or profitability – spiritual and material civilisation working in symbiotic bliss. Contemporary debates on “free service” have argued that “free service” activities can result in free-riding and market failure. According to Mao Yushi, free service activities are more likely to attract people who wish to take advantage of the service rather than people who wish to learn noble acts.  Borge Bakken similarly notes the story of do-gooder soldier Zhang Yiju whose free electrical repair store idea backfired when local store owners turned on him for taking business away from them. Free service was ill suited to the market economy. What becomes civilised service in this new setting, by contrast, is the willingness of employees and enterprises to go out of their way to provide “quality service” to paying customers and consumers.

In late 2001, The *Beijing Evening News* commenced a “Making Civilised Beijing Folk” column in which readers were asked to write a “Civilised morality story” and send it in to the newspaper to be published. According to the newspaper:

> Beijing’s people have happily reached the end of another year. Looking back, we see more people sacrifice their own interests for the good of others, more

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44 ibid.
46 Borge Bakken, ibid. p.347.
people happily helping others, more returns of lost and found goods and more orderly boarding and alighting at bus stops. The report points out that models of morality live anonymously among the people and they constantly touch the lives of those around them. The following week, a solicited story appeared in the column. Titled, *City Folk Hope that Catching a “Star Cab” is a Matter of Course*, the story was written by trainee journalist Zhou Mingjie, and is an account of one of his taxi ride experiences. According to Zhou, after waiting over an hour for a taxi on a wintery evening, he was finally successful in hailing a cab from the street side. Upon boarding the vehicle, the driver wished him a happy New Year and apologised for keeping him waiting in the cold. The driver apparently gave him the choice of two alternate routes to his destination, explained the pros and cons of each, adhered strictly to the traffic regulations and was at all times professional and courteous. Upon research, Zhou discovered that around 700 taxi drivers in Beijing who have been recognised for their level of service in providing assistance to sick people, offering free service during festivals, adhering to road rules and using civilised language, have earned the status of “star class”.

Such activities serve to suggest that paragons of twenty first century virtue are not necessarily those distant semi-mythical figures who become celebrity and cult objects through official endorsement, but mere mortals going about their day to day roles. The message is that one does not need to be superhuman in order to display exemplary behaviour. Similarly, journalist Mao Lei tells the story of Wu Changquan, a thirty two year old lowly paid dock worker from Anhui province, who had been awarded a “Spiritual Civilisation Ten Good Characters” title for saving eleven people from drowning in the Huai He river over an seven year period. For much of that period, Wu’s family had been struggling to live off his 100 yuan per month wage. Recently, states the report, the heroic Wu handed in his application to become a member of the Communist Party which he had been putting off for some time “because he thought he was not good enough and did not meet all the prerequisites”. The significance of such mere mortals is not their uniqueness or their “greatness”, but the idea

49 (精神文明十佳人物, *Jingshen wenming shijia renwu*)
that they are normal people, and that there are potentially any number of such people spread throughout China's cities and villages who are doing good deeds and providing civilised service, and that their actions are potentially infectious. This is an old message, drawing heritage from Maoist images of anonymous proletarian heroes, but it has been given a face-lift to give it post-Mao currency – a case of making old wine more palatable in a new bottle.

While civilisation and politeness handbooks were widely available from bookstores at prices considerably below that of popular fiction and other non-party published genres, they did not necessarily enjoy a wide appeal. The print media was certainly one vehicle by which the same specific messages could be delivered to a broad readership through columns that took the guise of reportage, anecdotes and self-help guides. A reader of the *Beijing Evening News*, for example, would find such columns located within the newspaper's “Home” (家圆, Jiayuan) section. Regular columns such as “A little Noise” (一点声音, Yidian shengyin), “Head of the House Handbook” (家长手册, Jiazhang shouce) and “Click Homepage” (点击主页, Dianji zhuye) feature stories carrying such cautionary titles as *Is your Home Hygienically Modernised?* and *I am Red Faced*. Unlike the printed, bound, and dust covered handbook, such columns are relatively accessible, attractive and dynamic; written in a style that would appear at a glance dialogic and emotive rather than didactic and detached. The authors of these columns appear simultaneously as experts and as ordinary folk – their narratives trumpeting ideological correctness behind a façade of populist rhetoric.

For demonstrative purposes, the *Beijing Evening News*’ combined “Everyday Service” and “Home” section of 02 January 2002 is of interest. This particular issue featured eight “Home” related articles, constituting one page of the tabloid format newspaper. The headline article focused on littering, chiding those who tend to spit and/or throw rubbish out of car windows, and cursing those who accept such practices as “uncivilised pollution”. Journalist Er Mao writes, “if you are a driver, stop your passengers from doing this type of thing; if you are a passenger and see the driver acting in this way, give him a talking to”. According to this journalist, protection of the environment is as important in terms of civilisation – if not more important – than the maintenance of airs and graces. Positioned beside this article was a

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50 Mao Lei, loc cit.
“question and answer” segment titled “Feelings Expert Line” (感情专线, Qinggan zhuaxian), and hosted by “expert” Meng Jie (“big sister Meng”). In this particular issue, a fellow had written to the newspaper to seek advice on how to deal with difficulties he had been experiencing with his one-time lesbian girlfriend who was struggling with her sexuality. Sister Meng ended her response by writing, “Come to think of it, what in fact do "homosexuals" have? No more than a greater chance of being infected with the Aids virus. Some people are not afraid [of this]. But we are afraid”. 52 The title of her response portrayed a sense of physical disgust towards the issue of homosexuality: A feeling akin to “swallowing a fly” (tun cangying). At the foot of the page, the “Head of the Household Handbook” section discussed the benefits of parents involving their young children in musical pursuits, such as playing the violin, as an entrée to enhanced intellectual and creative development.

The three articles mentioned above are representative of the type of journalism which appears in the Beijing Evening News’ “Home” section. Their subject matter is situated in moral territory that falls just beyond the practical jurisdiction of the legal system. They espouse a lore in place of the law, an unwritten constitution of what defines “civilised” as opposed to “uncivilised” behaviour. Their opinionated yet conformist, emotive and faux-pedestrian yet authoritative style attempts to create a cloak of mythical legitimacy which persuades the reader that what they are reading are the unadulterated views of the masses and that these views are unquestionably correct. In expressing such views, the columnists will often preface their opinions with “we” or “our” - harnessing pronouns in such a way that gives the impression that they are expressing the opinions of a collective which implicitly includes the reader. “Question and answer” type columns create a patient/expert relationship between reader and newspaper, contributing to the creation of an aura of authoritativeness, and the inclusion of rhetorical questioning guides the reader into arriving at preordained value judgments. The functionality of stylistic devices contained within these types of articles extends ultimately to the modeling of associated norms and to the promotion of pattern maintenance.

51 Er Mao (二毛), “What is that thing that’s been thrown from a car window?” (车窗里扔出的是什么, Chechuangli renchude shi shenme), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), 02 January 2002. p.35.

52 “A "Swallowing a Fly" Kind of Feeling” (有一种吞苍蝇的感觉, You yizhong tun cangyingde ganjue), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), 02 January 2002. p.35.
The wide range of morality handbooks preaching self-cultivation, and the proliferation of self-help newspaper articles preaching self-fulfillment, may be viewed as metaphors for China’s pursuit of self-realisation in the 21st century. The authors of such literature contribute to a discourse on moral progress by creating and reinforcing rules of behaviour and correctness that point their readership in a certain moral direction. The readers, searching for such rules in the rapidly evolving socialist market economy, contribute to this discourse to the extent to which they internalize, accept, or react to what is written. Fuelling the perceived necessity for new rules was a need for the population to be morally equipped to handle China’s increasing assimilation into the world economic system. According to the mass media, China’s “catching up” with the industrialised world was a struggle to be played out in the lives of individuals and their efforts to become more skilled, more highly educated and better equipped to do battle in the world’s economic markets.

civilisation and the world

China’s induction into the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the success of Beijing’s bid for the 2008 Olympic Games influenced discourse on civilisation in China in a number of ways. In one sense, it represented a triumph for Chinese civilisation – recognition for a dynamic and still viable cultural heritage in the throes of modernisation, and in another it stood as a wake-up call for a civilisation that had much to learn about being civilised. Many argued that opening reform of the socialist market economy had brought with it the need for a corresponding system of professional etiquette that reflected China’s increasing integration with the world economic system. Journalist Mei Mingyou relates the story of a recent trip to Switzerland made by the deputy minister for foreign trade, Long Yongtu.53 While in a washroom, Long noticed a strange sound coming from a nearby cubicle. Upon investigating, he discovered a teenage boy who was repeatedly attempting to flush a faulty toilet. Writes Mei Mingyou:

Would this happen in China? It may well be the case that if [the toilet] works, it flushes, and if it doesn’t [the boy] may well walk away. Deputy Minister Long warns citizens that after China joins the WTO, living their days by way of
cheating and dishonest acts will no longer be allowed and will no longer be viable.\textsuperscript{54}

According to a January 2002 \textit{Beijing Evening News} report titled \textit{Rural Folk Study “Li”}, winning the Olympic bid and entering the WTO had not only enabled Beijing residents to “witness unlimited trade opportunities”, but had also presented an increased need for business etiquette training. The report announced that “ground breaking lessons in ‘professional etiquette’ (\textit{zhiye liyi}) to raise the occupational skills relating to consultation with foreign counterparts have commenced in all provinces”.\textsuperscript{55} Participating delegates, states the report, studied “scriptures of convention” (礼仪经, \textit{liyi jing}) which “promoted Chinese civilisation”.

The report, although brief, makes no reference to any foreign codification of etiquette, instead making almost religious reference to the positivities of China’s own rules of propriety as embodied in the character \textit{li}. The ultimate message is that greater integration with the world economy and increased dealings with foreign businesses occasion the need for associated business etiquette training that is based on purely Chinese precepts (and not Western values).

In another \textit{Beijing Evening News} article, journalist Zhang Guoxian discusses the need for greater “trustworthiness” (信用, \textit{xinyong}) in light of China’s entry into the WTO. According to Zhang:

A healthy state of mind and reputation of personal character are the foundations of career success for anybody. The promotion of one’s competitiveness in an open international social system requires not only the establishment of a system of trustworthiness in corporate circles, but also the cultivation of personal character by individuals.\textsuperscript{56}

In linking entry into the WTO with an individual’s moral integrity and reputation within an “open international social system”, Zhang argues that there is a need for individuals to focus

\textsuperscript{54} Mei Mingyou, ibid. p.29.
on trustworthiness. This begs the question: are the Chinese to be regarded as relatively untrustworthy within an international context, and as a consequence less civilised? Has the opportunity for self-awareness that entry to the WTO represents reflected back to Chinese civilisation an unflattering image of itself, necessitating a reassessment of what it means to be civilised? Had closer engagement with the rest of the world uncovered another perceived fault in China’s moral culture? Whatever the answers, Zhang’s linking of entry to the WTO with the need for trustworthiness is indicative of an increasing internationalisation of moral yardsticks.

In Late 2001, a *Beijing Evening News* headline article identified the promotion of citizen morality as a key element of Beijing’s preparations for hosting the Olympics. According to the report, moral construction was considered central to the slogan “Build a new Beijing, host a new Olympics”. In the same publication, journalist Zhang Shaoxiong attacks the Chinese penchant for spitting on streets and sidewalks. With China only recently joining the WTO, and with only seven years before the 2008 Olympics, Zhang asks “what kind of capital do we want to be showing to the people of the world?”⁵⁷ In terms of gaining success in terms of international recognition for China, Mei Mingyou points to increased regulation resulting from greater integration with the world economic system, implying that it is up to the Chinese to improve their act if they have any hope of mixing it with the developed world. In this sense, it is implied that Chinese civilisation may not be as civilised as the West. “Why don’t we take the more advanced and useful things in Western civilisation”, writes Mei, “and make use of them.” Western teachings of kindness, respect, hard work, forgiveness and helping others, Mei continues, “should give us inspiration and civilisation instead of backwardness and ignorance.”⁵⁸

The Beijing Party Committee’s *Suggestions for Essentials of Building Citizen Morality*, launched in response to the Centre’s *Essentials of Building Citizen Morality*, made specific mention of Beijing’s preparations for the 2008 Olympics. It called for the implementation of the “Olympic Action Plan” and the establishment of an “Olympic consciousness” (奥运意识, aoyun yishi) In particular, it stated that

⁵⁸ Mei Mingyou, loc cit. p.29.
From now until the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing it is an important period and opportunity. The main objectives are friendliness, raising the standard of the capital’s citizen morality construction in order to make the morality of city folk first rate, first rate quality of service, first rate cultural atmosphere, first rate social climate, first rate humane environment, exhibit new images of Beijing, welcome the Olympic Games, and make Beijing a first rate civilised city around the world.59

The idea of Beijing’s moral future being driven by a desire for the city to be recognised as a “first rate” world city, and the pursuit of an “Olympic consciousness”, are both entirely expected yet thought provoking. It comes as no surprise that the hosting of the games is an opportunity for the CCP to both showcase China to the world and to proudly showcase its own glorious successes to its subjects. Within the context of moral construction as a key element in both the 9th and 10th five year plans, it is difficult to think of the “Olympic consciousness” as anything other than a self-serving idea located firmly within the framework of socialist spiritual civilisation. Despite this, the mere idea of pursuing an “Olympic consciousness”, however equivocal or rhetorical that idea may be, inherently implies the pursuit of some kind of moral sameness or assimilation with the world in general.

Arguments such as those above, however, do raise significant questions relating to the position of Western civilisation within the Chinese worldview. Is the civilisation of the West merely a civilisational supermarket from which the Chinese chose to take certain items, such as technological innovation and economic paradigms, while still maintaining a strong exclusively Chinese spiritual base? Or does Western civilisation represent something much more – providing the very yardsticks of civilisation itself? While the triumphalism resulting from entry into the WTO and a successful Olympic bid in one sense represents recent success for Chinese civilisation, in another – and possibly more profound – sense it represents a challenge to many aspects of China’s spiritual base. In a way, we see the return of sentiments not dissimilar to those professed by Bo Yang in the 1980s, albeit in a much milder form. If China is to become a viable member of the WTO and stage a successful Olympics, argue such views, it will need to borrow from the Western spiritual realm. The implication here is

59 Wang Xibao (王希宝). “CCP Beijing Committee’s practical suggestions concerning the Essentials of Building Citizen Morality” (中共北京市委关于贯彻落实<<公民道德建设实施纲要>>的意见, Zhonggong
that Chinese civilisation possesses gaping spiritual inadequacies – particularly in the areas of professional ethics and public morality. Cheating, spitting and a lack of regard for public spaces are presented here as particularly Chinese faults, and characteristic of entrenched cultural traits. Such perceived inadequacies would not exist without an idea of civilisation that borrowed to some extent from the civilisation of the West. To be more civilised, in this sense, meant to become more like the West.

While some reportage refers to modernisation within the context of a dualistic struggle between the civilisations of China and the West, other perspectives present progress in terms of growth and mutual borrowings between China and the world. China is not becoming "Westernised" so much as becoming an increasingly important contributor to and accepted player within world or “human” civilisation (人类文明, renlei wenming). This broader definition of civilisation implies that despite certain imperatives toward cultural hegemony, civilisations can maintain their integrity, and they can coexist. Fitting in with the world system is viewed as a positive development for the future of China and its culture. A reader on public morality discusses the development of Shanghai in this way, describing the city as “not only China’s Shanghai but… the world’s Shanghai”, a global showcase where the “world card” (世界牌, shijiepai) can be played well. In playing the “world card” well, does China maintain the viability of her unique ideational realm or does she leave it open to attack and decay? The tone of many cultural critiques appearing in the Chinese media suggests that playing the world card, through such mechanisms as the Olympics and WTO, creates increased opportunities for critical self-awareness. In turn, self-awareness results in the identification and classification of both positive and negative cultural traits and associated areas for improvement. Although this situation of self-awareness bears similarities to that of the late 1980s, there are marked differences. This time the Party has learnt a thing or two about managing perceptions, controlling the process of self-awareness, and influencing the relative values placed on China’s cultural traits. The cultural self-loathing and envy so much a feature of the twentieth century world view of the Chinese are no longer inevitable consequences of self-awareness, but they are not necessarily avoidable.

beijingshiwei guanyu guanche Luoshi Gongmin daode jianshe shishi gangyao de yijian), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), 27 December 2001. p.3.
This chapter will discuss those aspects of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation that may be characterised as ritual. These ritual components of the campaign shall be examined by focusing on several types of activities which appeared throughout the campaign, such as songs, poems, exhibitions, ceremonies, awards, rating systems, rural and urban compacts, and various demonstrations of support for the campaign by work units and the media. The semiotic qualities of these activities will be studied with a view to determining their effectiveness in meeting the campaign’s objectives and in promoting a uniquely Chinese brand of civilisation.

The ideological campaigns (运动, yundong) and struggles (斗争, douzheng) that have littered the Chinese political landscape throughout the twentieth century have been studied as a form of ritual. Similarly, the semiotic aspects of their more localised and ad hoc variants, including activities (活动, huodong) and projects (工程, gongcheng) have been identified. Jiang An has noted the synchronous timing of CCP Central Committee meetings with the launching of such campaigns, a temporal/causal relationship which is worth exploring from a semiotic perspective. The promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation drew top billing at both the Sixth Plenary Session of the 12th Central Committee in 1986 and the Sixth Plenary Session of the 14th Central Committee in 1996. Both plenary sessions produced resolutions on the developing of spiritual civilisation which were hailed as important moral guidelines or blueprints for the future, and both were followed by spiritual civilisation campaigns driven by the Party’s propaganda machinery. In both cases, the Party’s macro-level promotional activities were supported by complementary activity at provincial and local government levels and among the media, army and various work units (单位, danwei) across a range of industries.

Geremie Barme notes that the staging of plenary sessions and campaigns have become temporal milestones in contemporary China. Time itself becomes organised by the almost cyclical process of campaigns and purges that originate in the political realm. This certainly reflects on the pervasiveness of politics within Chinese society, but also points to the
existence of a pattern of ritualised political action and reaction. Each CCP Central Committee meeting has the potential to set a chain of events in motion which involve guidelines promulgated by the leadership being promoted at various levels of the state and Party hierarchy and responded to by work units, organisations and individuals at the grass roots level. Within this framework of cyclical “action and reaction” we can place He Xin’s categorisation of campaign participants as “instigators” (煽动, shandong) and “spectators” (看客, kanke). According to Borge Bakken, instigators “form a core of key participants” who take an active role within a campaign. Spectators, on the other hand, may tend to be less strategic in their activities, yet their participation is by no means of less importance.

Campaigns are characterised by a particular moral standard or norm. The instigator will act in an attempt to be seen to be promoting this norm, and the spectator will react in an attempt to be seen to be supporting and adhering to the norm. The importance of such campaigns, it could be argued, does not lie with the norm itself, indeed the norm of one campaign may well be at odds with the norm advertised in the next. The importance may well lie with the ritual responses of participants as contributing to, and symbolic of, the maintenance of a clearly defined political order.

The showing of support for the moral norm advertised in a campaign points, as previously mentioned, to an emphasis on a moral orthopraxy as opposed to an orthodoxy – on etiquette rather than ethics. While a campaign and its associated activities may, from a phenomenological perspective, prove successful within the context of its own limited life-cycle and within the context of its political terms of reference, it is questionable whether such campaigns are able to achieve success in terms of the long term adoption of the norms they attempt to promote. The most recent promotion of spiritual civilisation has witnessed a high level of participation through the conduct of various activities and shows of support that has given the campaign the appearance of a “craze”. From specially written songs and poems to large slogan banners and activities undertaken by students, the campaign possesses the garb of a popular movement. If such shows of support are merely that – outward displays of conformity – then is the campaign no more than a hollow servicing of a temporary political imperative? Accepting the well documented arguments attesting to the “other-ruled” or “outward” orientation of Chinese morality (especially with the campaign context), I would

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1 Borge Bakken, op cit. p.345.
argue that such an orientation does not necessarily prohibit the possibility for an internalisation and active adoption of values. History demonstrates that the messages and ideals promoted in one campaign may well be more palatable and become more popular than the ideals expressed by another.

Within the campaign phenomenon of “action and reaction” exists a number of potential semiological chains. Firstly, the semiology of “action” can be located along a chain in which ostensive morality and respect for China’s cultural traditions, expressed through the promotion of spiritual civilisation, form a first order meaning, which also constitutes the signifier or expression of an implied second order meaning: that of moral authority. This, in turn, signifies the third order meaning: the goal of political power maintenance. We can also talk of the semiology of “reaction”, a semiological chain in which a first order system of ostensible morality is signified by good deeds and participation in civilised activities. The associative total of this lower order system may then be seen as the signifier of second order meanings, such as a perceived need or wish to express compliance or deference on the part of participants. This, in turn, signifies an imperative on the part of participants to seek political advancement as “instigators” or safety as “spectators”. The framework we are ultimately left with is an ends-means matrix of Party action and popular reaction (see matrix below) which completes a semiological circle of power maintenance – the acting out of the action-reaction ritual becoming an encoded metaphor for political authority and compliance. Within such a framework the success of the campaign is not so much in the actual adoption of propagated norms but in the soliciting of desired popular reactions which, in effect, tell the Party, “you’re still in charge”.

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<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>REACTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>1st order</td>
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<td>Promotion of</td>
<td>Participation and</td>
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<td>spiritual civilisation</td>
<td>civilised behaviour</td>
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<td>2nd order</td>
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<td>Expression of</td>
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<td>moral authority</td>
<td>deference</td>
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<td>3rd order</td>
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<td>Power maintenance</td>
<td>Political ambition or safety</td>
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Means

Ends
The promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation is an ideological-moral campaign, and it employs the technologies of ritual that one would usually expect to see employed in such a campaign. The study of these technologies – who they target, how they are framed and delivered, can tell us much about how the ideals actually promoted in one campaign differ from those promoted in another, and how these ideals relate to the political imperatives of the ruling elite. In many respects, however, such terms as “campaign” have become somewhat dated, having become synonymous with the highly politicised mobilisation efforts of the Mao period. Various activities associated with the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation have alternatively been labeled as “projects” (gongcheng). According to a *China News Analysis* report, however, “in recent years this term has become a semantic jack of all trades, and it is becoming another empty notion”. Projects which are regularly referred to in spiritual civilisation rhetoric include “Project Hope” (希望工程, Xiwang gongcheng) and the “Hand in Hand Project” (手牵手工程, Shouqianshou gongcheng). While both projects are ostensibly charitable, and have resulted in many positive social outcomes, they disguise overbearing political imperatives demonstrated, according to *China News Analysis*, in Hand in Hand’s “Pen-pal and Gift Exchange Program between Tibetan and Han children.” It is apparent that the “project” shares many of the attributes of its cousin the “campaign”, not least of which is its ability to fit comfortably within the framework of the “action – reaction” ritual.

Party officials were by no means immune to the social ills identified as symptomatic of the reform era. According to a book titled *Socialist Reform Theory*, an overemphasis on the promotion of material civilisation in the 1980s and the neglect of spiritual civilisation had serious consequences for many cadres:

Some cadres look after their personal interests, winning contracts, attracting flattery and bringing a low quality style to the Party. Some cadres have no spirit, ignore problems, conduct their duties in a perfunctory manner, even faking their work. Some have shallow views, do not listen to the people, do not care about the

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3 ibid. p.7.
people’s troubles, are not interested in helping people solve practical problems and even bully and oppress people. Some cadres use their positions for personal interest which damages the nation’s and the people’s interests; they even descend into the ranks of criminals.4

Activities sponsored by Party organisations during the campaign – let alone the campaign itself – were opportunities for the Party to present an image of self-reflection, even self-criticism. The promotion of spiritual civilisation was in this sense the propagation of an idea of ritual cleansing or purification - a search for truth. If the party was not infallible, at least it could be seen to be doing its best to govern by virtue.

During the course of the promotion of spiritual civilisation, the CCP leadership called for all Party cadres to show an exemplary level of support for the campaign and its stated aims. According to the October 1996 resolutions,

To promote spiritual civilisation construction, it is essential first of all to run the party strictly and improve the party’s work style. The Chinese Communist Party is the vanguard of the working class in China. Communist Party members should play an exemplary role in the whole of society, and party leading cadres should play an exemplary role in the whole party.5

Cadres were to take a leading role in the establishment of the post-Deng moral order and in doing so to “resolutely refrain from what is prohibited for others, consciously subject themselves to the supervision of the party and the people, and withstand the tests of power, money and sexual temptations”.6 A number of catch-phrases were to capture the aims of party and state organs throughout the campaign, particularly “govern according to virtue” (以德治国, yi de zhi guo), “govern according to the law” (以法制国, yi fa zhi guo) and “service to the people” (为人民服务, wei renmin fuwu).

On 02 March 1998, the Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Committee covering those organs directly under central Party control announced a resolution initiating “establish civilised

5 October 1996 Resolutions
6 ibid.
organs, be good public servants” activities. The resolutions called on central Party organs, as leading organs, to establish activities aimed at promoting ideology and morals, honest government, environmental order, and various “stress civilisation, cultivate a new wind” activities. Such activities are described as a “requirement of socialist opening up and reform and modernisation”. Specifically, cadres were directed to diligently study Marxism, Mao Zedong thought and Deng Xiaoping theory, propagate fine professional, social and family morals, better inherit and develop the Party’s “fine tradition” in accord with the new demands on the Party and government.

It was obviously important for the Party to be seen as unified in its approach to the campaign. What this meant was that party and state organs at national to local levels – and the Army and People’s Armed Police - were to appear to be consistent in their approach. Such organs across the country were, therefore, quick to make a well-noticed jump onto the spiritual civilisation bandwagon. In August 1996, for example, it was widely reported that authorities in Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Xiamen and Hainan had written songs in support of the civilisation drive to “indoctrinate people about morality”.

In promoting spiritual civilisation within the army, Huang Ju, a member of the CCP Central Committee Political Bureau and First Secretary of the Party Committee of the PLA Shanghai Garrison was quoted as stating, “all levels of party and government departments must place the building of spiritual civilisation on the top of the agenda and have a strong sense of responsibility and a keen perception of opportunity.”

Civilisation-related activities have also provided a vehicle for the promotion of administrative good news stories. The Beef Street Public Security Bureau station in

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8 ibid.
Beijing, for example, had, for four years up to 1993, been named by city and district governments as a “unit with an advanced sense of spiritual civilisation”.

Proclamations and literature throughout the campaign called upon party officials and members to do their bit in supporting the promotion of spiritual civilisation. One such handbook, titled *New Age Communist Party Member Morality Construction Reader*, states that “all party members, especially leading cadres must stress study, stress politics, stress healthy tendencies, keep firmly in mind the party’s fundamental aim, rigorously change the subjective world, and strengthen moral attainments…” Party members are urged to “thoroughly establish practical citizen morality activities with popular character”. Party and government organs are directed to conduct activities along the lines of such activities as “Project Hope”, “Holding Hands” and the “Happiness Project”, and those activities that make people satisfied with the work of government officials, commemorative activities and politeness activities. Cadres are also called upon to “advocate raising of the national flag, singing of the national anthem, swearing in of new party, group and team members, adult ceremonies, “stress politeness” and “Say goodbye to uncivilised expressions” activities at important places and during major activities.”

showing support: media and the masses

The reporting by Party mouthpieces of achievements in the promotion of spiritual civilisation is constituted, to a large extent, by accounts of positive manifestations of the “action-reaction” ritual. These accounts were published by media outlets in adherence to the Party’s directive to “persist in positive publicity in favour of unity, stability and boosting the morale of the people, and stick firmly to correct orientation of public

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14 ibid. p.11.
opinion. With media outlets keen to be seen to be supporting the campaign, news reports throughout the late 1990s attributed many activities and good deeds performed by party organisations, military personnel, model citizens, residential districts and work units as examples of the grass roots adoption of socialist spiritual civilisation. The People’s Daily, for example, paraded itself as the “messenger of spiritual civilisation”. In a June 1998 report celebrating the newspaper’s fiftieth anniversary, journalist Li Qingan writes that the paper is “the premier disseminator of the voice of the Party and state, the representative of the aspirations of the people, and is the messenger of spiritual civilisation”. The journalist describes the role of such a messenger in terms of the paper’s publication of “special reports” on the deeds of popular models such as Lei Feng, Li Suli and other “heroes” from various periods. Similarly, a February 1998 People’s Daily article reported on the efforts of the Central Nationalities Publishing House to promote the campaign by publishing a book of “four word” poems (四字歌, sizige) promoting the building of spiritual civilisation. Support for the campaign in the electronic media was evident in a June 1996 China Television News (中国电视报, Zhongguo dianshibao) report on the 1995 Television Social Education Awards which carried the headline “Promote the Building of Spiritual Civilisation, Develop Social Education Television Programs”.18

According to another People’s Daily issue of the same month, an eighty-seven-year-old man from Jiangxi province reportedly volunteered his services free of charge to promote spiritual civilisation to the masses. The report noted that the old worker “persists in reciting stories,
humour, folk songs and other [literary] forms by heart” to promote the campaign. In similar fashion, a January 1997 Beijing Evening News report covered a prize ceremony attended by the Capital Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Standing Committee Office deputy head, Liu Quanwang (appendix 33). The report featured the efforts of a Beijing resident in writing a humorous essay about spiritual civilisation and “window industries”. The ritual showing of support for the campaign by the media is supported by a concurrent ritual labeling of activities. Any activity or development of note, it seems, from the deeds of a model citizen to improvements made to public infrastructure, are promoted as examples of spiritual civilisation simply because they fall within the life span of the campaign. The staging of many activities, in other words, that are not necessarily intended as shows of support for the campaign are nonetheless appropriated as positive manifestations of the “action-reaction” ritual. As with the above example, it is difficult for the reader to determine whether the promotion of spiritual civilisation is the actual motivation behind such activities, or whether the connection between the activity and the campaign has been constructed purely for the purposes of the “story”. Through newspaper reportage the protagonists of these activities become actors on a virtual stage of spiritual civilisation whether they like it or not. Their actions are reconstructed and ritualised through media coverage and official recognition, becoming larger than life and replayed many times over. The protagonists and their exploits become model “actors” and “acts”, and as such they become an example for others to react to accordingly.

The mass media, however, have not by any means been the only players eager to promote their support for the campaign. A range of organisations, including local to national level Party and state organs, work units and other groups, have made their own campaign-related activities widely publicised through the media. The campaign had spawned a large number of associated activities in various localities, such as the “New Wind Household” (新风户, xinfenghu), “Five Goods Family” (五好家庭, wuhao jiating), “civilised townsfolk” (文明市民, renmin ribao), “Old Folk Enthusiastically continue to Promote Civilisation” (老热忱地宣传精神文明, renlao rexin rencun yiwu xuanchuan wenming), People’s Daily (人民日报, Renmin ribao), 25 February 1998, Beida Computer System Engineering Company – universal news search system (北大计算机系统工程公司-德普信息检索系统, Beida jisuanji xitong gongcheng gongsi - depu xinxi chasu xitong), http://202.99.23.241/scripts/cgi-mxs/dispdoc.exe.

20 Bai Dongfa (柏冬发), “Wiping Clean Capital Civilisation’s Service Window” Humorous Essay Prize Ceremony (“擦亮首都文明服务的窗口”杂文发奖金会举行, “Caliang shoudu wenming fuwude
wenming shimin), “civilised private vendors” (文明个体工商户, wenming geti gongshanghu), “civilised employees” (文明职工, wenming zhigong), “civilised districts” (文明小区, wenming xiaoqu) and “civilised streets” (文明街道, wenming jiedao) activities. Successful activities conducted by one locale would, through media attention and official acclaim, catch on and be replicated elsewhere. Various villages, districts, cities and provinces would report on the successes or sheer volume of the various activities conducted within their boundaries, in the hope of becoming sanctified as a “model”. A People’s Daily article highlighting the contribution made by Jiangsu province to the promotion of spiritual civilisation, for example, states that the province possesses 2,256 “cultural centres” (文化站, wenhuazhan) of differing types, which include a recently constructed Zhou Enlai Memorial Hall, a Revolutionary Martyrs Memorial Hall and the Nanjing National Defence Park. In March 1997 the Central Propaganda Bureau announced the establishment of 100 “civilised city” models and 200 “civilised village” models. The establishment of “civilised cities”, “civilised villages” and “civilised services” activities, according to one report, “has built a network of models, and that the work of these models has thoroughly spread”.

The showing of support for the campaign across China has been mimicked by the showing of support by organisations hosting websites on the World Wide Web. A range of sites hosted online advertising and articles relating to the promotion of spiritual civilisation, such as New Mankind (新人类, Xin renlei), Beijing.com, the Beida Computer System Engineering Company, and the People’s Daily. Government sites, such as the Chinese Customs (appendix 34) site also featured promotional material related to spiritual civilisation. In September 2000, the Beijing Evening News reported on the Beijing.com “Strive to make civilised residents of Beijing” website. According to the report, he activity, organised jointly by the
CCP Beijing Committee’s Propaganda Bureau and the Capital Civilisation Office, had attracted five thousand hits.

In a *Beijing Evening News* article titled *16 Residential Districts in Xuanwu Achieve ‘Closed’ Management*, the exploits of a number of residential districts in taking an active role in preventing bicycle theft and achieving greater self-management are given top billing. The report cited the cooperative approach taken by local government and citizens as an example of a district committee and district government working for the people in the area of spiritual civilisation. Such reports contribute to a discourse of voluntarism and cooperation in which the initiatives of an active participatory citizenry are seen to be nurtured and assisted by an open and responsive government. This inverting of the “action/reaction” relationship attempts to give the campaign and its stated objectives a grass-roots, popular character. The achievement of Jiang Zemin’s “civilisation” is thus endowed with a mandate and a kind of social inevitability. The impression of mass voluntary participation generated by such reports, and an official insistence on adherence to the principle of “letting a hundred schools of thought contend”, however, is contradicted by rhetoric which calls for the opposing of “low tastes” and “decadent trends of thought”, and for the “overhaul” or closure of publishing units which fail to adhere to the aims of the campaign.

Accompanying the reportage on the myriad of civilisation-related activities was that concerned with covering the countless “exchange of experience” (经验交流, *jìngyàn jiāoliú*) meetings held across the country in the name of “spiritual civilisation”. Rating a detailed account in the *1996 China Yearbook* was the “National Promotion of Civilisation Exchange of Experience Meeting” held in the capital of Jiangsu Province, Zhangjiagang, in October 1995. Quite apart from the practical outcomes that may have emerged as a result of the meeting, the exchange was said to have created a “Zhangjiagang spirit” (张家港精神, *Zhangjiagang jǐngshén*). The *People’s Daily* covered a meeting held in Beijing during January 1998 and attended by Jiang Zemin, noting that “the representatives from various

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24 October 1996 Resolutions.

localities and departments across the country avidly exchanged their experiences in working to promote spiritual civilisation in recent years". The meeting brought together representatives who were themselves members of provincial level "Civilisation Committee Offices" (文明委办公室, Wenmingwei bangongshi) as a show of national unity towards the campaign.

In June 1996, the Beijing Evening News covered the Shijiazhuang City Taxi Service “Ten Goods Civilisation Envoy” trip to Beijing. This involved the arrival of a number of model taxi drivers from Shijiazhuang in Beijing to exchange “strengthening civilisation and professional morality building” experiences with the Beijing City Taxi Company. This gave Beijing taxi drivers the opportunity to learn about their Shijiazhuang counterparts’ “Five Civilisations” (五个文明, wuge wenming) activities, which included 98 weeks training in “language civilisation, appearance civilisation, passenger civilisation, driving civilisation, and management civilisation”. The report stated that the leadership of Beijing Taxis indicated the need to “vigorously study the Shijiazhuang experience” in order to raise the level of services provided by their own company. Such reporting takes the campaign from being a mere “action-reaction” spectacle to being an apparent subject of dialogue and discussion among the people and between organisations, and is reminiscent of exchanges of revolutionary experience which took place in Beijing during the heady days of the Cultural Revolution. The inherent ritual symbolism here is obvious – a country unified in its goal of achieving higher levels of civilisation.

The October 1996 resolutions identify China’s youth as an important target of the campaign, calling for the improvement of school curricula in areas such as politics and ideology, the reaction of a “good environment” for the young by their schools and families, and an enhancement of the role of the Communist Youth League. Proceeding the resolutions were a number of etiquette handbooks aimed either at the youth market or their educators, such as A

Guide to the Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation in Schools and A Contemporary Youth Civilised Politeness Handbook. Significant to the promotion of the campaign, also, was the media coverage of youth showing their support for the ideals of spiritual civilisation, with such headlines and report titles as “Civilisation Starts in School” and “University Students Enter Homes to Popularise Spiritual Civilisation”. In the case of the later report, which appeared as the headline story in a June 1996 issue of Beijing Evening News, it was reported that forty Beijing Construction Engineering Institute students voluntarily performed good deeds. These types of deeds, according to the newspaper, form “socialist spiritual civilisation’s ‘big classroom’”.

Another example of such coverage is the appearance, on the front page of a June 1996 Beijing Evening News, of a “letter” apparently written by a primary school student (who goes by the anonymous title of “a little citizen”) and addressed to Beijing’s Mayor, Li Qiyan. The student lists some suggestions for Beijing’s “Capital City Civilisation Compact”, including proper queuing at stores and banks and the management of environmental pollution. The editor of the newspaper states that the student’s list of suggestions “embodies the importance attached by primary school students to the promotion of spiritual civilisation in the capital”.

On 06 January 1997, making reference to prime spiritual civilisation model and bus conductor Li Suli, Beijing Evening News announced the long titled “Study Li Suli, Genuine Feelings Towards Others “Youth Civilisation Service Card” Helping Households Activity” commencement ceremony. Cards printed with a description of services and a contact name and number are distributed by company representatives to households in most pressing need. Participating work units included various statutory bodies and state owned and private enterprises within Beijing’s commercial and hygiene sectors. The activity is aimed primarily at fostering strong professional and social ethics among youth in Beijing’s service industries, and developing a sense of social responsibility among future enterprise managers. This, and

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28 Chen Hongcheng (陈洪成), “University Students Enter Homes to Popularise Spiritual Civilisation” (大学生入户传播精神文明, Daxuesheng ruhu chuanbo jingshen wenming), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), No.8800, 02 June 1996. p.1.
other youth-related activities, emphasises the importance of the role of youth in the campaign as representatives of the future, and as prototypes of the new citizenry envisioned by the authors of socialist spiritual civilisation.

manners, etiquette, convention & ceremony

A study of the ritual aspects of the spiritual civilisation campaign should adequately examine and discuss the ritualistic concept of li and how it has been promoted during the course of the campaign. The October 1996 Resolutions on Certain Important Questions Relating to the Strengthening of the Promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation called for the “vigorous initiation of civilised manners (文明礼貌, wenming limao)”.

With “manners” constituting one of the elements of the “four haves”, “placing emphasis on civilised manners” (讲文明礼貌, jiang wenming limao) was one of the core components stressed by the resolutions. Manners, or limao, here refer largely to how civilisation is manifested in the way in which people interact with each other: the use of polite language, avoidance of cursing, the practice of presenting facts and reasoning things out and respecting others, etc. The term limao is distinguished from but related to other terms, including “civilised conduct” (文明行为, wenming xingwei), “civilised appearance” (文明仪表, wenming yibiao) and “civilised presence” (文明风度, wenming fengdu). The expression is also closely linked within the rhetoric of the campaign to two other li-based terms: convention (礼仪, liyi) and etiquette (礼节, lijie). In his discussion on the meaning of civilisation, author Miao Yuanyi writes that equivalents of the term “civilisation” had been used to describe such ideas as lijie and xingwei as far back as the Yin and Zhou dynasties.

In late 2001, the Chengdu City Education Bureau published a set of standards for children, titled Chengdu Student Standards of Convention. This document was based on the Essentials of Building Citizen Morality, a widely promoted set of moral and ethical standards published

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30 Ma Yupeng (马宇鹏), “Youth Civilisation Service Card Commences” (青年文明号服务卡启动, Qingnian wenming hao fuwu ka qidong), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), No.9018, 06 January 1997. p.1.
31 ibid. p.3.
in October 2001 by the Party Centre. The Chengdu standards focused on standards of individual behaviour and patriotism among the youth. According to journalist Zhou Bo, the document covered such behavioural standards as:

One must knock on the door and enter one’s parents’ room only with permission... When attending a play or a match or listening to a report or presentation, one must be a civilised viewer or member of the audience by clapping at the appropriate time, and one must not boo or hoot, make catcalls or leave early.33

Also in response to the Centre’s Essentials of Building Citizen Morality, the Beijing Party Committee launched its own document, Suggestions on the Essentials of Building Citizen Morality (Suggestions). A summarized version of the Suggestions, which appeared as a full page spread in the Beijing Evening News, featured 25 points relating to all aspects of the promotion and adoption of civilised behaviour. Included within the Suggestions was a point highlighting the need to educate the non-local population (外来人口, wailarenkou) in what is regarded as moral conduct in the capital.34

The author of a children’s handbook on manners states, “paying attention to civilised manners is China’s fine moral tradition. Our country has always been known as an “ancient civilisation”, enjoying a reputation as a “country of etiquette” (礼仪制邦, li yi zhi bang). We must inherit and develop this kind of tradition”.35 According to author Wang Manchuan:

Various localities possess many forms of convention [liyi], among which there are some which have become out-of-date and some that are extravagant and wasteful which must be discarded; but there are also some good conventions

34 Wang Xibao (王希宝), “CCP Beijing Committee’s practical suggestions concerning the Essentials of Building Citizen Morality” (中共北京市委关于贯彻落实<<公民道德建设实施纲要>>的意见, Zhonggong beijingshiwei guanyu guanche Luoshi Gongmin daode jianshe shishi gangyao de yijian;), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), 27 December 2001. p.3.
which we must inherit, such as members of the older generation bringing suitable presents on New Year’s Day or other festival visits.\footnote{Wang Manchuan  (王满春), A Civilised Homeland (文明的家园, Wenming de jiaoyuan), Nanchang, Jiangxi People’s Publishing House (江西人民出版社, Jiangxi renmin chubanshe), 1999. p.61.}  

Wang implicitly defines what are to be regarded as “good conventions”, making a link between adherence to traditional conventions and the observance of rules of public order, such as queuing at shops and bus stops, obeying traffic regulations and not arguing noisily in public. “Public rules” of this kind, of course, found expression throughout the campaign in community compacts and on posters in buses and trains throughout the country. The Beijing Subway, for example, set up a “Spiritual Civilisation Office” to promote requisite standards of passenger behaviour.\footnote{Beijing ditie jingshen wenming bangongshi. From in-carriage posters, and posters at subway stations in Beijing (see appendix 20).} Similarly, the Beijing Bus Company (北京巴士公司, Beijing bashi gongsi) enforced its etiquette requirements through the employment of “civilisation watchdogs” (文明监督员, wenming jianduyuan).\footnote{“Civilisation Watchdogs” wore bright blue coats, and were noticed by the author during December 2001 and January 2002 at bus stops along Fuxing Road / Chang’an Avenue in west Beijing during peak passenger times.} These brightly uniformed personnel were responsible for maintaining a presence at bus stops during peak hours to regulate the flow of passengers on and off buses, assist old folk and mediate inevitable disputes between commuters.

As far as moral and behavioural conventions are concerned, regulation and codification through didactic handbooks, prescriptive public rules and compacts, have tended to be the order of the day. Such codification reflects a tradition which mapped acceptable behavioural norms to such detail that very little room was left for interpretation or experimentation. Non-conformity to the norm was akin to an act of anarchy. In an article appearing in a December issue of the \textit{Beijing Evening News}, journalist Li Haiqing discusses debates between regulation and persuasion on China’s university campuses.\footnote{Li Haiqing (李海青), “University Students put an End to the “Prohibition of Sex”? (大学生终结“禁性令”, Daxuesheng zhongjie “jinxingling”?), \textit{Beijing Evening News} (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), 10 December 2001. p.18.} Li writes that according to university student handbooks published by relevant ministries, students are not allowed to engage in “illegitimate sexual behaviour” or to have \textit{de facto} cohabitation arrangements as per university regulations. Students who break these rules face expulsion from university. Despite the rules and penalties, students appear to be offending in considerable numbers.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{1} Wang Manchuan  (王满春), \textit{A Civilised Homeland (文明的家园, Wenming de jiaoyuan)}, Nanchang, Jiangxi People’s Publishing House (江西人民出版社, Jiangxi renmin chubanshe), 1999. p.61.
\bibitem{2} Beijing ditie jingshen wenming bangongshi. From in-carriage posters, and posters at subway stations in Beijing (see appendix 20).
\end{thebibliography}
According to the Qianlong News Network, at one university in Beijing, eight male students recently each chipped in fifty yuan to covertly engage in group sex with a prostitute in their dormitory, while another reported that a student kept a prostitute in his university dormitory for as long as a week.\(^40\)

Li echoes the sentiments of some students who feel that they should be given greater freedom over their personal choices, writing that prohibitions on sex which appear to be based on concerns over sexual health appear “rigid and philistine”. He cites the example of the British public health system which has approached similar issues through advertising campaigns advertising that “it’s cool to be a virgin”, and asks “why can’t we openly tell our students that it’s cool to be a virgin!”\(^41\) Such debate raises the question – what is the hallmark of a more civilised society? – one which educates or one which regulates? Strict enforcement of the behavioural norm, including the inhibition of basic human desires among adolescents and young adults, however, remains a continuing feature of behavioural regulation. This calls to mind the argument of Zhongshan University Professors Li Ping and Xia Jimei, who claim that while regulation is necessary, regulation without moral cultivation potentially produces a population of deficient moral character which cannot actively distinguish moral right from wrong. While regulation persists to the neglect of education, one may well question the long term efficacy of such an approach in the building of a new citizenry morally equipped to prosper in the twenty first century.

A similar argument is voiced by journalist Zhang Guoxian. According to Zhang:

In the past, our education in personal character emphasised instruction, which is not entirely adequate from the perspective of self-control. People who are self conscious do obey the rules, while people who are not self conscious will not obey the rules.\(^42\)

Zhang argues that the management of individuals in society focuses too heavily on “external controls” (外控, \textit{waikong}), such as legal codes and traffic regulations, to the neglect of a “system of self regulation” (自我制约机制, \textit{ziwo zhiyue jizhi}). In support of his argument, he

\(^{40}\) ibid. p.18.  
\(^{41}\) ibid. p.18.  
quotes Beijing University Chancellor, Xu Zhihong, who talks about a “system of trust” (信用体制, xinyong tizhi) as a means of self-regulation. Within such a system, one’s trustworthiness follows one around like a shadow, causing the individual to “be careful of their words and actions every moment and try their best in every endeavour”. Does “self consciousness” mean being truly conscious about one’s own moral character, or does it mean being conscious merely of how one may be being perceived by others? If the latter is the case, then surely, “trust”, like etiquette, becomes as much an external control as traffic regulations.

A reader on citizen morality discusses national flag raising and the singing of the national anthem in terms of manners, etiquette and convention activities. According to the reader, “the raising of the flag and singing of the national anthem during significant occasions and large activities is … an important form of education in the advancement of patriotism and etiquette”. The types of etiquette-related activities listed by the reader are presented as a channel for the molding of a “Chinese soul” (中华魂, zhonghua hun). The promotion of traditional or socialist Chinese forms of etiquette and convention, and the close relationship established between convention and patriotic education in Party rhetoric, represented a response to the perceived threat posed by the corrosive influence of Western culture.

The celebration of commemorative occasions in the Chinese calendar is emphasised in the October 1996 resolutions as a major component of patriotic education. According to one Party morality handbook:

Various forms of festivals, commemorative days, contain valuable moral educative resources. If utilised, such revolutionary festivals as “May Fourth”, “July First”, “August First” and “October First” and international festivals such as “March Eighth”, “May First” and “June First”, as well as popular traditional festivals and the commemorative days of historical figures, the holding of this kind of mass celebration or commemorative activity will cause people to get together collectively, and in the act of coming together, strengthen love of

43 ibid. p.22.
country, hometown, nature and life, and exercise a healthy influence on their moral integrity.\textsuperscript{45}

Such events are seen as possessing a particularly high educative value given their obvious popular appeal and patriotic character.

The appropriate utilisation of various types of activities staged for festival occasions is seen as an important component of the promotion of spiritual civilisation in schools.\textsuperscript{46} The organisation of such celebrations as the international youth day and Chinese national day, it is asserted, will increase students’ enthusiasm for patriotism and will increase their resolve to struggle for China’s ascendancy in the world. The organisation of arts, sport and science festivals, it is argued, will assist in students’ development in a number of areas, such as morality, wealth and academic pursuit. In arguing that such ritual forms may be utilised in the building of a stronger China, the author cites the example of a certain primary school in Beijing which holds remembrance activities at the Old Summer Palace (\textit{Yuan Ming Yuan}) around the Qing Ming Festival. During the activities, students hear reports by staff recounting the venue’s troubled history, and come to appreciate the idea that “if you are backward you will take a beating” (落后就要挨打, \textit{luohou jiu yao aida}). Commemorative activities with a “national humiliation character” (国耻性, \textit{guochi xing}), such as commemoration of the “September First” and “July Seventh” incidents and the Nanjing massacre, however, were not to be considered as opportunities for public indignation or “blind xenophobia”.\textsuperscript{47} In the case of the above Qing Ming activity, the experience, writes the author, is more powerful than any classroom lecture, and will inspire students in a positive way to study harder for the sake of assisting in China’s ascendancy.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Dangdai qingnian wenming limao shouce}, op cit. pp.357-358.
\textsuperscript{48} He Xiazhai, ibid. p.158.
Celebrations of traditional festivals (传统节, chuantong jie) also highlight the positivities of China’s cultural tradition. According to a reader on citizen morality published by the Central Party School, China’s national traditional festivals are Chinese national culture’s “crystallisation of history” (历史结晶, lishi jiejing).\[49\] The publication states that such traditional festivals may be used to scientifically promote moral education, and uses the Chong Yang festival as an example of how a festival could be utilised to educate children in practicing filial piety towards their parents. The author also writes that revolutionary festivals (革命节, geming jie) such as May First, May Fourth and October First are a “historical gathering” of China’s revolutionary morals, which allow people to cherish the memory of revolutionary martyrs, recall momentous historical events and study the history of the party. The 1998 anniversary of the death of Zhou Enlai was similarly an occasion to highlight the role of this Party leader as a model of socialist culture and paragon of civilisation\[50\]. It is stated that this type of patriotic education has exceptionally strong moral appeal and impact.\[51\]

Official literature on the subject highlights two main functions carried out by such state-sponsored rituals of commemoration: the manipulation of the society’s memory through their inherent mnemonic symbolism; and the reinforcement of society’s values through their reminding participants of the basic values which society rests upon. The intended effect of these rituals is a renewing of understanding and commitment by participants to the values expressed by them.

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rural & urban compacts and ratings systems

Compacts, both in the cities and countryside, have played a pervasive role in the promotion of “civilised communities” during both the promotion of spiritual civilisation of the late 1990s and during the post-Mao reform period as a whole. Since the launch of the spiritual civilisation campaign of 1986, the community compact has been increasingly associated with the broader aims of the Party’s civilisation drive. This is evident, for instance, in the role of the “Capital Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Standing Committee” in the drafting of a

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\[51\] ibid. pp.100-101.
Capital Resident’s Civilisation Compact in Beijing in 1996 (appendix 22). This particular compact had the aim of “raising the quality of city folk” and making Beijing a “moderising world-class capital city”. The compact, however, is a ritual of governance which predates the reform era considerably. What characterises compacts most notably is their ritual ambiguity, both in terms of their historical and politico-legal position.

Ann Anagnost notes that although compacts “bear some resemblance to the xiangyue of the late imperial period, the question of historical antecedents is a vexed one and must be put into the context of the “heated” debates about Chinese culture... beginning in the mid-1980s.” The village compact, it could be argued, is a binary historical entity. On the one hand it can be viewed as the contemporary manifestation of a mechanism of social control deployed by the autocratic rulers of “old China”. On the other hand it may be viewed as a grass roots strategy assisting in the development of a modern and civilised contemporary Chinese citizenry. As far as the Party is concerned, however, the village compact is a modern democratic phenomenon brought about through the localised popular concern for social order.

Community compacts are described as a grass roots democratic process in which the people, sometimes organised as committees (eg. cunwei, jingshen wenming weiyuanhui, wenmingzu), participate in the drafting of guidelines pertaining to correct habits and practices that are of such specificity as not to be covered by the state legal apparatus. Such guidelines invariably include the discouragement of unhealthy tendencies such as feudal superstitions, and the encouragement of acceptable practices as looking after the environment, keeping cities clean and paying attention to hygiene. While these community-specific compacts are promoted as a form of self-government and self-regulation, they have their basis in law. Article 24 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China states:

The state strengthens the building of a socialist society with an advanced culture and ideology by promoting education in high ideals, ethics, general knowledge, discipline and legality, and by promoting the formulation and observance of rules

52 Capital Resident’s Civilisation Compact (首都市民文明公约, Shoudu shimin wenming gongyue), Capital Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Standing Committee (首都精神文明建设委员会, Shoudu jingshen wenming jianshe weiyuanhui), March 1996. Taken from a poster which appeared in a number of Beijing subway stations throughout the late 1990s and beyond.
53 Ann Anagnost, loc cit. p.347.
of conduct and common pledges by various sections of the people in urban and rural areas.\textsuperscript{54}

The specificity of guidelines stipulated by community compacts suggests, argues Ann Anagnost, that they constitute \textit{de facto} regulations for an immature legal system that has yet to develop such a degree of pervasiveness.\textsuperscript{55} The legalistic nature of the compact is evidenced, for example, by the systems of fines that many compacts employ to sanction transgressions, and by the fact that they tend to promote practices enshrined in Party policy. Furthermore, many compact stipulations bear remarkable similarities to rules and regulations (\textit{守则}, \textit{shouze}) promulgated by various statutory bodies, such as those drawn up by railway and subway companies to regulate the behaviour of passengers (appendix 20).\textsuperscript{56}

Party rhetoric aside, the community compacts of contemporary China would appear to draw direct historical lineage to the late-imperial \textit{xiangyue}, and their existence represents the operation of state power at the most mundane, almost subliminal, levels. As a ritual, the symbolism of the compact is that of democratic self-regulation with an implicit acceptance of the values promoted by officialdom. In this way, Beijing’s \textit{Capital Civilised Residents’ Compact} becomes a compact that was “founded on public discussion” in response to “the demand to raise the civilisation quality of residents” and as a means of “strengthening the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation.”\textsuperscript{57} This symbolism detaches the compact from its inherited historicality, and places it within a process of socialist development and, of course, the framework of spiritual civilisation. The semiotic representation of the compact as an “agreement” between communities and the state, gives the compact a grass-roots, indigenous, and ultimately Chinese quality. The Chinese quality of the compact is a Chineseness attached not to any historical antecedence, but to the compact’s positioning within a Chinese socialist model of human improvement and popular participation. When viewed in light of many of the norms promoted by various compacts which often represent departures from

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Constitution of the People’s Republic of China} (adopted at the fifth session of the Fifth National People’s Congress and promulgated for implementation by the proclamation of the National People’s Congress on 04 December 1982) [1987], Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1990. p.21.

\textsuperscript{55} Ann Anagnost, loc cit. p.349.

\textsuperscript{56} find photo ref.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{1996 China Yearbook} (中国年鉴, 1996 \textit{Zhongguo nianjian}). p88.
established modes of behaviour, the importance of the ability of compacts to be represented as quintessentially Chinese becomes evident.

Throughout the reform period, from the early 1980s, various titles have been conferred upon households, work units, districts and individuals who have been recognised by local authorities as being “civilised”. Ratings conferred upon households included: “Civilised Household” (wenming jiating, wenminghu), “Two Civilisations Household” (双文明户, shuang wenminghu), and “Ten Star Civilised Household” (十星级文明户, shixingji wenminghu). The conferring of a “Ten Star Civilised Household” title on peasant households in rural areas required the fulfilment of ten rather diverse criteria, including: loving Party and country, abiding by the law, working hard to get rich, family planning, voluntary service, taking science and technology seriously, changing established habits and customs, respecting elders and looking after the young, household harmony, and purification and beautification. While some of these criteria appear ambiguous, even somewhat contradictory, what does not appear ambiguous is a discourse of civilisation conveyed through such criteria that equates civilisation with a rejection of the past and an embracing of the new.

An involved public evaluation process culminates in the awarding of a number of stars to each peasant house in a particular county. These stars are displayed prominently on bright red plates over the doors of houses. A household may receive anywhere up to ten stars depending on how many of the above criteria it was deemed as having fulfilled, and their number of stars would be reviewed yearly. While the criteria appear to push a brand of new or scientific civilisation, Stig Thøgersen argues that they “draw on a long line of civilising discourses”.

However, unlike earlier CCP ideological campaigns, Thøgersen writes that the ten stars system involves every house in a rural peasant community, allowing the Party to “carry ideological work into the households”, and that it is backed by certain financial incentives. Placing the system within the framework of ritual action-reaction we see the bright red plates adorning house entrances as representing the operation of a desired moral and political order. While it may well be

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59 Stig Thøgersen, “Cultural Life and Cultural Control in Rural China: Where is the Party?”, The China Journal...p.139.
the case, as Thøgersen states, “that very few farmers had sleepless nights over missing a couple of stars”\textsuperscript{61}, the fact remains that power relations between party and people are reinforced through even the most non-committal participation in the ten star system’s process of evaluation, public scrutiny, display and review.

A newspaper article promoting the establishment of eighty eight “Civilised Residential Districts” (文明居民区, \textit{wenming juminqu}) in Beijing’s Haidian District, notes that such districts have achieved their status through exhibiting “exquisite environment, good order, proper lifestyle”.\textsuperscript{62} Their residents are said to conduct cooperative activities such as planting trees and grass, fixing fences and building bicycle sheds – activities which complement the broader programs of the metropolitan government. Other reports have noted the transformation of rural villages from a “quarrelsome village” (shifeicun) or a “war chaos village” (zhanluancun) to “civilised village” (wenmingcun) status.\textsuperscript{63} In their triumphal accounts of the transformation of villages from a relative state of barbarism to civilisation, such reports actively devalued certain manifestations of parochial Chinese village culture in favour of the CCP’s model of civilisation. According to one \textit{People’s Daily} report “the vast countryside is a crucial element in the promotion of spiritual civilisation, it is also a difficult element”.\textsuperscript{64} Indeed, it has been stated that an important element in the promotion of rural spiritual civilisation is the solving of problems left behind by history through the creation of new criteria for progress.\textsuperscript{65}

States the October 1996 Resolutions, “the construction of civilised villages and townships must go hand in hand with the building of grass-roots organisations of the party, with the consolidation of political power at the grass-roots level.”\textsuperscript{66} ... The granting of “civilised” status could be viewed as official recognition that the recipient

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{60}] ibid. p.140.
\item[\textsuperscript{61}] ibid. p.139.
\item[\textsuperscript{63}] Ann Anagnost, loc cit. p.354.
\item[\textsuperscript{65}] Wang Manchuan, op cit. p.41.
\end{itemize}
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Within industry — and particularly the service sector — work units which satisfy certain criteria in line with the objectives of spiritual civilisation are awarded the status of "civilised work unit" (文明单位, wenming danwei). According to an internet news report (sourced from the People’s Daily), a Taiyuan company, May First Department Store, established its own internal “Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Guiding Committee” in 1994. The committee is complemented by a “Workers’ Ideological Work Research Association” which apparently boasts 367 members who were required to write two “theses” regarding spiritual civilisation within the department store. According to the report, these theses are consulted by the store’s directors in making their business decisions. On the anniversary of an employee’s induction as a member of the CCP, the store’s Party Committee organises “birthday” celebrations to commemorate their joining of the Party. 67 The store’s efforts in promoting spiritual civilisation have been amply rewarded over recent years with such titles (称号, chenghao) as: “National Military Promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation Advanced Work Unit”, “Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Advanced Work Unit”, “Taiyuan City Civilised Work Unit Example”. The awarding of such status to work units is fundamentally a recognition of their ability to successfully manage the relationship between profit and service, or material and spiritual civilisation.

66 October 1996 Resolutions.
In certain industries, such as the retail of fresh foodstuffs, civilised rating systems appear to serve more than political lip service. The dark side of competition in the market economy had manifested itself in the proliferation of fake and poor quality goods, a lack of regard for hygiene and crooked measurements. Under the guise of the promotion of spiritual civilisation, a range of activities were launched to counter this trend and remove an emphasis on “quantity” in favour of “quality”, including “100 cities 10,000 shops without fake goods” and “correct industries’ unhealthy wind” activities. Fresh produce stalls and markets which demonstrated requisite levels of hygiene (卫生, weisheng), fairness (公平, gongping) and quality (质量, zhiliang) were recognised by local authorities. As of September 1998, fifteen streets across the country had been given the title of “Non-Fake Goods Model Street”68, and many free markets had earned the status of “civilised market” (文明市场, wenming shichang). Businesses that received such ratings often received recognition through coverage in the media. The “National Professional Moral Promotion Ten Goods Work Units” (全国职业道德建设十佳单位, chuanguo zhiye daode jianshe shijia danwei) of 1996, for example, were all listed in that year’s China Yearbook.69 “In the cities”, states one report, “Provincial governments have the honour of giving prizes [to work units] in competitions such as “Beautiful Environment”, “Beautiful Order”, and “Quality Services”.70 The work units that finish behind the winners, continues the report, “are required to make improvements within specific timeframes”.71

Such ratings systems represent an incentive system based on a hierarchical ordering of values as determined by the precepts of spiritual civilisation. The incentive system operates through its inherent ritualism and the symbolism attached to the title of “civilised district” or “civilised work unit”, etc. The title of “civilised work unit”, for example, carries with it such connotations as “forward thinking and modern”, “ethical and fair”, “polite and professional” and “quality service”. It is a title that may bring

70 Long Yongquan, loc cit.
prestige to a work unit through possible media coverage and its ability to display a “civilised work unit” plaque in its premises, thereby providing an incentive for other work units to pursue “civilised” status. Any sightseer visiting the Liaoning War Memorial in Jinzhou in late 2001, for instance, would not be able to help noticing the massive red banner hung from its entrance, announcing: “Our work unit has applied for [the status of] Civilised Work Unit at the provincial level, we welcome all social circles to evaluate us”.\footnote{The ritual thus becomes part recognition, part competition as work units, districts and villages, etc. vie to be seen to be out-doing – or out-civilising - each other in the civilisation stakes. Such civilised ratings systems ultimately constitute a mechanism of state micro-management, part of a broader imperative of moral and ideological regularisation (规范化, guifanhua).}

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window industries

Coverage of the campaign has witnessed a definite emphasis on the role of “window” industries (窗口行业, \textit{chuangkou hangye}) in the promotion of spiritual civilisation. According to one newspaper report:

People who either live in or come to Beijing invariably notice these changes: the number of public bus routes has increased by 12, there are now 10 more ticket booths from which one may purchase train tickets, elevator services in smaller districts now run 24 hours a day, telephone installation on average takes only 37 days...\footnote{These are but some of the exploits carried out by twelve “window” industry companies that were acknowledged by Beijing city leaders as examples of service sector work units working towards spiritual civilisation. Similarly, a public announcement regarding Beijing service industry plans relating to the promotion of spiritual civilisation, published in the print media, lists the various works completed in the name of spiritual civilisation, including: the building...}

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\footnote{Zhang Zhaonan (张兆南), “Handling Practicalities has become the Order of the Day for the Capital’s Service Work Units” (首都窗口单位办实事成风, \textit{Shoudu chuankou danwei banshishhi chengfeng}), \textit{Beijing Evening News} (北京晚报, \textit{Beijing wanbao}), 17 August 1996, No.8876. p.1.}
of district libraries, sports centres, clubs, automatic public toilets, garbage disposal facilities, the installation of replacement power cabling and environmental management.\footnote{A Public Announcement Regarding the Complete Situation of Various Beijing districts’ Service Industry Plans Relating to the Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation (Benshi gequ xian, chuangkou hangye 1996 nian jingshen wenming jianshe banzhi jihua wancheng qingkuang gongbu), Beijing Evening News (Beijing wanbao), No.9032, 20 January 1997. p.1.}

The concept of window industries is a product of the post-Mao reform period. Literally translated as “window industries”, the term chuangkou hangye may be interpreted in a number of ways. On a literal level, the term may refer to service industries (服务行业, fuwu hangye) which involve the serving of customers on a face-to-face basis. Using this definition, the term “window” may be seen to represent the window of a ticket booth, cashier counter, bank teller or other “shop front” activity, which acts as a looking glass through which an interface between the service professional and the consumer is enabled. On another level, the term “window” may be seen as representing the interface between the creation of an impression on one side and the formation of a corresponding perception on the other. In this sense, “window” refers to “image”, or more specifically the image portrayed by the service professionals in their dealings with consumers through the attitude and etiquette they employ.

There is yet a further extension of the meaning of chuangkou hangye. The term “window industries” has been commonly employed to refer to those industries which assist in the creation of a civilised cityscape. Industries related to the provision of infrastructure and public works, for example, are referred to as window industries because they provide services such as the construction of new public buildings, electricity and other facilities which are seen as essential attributes of a civilised community. Window industries, in this sense, are the driving force behind the construction of a civilised environment. Inherent within this definition also is the idea of “window” separating a metaphorical “inside” and “outside”. The meaning here is that the object to which the image created or impression made is directed is a theoretical “other”, and that the “inside” subject aims to satisfy the “other” that it is moving forward along a process of civilisation. In a city such as Beijing, such an “other” may include domestic visitors, the rest of China, foreign tourists or business people, or indeed the rest of the world. This aspect of window industries is demonstrated, for example, by the key role they played in Beijing’s successful bid for the 2008 Olympic games.
From an outsider’s perspective, one of the more curious aspects of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation in Beijing was an associated promotion of public lavatories. This spawned a number of toilet-related activities supporting the civilisation drive, such as an exhibition held in the Chinese Museum of Revolutionary History in 1996. June 1996 saw several news features which focused on the “'96 Beijing City Public Toilet Construction Culture Exhibition” (’96 Beijing chengshi gongce jianshe wenhua zhanlan). “Art’s holy place, the Chinese Museum of Revolutionary History”, stated one journalist, “is for the first time hosting an exhibition not [normally] grand enough for such a hall”. 75 Coinciding with “World Environment Day”, the exhibition was organised jointly by Beijing’s Capital Regulatory Committee (首委办, Shougui weiban), City Construction Committee (市建委, Shijianwei), City Policy Committee (市政策委, Shizhengciwei), City Environment and Hygiene Bureau (市环卫局, Shihuanweiju) and other work units, and its launch was attended by over twenty news organisations. The event seemed a strange mixture – part classroom, part trade fair, part political spectacle – which appeared as much an example of kitsch commercial opportunism as it did a manifestation of the ideals of spiritual civilisation.

Since then, the issue of public toilets has become a recurring theme in reportage linked to the promotion of spiritual civilisation. In late December 2001, the Beijing Evening News carried a report which criticised the statistic that 26 out of 36 restaurants along one particular street in Beijing did not possess washrooms.76 On the one level, this is presented as a “hygiene” related problem, on another level it is presented as a customer service problem – particularly in winter when restaurant goers are forced outside into freezing conditions in order to find an appropriate place to relieve themselves. When viewed as an increasingly demanded service within the restaurant industry – and “window” industries in general - the public toilet itself becomes a symbolic material requirement of a civilised society. This material requirement becomes representative of the acquisition of a certain level of spiritual civilisation in that it is the provision of a service to the people, and it is a service which reflects an increased regard for basic quality of life.

The idea of “window industries” as representative of a metaphorical “inside” displaying the ostensible attributes of civilised society to a metaphorical “outside” places the concept within a framework of Westernisation or the adoption of “otherness” versus the retaining of a quintessential Chineseness. Beijing’s successful 2008 Olympic Games bid, like China’s highly anticipated entry into the World Trade Organisation (and even the Chinese soccer team’s qualification for the 2002 Soccer World Cup), has been both a source of great national pride and a measure of the success of the modernisation program. Such achievements highlight China’s increasing success as a member of the international community, and are presented as evidence that China is moving onwards and upwards. In light of this, the “civilisation” of window industries appears to be a notion of civilisation that is inherently foreign, it is a notion of civilisation which prizes developments in civic facilities and improvements in commercial etiquette that are, stylistically at least, Western, and that are arguably aimed at presenting a particular image of China to the developed world.
10. portraying civilisation
visual symbolism & the virtual environment

This chapter will discuss aspects of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation that may be characterised as visual or iconic symbolism. These visual components of the campaign shall be examined by focusing on several types of visual propaganda media and activities which appeared throughout the campaign, such as billboards, pictorial posters and slogan banners, non-poster advertising, and various augmentations of the physical landscape which, in one way or another, promoted and reinforced the ideals of a "civilised" China. The semiotic qualities of these activities will be studied, with a view to determining their effectiveness in assisting the campaign's objectives.

The use of visual propaganda has been a ubiquitous feature of Party rule. Posters and billboards have played a key role in promoting and reinforcing the Party's messages to the people, from sweeping ideological statements to specific policy or regulatory announcements. In many cases, such propaganda served as a visual representation - a visualisation - of the type of future China that the Party's leadership were attempting to impress upon the masses. Such overt propaganda media as billboards and posters were coupled also with less overt forms of visualisation. Billboards often presented highly stylised, idyllic, and utopian images featuring nature, modern cities, and traditional Chinese icons. This chapter discusses the semiology of civilisation-related visual propaganda, charting the decline of the propaganda poster and the development of new propaganda media designed to more convincingly convey the CCP's messages to contemporary audiences.

decline of conventional visual media

Visual propaganda has for centuries been employed by successive Chinese regimes as a mechanism for the propagation of behaviour. The CCP had harnessed the promotional power of visual propaganda since the 1930s when Communist artists agitated against Guomindang rule and Japanese occupation. At the Yan'an Conference on Literature and Art in 1942 it was decided that propaganda was to have both a "time quality" (时间性, shijianxing) and a "local quality" (地方性, difangxing), and that it should be directed with
relevance at specific target audiences. This continued into the post-Mao reform era, as the Party propaganda machinery shifted its focus to the promotion of the four modernisations. While billboards carried such images as portraits of Deng Xiaoping and promoted policies such as family planning, propaganda posters promoted the virtues of hard work, order, public morality and care for the environment. The underlying message of all forms of visual propaganda was the enduring importance of the CCP in steering China’s modernisation.

Banners bearing campaign slogans constituted a highly visible component of the spiritual civilisation campaign. This ubiquitous form of propaganda appeared in prominent locations, and banners were most commonly positioned over compound and building entrances, and across building facades. In the main, these banners may be viewed as highly visual manifestations of the “action–reaction” ritual - attempts by work units to state their support for the campaign in red and white. Many work units displayed banners which indicated that they were taking part in a civilisation-related activity which called for public “supervision” or “review”. Across the entrance to a military compound in west Beijing in September 1999, for example, were red characters proclaiming that “Soldiers build Socialist Spiritual Civilisation together” (appendix 11). Across the façade of Shanghai International Airport’s terminal building, also in September 1999, were two massive slogan banners, stating “Shanghai Airport has established a creating civilised industry review activity” (appendix 12). And in the same month, in front of the Military Museum in Beijing stood eight large red characters which simply read “Socialist Spiritual Civilisation” (appendix 10). Similar banner-type advertising included the painting of spiritual civilisation slogans on the walls of countryside road cuttings and on the perimeter walls of construction sites.

Billboards and posters usually focused on specific components of civilisation/morality, employing highly stylised images of people and landscapes. A comparison of civilisation-

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2 “Soldiers build Socialist Spiritual Civilisation together” (军民共建社会主义精神文明, Junmin gong jian shehuizhuyijingshen wenming). From a photograph taken by the author in Beijing in September 1999.
3 “Shanghai Airport has established a creating civilised industry review activity” (上海航空港开展创建文明行业展示活动, Shanghai hangkonggang kaizhan chuangan wenming hangye zhanping huodong). From a photograph taken by the author in Shanghai in September 1999.
4 “Socialist Spiritual Civilisation” (社会主义精神文明, Shehuizhuyijingshen wenming). From a photograph taken by the author in Beijing in September 1999.
related propaganda posters from the early 1980s and the late 1990s shows just how little the propaganda poster has evolved as a medium over a period of almost two decades. Civilisation-related posters of the early to mid-1980s displayed images reflective of the ambiguities inherent in the unresolved contradictions between tradition and modernisation, Chineseness and Westernisation. Writes Stefan Landsberger,

As opposed to the reasonably predictable, single and simple propaganda messages of the preceding decades, the visual instructions for behaviour in the 1980s have become multi-layered and confusing, containing various conflicting attitudinal stimuli and instructions for behaviour.

The confusion is evident in such posters as *Create a new age of civilisation*, published in 1983. Featuring two “flying devils from Dunhuang” representative of the creative endeavours of the Chinese people, the poster is dominated by the image of a glittering Western-style trophy dwarfing a rather dull likeness of the Great Wall fading into the background. As one devil eyes the trophy, the other one attempts to touch the sun, which is partly obscured by what appears to be the stylised crenelations of another Great Wall image.

Apart from posters promoting civilisation in a general, albeit ambiguous, sense, were posters advertising particular components of the civilisation drive, such as hygiene, the environment, manners, and civilised behaviour. It is worthwhile comparing posters of this type published in the early 1980s with those being displayed in the late 1990s. The poster *Protect environmental hygiene*, published in 1983, features a forearm and hand placing what appears to be a mandarin peel into a rubbish bin. In the background are two birds, and above are the words that make up the title of the poster. The poster *Stress hygiene, don’t spit and leave rubbish everywhere*, displayed in 1999, features a young girl placing rubbish into a bin. In the background is a grassy lawn littered with autumn leaves (appendix 14). The two posters, while separated by 14 years, differ very little in content, form and target audience, and are exemplary of just how little the propaganda poster has evolved throughout the reform period. Despite minor differences in production, such as a move away from realist artistry to photography, the poster remains unchanged.

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6 ibid. p.122.

7 (要讲究卫生,不要乱吐乱扔,故新 新, *yao jiangjiu weisheng, buyao luantu luanreng*). From a photograph taken by the author in Xidan, Beijing in September 1999.
It comes as little surprise that the successful visualisation of the eschatology of spiritual civilisation remains a problematic endeavour. Given the broad and complex scope of the civilisation narrative, the poster appears increasingly inadequate as a medium through which to visualise the multifarious idea of a civilised future. According to Landsberger, "the Party has not been able to visualize appropriate, indigenous behavioural stimuli for a society in the throes of modernization". It has instead continued to rely on tried and true images while mixing them occasionally and confusingly with newer more market oriented ones. In the language of semiology, we find that it is a case of the signifier – and often conflicting signifiers - equivocating the signified. If we are to follow Landsberger's claim that the population is “no longer buying” the message of the propaganda poster, then we would conclude that as signifier the poster – and its images - have ultimately lost their significance.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the viability of the propaganda billboard and poster has been challenged by developments in commercial advertising and technology. Street-side propaganda posters now vie for the attention of passers-by with slick catchy advertisements promoting desirable consumer goods and fashion labels. The poster’s inadequacy is further emphasised by advances in electronic media, such as the development of internet technology. Such technologies make the poster appear more as a thing of the past than a showcase for the future. Indeed, visual propaganda has, to a large extent, found new expression away from posters and onto various electronic platforms, not least the homepages of dozens of Party and government organisations. In spite of this, the poster endures, but it does so less and less as a medium in its own right, and increasingly as part of a more “multimedia” approach to the visualisation of ideological doctrine. No longer is the poster’s message seen as persuasive in itself, especially within a setting in which the idyllic images of the poster stand in stark contrast to considerably less idyllic surrounds. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, the continuing credibility of the poster appears to be dependant upon a greater synthesis between the images it portrays and the world portrayed by the physical landscape in which it is situated. Within this “multimedia approach”, visual propaganda is no longer confined to the poster, but now incorporates the physical landscape upon which the poster stands. Within this network, the basic medium becomes the landscape itself, and its components are made up of particular features of the natural and built environments.

8 Stefan Landsberger, op cit. p.211.
While billboards often portrayed highly stylised images of the civilised landscape in two dimensions, parts of the landscape itself, such as refurbished streets and landscaped nature strips, were used as representative three dimensional microcosms of a civilised environment. In the same way that exemplary behaviour was used to model civilised interpersonal relations, these model environments signified civilised habitats. The term "environment" (环境, huanjing) refers to the physical landscape – surroundings which have implications for the complexion of a community’s moral landscape. The idea of the environment as conditioning its resident communities draws a distinct lineage from the fundamental Marxist doctrine of ideational life as determined by the material conditions of production, and it possesses an apparent scientific character, allowing it to sit comfortably within the framework of socialist spiritual civilisation. According to official discourse, a poor environment may inhibit the spiritual development of its inhabitants, while a good environment may nurture and inspire moral and intellectual growth. This causal relationship between environmental factors and the attainment of “modern socialist civilisation” is discussed by Miao Qiming and represented in the diagram below:

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10 Miao Qiming (苗启明), The Theory and Method of the Promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation (社会主义精神文明建设的理论与方法, Shehuizhuyi jingshen jianshe de lilun yu fangfa), Yunnan Education Publishing House (云南教育出版社出版发行, Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe chuban faxing), Kunming, 1996. p.229.
Miao abbreviates the relationship between people and their environment with the expression “people-environment system” (人景系统, renjing xitong). The environmental elements and environmental quality within this system are constituted by two components: the “natural material conditions” (自然物质条件, ziran wuzhi tiaojian) and “social material basis” (社会物质基础, shehui wuzhi jichu). The natural material conditions roughly translates as the natural environment, referring to such conditions as geographical location and climate. The social material basis translates roughly as the human environment or “the material environment in which people apply their effect”. These two environmental components interact with each other, with developments in one having the potential to impact profoundly on the other.

Miao applies his framework to a county-sized community, which he calls Wu County. According to Miao, “for a relatively poor area, the relationship of its environment and its people is a vicious circle of control and limitation upon one another. In other words, it’s a system of negative effect”. Miao’s system proposes that the relationship between people and their environment is one of reciprocity: a poor quality environment shapes and conditions poor quality inhabitants, and in turn its inhabitant’s poor spiritual quality manifests itself in practices that impact negatively on the environment. He claims that there are two important factors which can raise the quality of people and environment within this system. The first is the implications of science and technology of relevance to economic development and the construction of spiritual civilisation. The second is the placement of this system into a larger open system (开放系统, kaifang xitong) which is able to absorb external influences so that it’s constituent systems may develop simultaneously with the mother system.

Classical Marxism and Party rhetoric places the environment – as part of a society’s material conditions – within a societal substructure. The role given to the environment by propaganda organs within the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation places it also, albeit unintentionally, within an ideational superstructure insofar as representations of an ideal environment have formed a key element of the official civilisation narrative. We find that throughout the rhetoric, “environment” is closely related to the ideas of “atmosphere” (气氛, qifen), “wind” (风, feng), “climate” (气候, qihou) and behaviour (行为, xingwei). While “behaviour” relates to the appearance (表现, biaoxian) or outward form of

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11 ibid. p.229.
12 ibid. p.228.
individuals, the terms “atmosphere” and “climate” relate in some way to an idea of a real or imagined status quo or collective consciousness as expressed through the outward form of society as a whole. Within civilisation rhetoric, environment – like behaviour – is promoted as one of the “four beauties” (四美, simei). As such, the state of the environment, like language or behaviour, is presented as an outward expression or manifestation of civilisation. A “fine environment” (优美环境, youmei huanjing) becomes the ostensible hallmark of the civilised society.

The “four beauties” have featured prominently since the early days of the civilisation drive. According to one handbook’s treatment of the four beauties, “a beautiful environment is an important component of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation”. Specifically, “beautiful environment” (环境美, huanjing mei) refers to beautification of both the natural and “societal” environment. The handbook goes on to mention three fundamental components to the creation of a beautiful environment: hygiene (卫生, weisheng), cleanliness and tidiness (整洁, zhengjie), and green-ification (绿化, luhua). “Hygiene” is concerned with the safeguarding of health, the management of pests, the lowering of water and air pollution, and the increasing of the population’s health levels. “Cleanliness and tidiness” refers to maintaining a living environment that possesses a scientific layout (科学的布局, kexuede buju), that is orderly, and that conforms to a standard design (统一规划, tongyi guihua). “Green-ification” concerns the planting of trees, flowers and grass, reforestation, and the protection of fauna. In order to successfully create and maintain a beautiful environment the handbook states that the significance of a beautiful environment must be promoted, including the changing of “people’s old opinions”. Rules and methodologies regarding the carrying out of movements, such as those relating to hygiene and the planting of trees and forests must be developed, focusing on the identification of responsibilities and outcomes. Thirdly, states the handbook, such efforts must be carried out into the long term “in order to create a beautiful environment for our motherland and for our people”.

The Chinese have often not fared well in literature that discusses the relationship between people and the environment. Chinese environmental practices since the Mao period have

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13 ibid. p.228.
15 ibid. p.23.
often come under attack from commentators overseas. The typically dirty and littered state of public spaces in most Chinese cities is acknowledged a consequence of poor public morality – a situation cited by overseas Chinese detractors, such as Bo Yang. In a September 2000 article, *Beijing Evening News* journalist Fang Zhou attacks the treatment of communal space within universities, writing “the [level of] civilisation one can see on campuses is an indication of the city’s, even the country’s, [level of] civilisation”.16 Fang singles out the state of student dormitories and classrooms which is described as “disappointing”. According to Fang,

Piles of rubbish, smelly socks, and dirty underwear are tossed everywhere, bed covers lay unfolded; everything is in a mess, and the air in the rooms is worse than the worst pollution levels in the city.17

Obversely, a civilised environment is considered to be indicative of a civilised society – as evidenced by “civilised citizens compacts” calling on residents to protect the environment and keep cities clean. The landscape itself thus becomes a symbolic measuring stick for the level of civilisation of its inhabitants.

To be sure, the promotion of spiritual civilisation actively encouraged and lauded actual improvements made to “material conditions”, such as environmental protection and urban residential and commercial development, but importantly it also used such improvements as visual examples to illustrate the ideals of civilised society. Judging by an early 1970s propaganda poster titled *On the banks of the Yangzi river, Daqing blooms*, where the term “blooms” was a metaphor for billowing plumes of industrial smoke symbolic of productive prowess, Daqing and the civilised city had little in common in terms of environmental quality (*环境素质, huanjing suzhi*).18 Like Dazhai and Daqing during the Great Leap Forward, however, certain cities, districts and streetscapes became important within the context of the civilisation “campaign” of the 1990s, not so much for their own achievements, but for their exemplary or illustrative effect. These localities within the rural and urban landscapes became figurative billboards in the promotion of spiritual civilisation. Promoting the civilised environment meant making the ideal environment a reality, and the city itself, or the countryside, a symbol of civilisation through successful augmentation of the physical landscape. Commercial and residential areas, wide streets, modern buildings; highly visible service industries, hygiene, environmental protection

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17 ibid. p.42.
18 (*Yangzijiangpan Daqing hua*), in Stefan Landsberger, op cit. p.113.
and the adoption of environmentally friendly practices became symbolic examples of the positive relationship between environmental quality and population quality.

the natural environment

The Chinese natural environment suffered greatly in the first decades of the People’s Republic. Mao had based his environmental theories on the idea of development as a “triumph over nature”, and had implemented them with utopian urgency. The industrial revolution led by Mao held little regard for aesthetic environmental concerns. In the pursuit of greater productive output, surplus harvests and industrial smog were the hallmarks of progress.

In terms of the environment, the idea of civilisation has evolved from being regarded as a state achieved through triumph over nature to being a state achieved through sustainable environmental management and acknowledgment that humankind is enriched by – and indeed fundamentally dependent on - mother nature. The natural environment, and its protection, has become a highly promoted part of the civilisation drive. According to a reader on citizen morality, “protecting the environment should be part of the moral awareness of every citizen, and it should form one of the basic codes of moral consciousness”. The media also heavily picked up on and promoted changing environmental values. In support of the push towards more environmentally friendly practices, for example, journalist Sun Haidong writes, “one should eat vegetables grown on farms without environmental pollution, renovators should use materials that are environmentally friendly, and single-use food containers should be easily recycled”.

Propaganda posters often depicted forests, lakes, blossoms, flowers, glassy lakes and idyllic park scenes and close-up colour photographs displaying larger than life images of leaves and flower buds (appendices 15 & 16). Such propaganda placed an emphasis on themes of freshness, wilderness, clarity and tranquillity. In many ways, these official views on and representations of the environment may be viewed as a reflection of

19 New Century Citizen Morality New Images, loc cit. p.163.
20 Sun Haidong (孙海东), “1247 Products Bear the Chinese Environment Symbol, 28.1 Billion Yuan Worth of Clean Products have been Sold” (我国环境标志产品已有1247项洁净产品卖了281亿, Woguo huanjing biaozhi chanpin yiyou 1247 xiang jiejing chanpin maile 281 yi), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), 27 December 2001. p.11.
emerging trends within the socialist market economy. The environmental neglect under Mao, heavy industrialism of the latter part of the twentieth century and population pressures, particularly in the cities, have fuelled an apparent post-industrial consumer preference for goods and services that are advertised as possessing “environmental quality”. Commercial advertising of products – from bottled mineral water to electrical appliances - in television, newspapers and magazines, increasingly incorporated environmental images in order to cash in on heightened demand for green products.

In advertising their products, companies often advertised their environmental credentials or employed signifiers in their advertising that displayed an overtly environmental quality (appendices 1,2,3,4). A curious example of this is an advertisement for the Beijing Shukang Weight-loss Centre which appeared in a June 1999 issue of the Huanbao Zhoukan (appendix 4). The centre advertised that it provides “green” treatment methods, and the vast majority of page space is taken up by a wilderness scene depicting lush green vegetation and clear running water. 21 Journalist Sun Haidong, citing statistics contained within a December 2001 report titled The Basic Situation of National Environment Protection Related Industries in 2000, writes that there are currently around 1,370 work units and almost 200,000 people involved in the production of “clean products” (清净产品, jiejing chanpin). 22 Certain “clean products” have been approved to bear the “Chinese Environment Symbol” (中国环境标志, Zhongguo huanjing biaozhi). Restaurants taking part in the “National Green Food and Beverage Enterprise” program, displayed a “promissory document” (承诺书, chengnuoshu) on their premises (appendix 21). 23 The document listed ten items, including hygienic food preparation, the proper discarding of oil after three uses, cleanliness, politeness and “civilised” management practices.

This return to nature, far from being luddite in motivation, was linked very closely to the development of new technologies, representing a vision of progress championing environmentalism through scientific progress. This ecotopian vision was manifest in such propaganda posters as Create civilised city folk, build a civilised city, which featured such images as clean ultra-modern commercial and industrial buildings nestled neatly within a natural setting (appendix 7). 24 Images such as these paralleled trends in commercial

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22 Ibid. p.11.
23 全国绿色餐饮企业, Quanguo luse canyin qiyeyi.
24 From a photograph taken by the author in Beijing in September 1999.
advertising which appropriated the double-barrelled desirability of high technology and environmentalism among young educated consumers. This trend is demonstrated in advertising such as a 1999 advertisement in *PC Times* (电脑生活, *Diannao shenghuo*) for computer outlet *Multimedia World*, which features an idyllic representation of a futuristic cityscape boasting clear skies, supermarkets, and internet cafes (appendix 3). An article in the Real Estate section of the *Beijing Evening News*, features an environmentally friendly residential suburb in Beijing’s Haidian district, called Tianxiu Gardens.

The development, states the article, utilises joint Chinese and German technologies to collect and store rain and flood water for use in flushing toilets, irrigation, car washing, fire fighting and landscaping. According to the article, because of its adherence to ideals of advanced environmental protection design, the Gardens have “gained the consent of the market and the approval of experts”. It has also received the China Quality Inspection Office’s “China Beautiful Homeland” (中国美好家园, *Zhongguo meihao jiayuan*) award and the Beijing High Technology Industry International Week’s “2001 Ten Goods Green Environmental Protection Building” award.

**The human environment**

The city of Beijing’s progress in terms of material and spiritual civilisation is often related to or expressed in terms of improvements made to the physical environment, such as the provision of parklands and public facilities, and the pace of building construction. According to Deborah S Davis, “cities of the early 1990s grew around specialised nodes of commerce, finance, and trade, and the new construction created skylines that contrasted dramatically with the uniform, grey horizons of the 1960s and 1970s.” While utilitarian soviet architectural styles had dominated urban design during the Mao era, modern international and futurist forms dominated the post-Mao setting – an eclectic albeit haphazard array of naked concrete, tinted glass and ceramic tiling. The demolition of old dilapidated buildings and their replacement with modern high-rise apartments and

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27 Ibid. p.53.

Office buildings was symbolic of the transformative effect of economic development on China's cityscapes and the societies inhabiting them. While the erection of new buildings was an obvious and highly visible symbol of material advancement, it was promoted also as very much a symbol of progress in spiritual civilisation.

The towering cranes and concrete cores of buildings under construction served as ideal hanging space for spiritual civilisation slogans, and they heralded the transformation of China's modernising cities into world class metropolises or world cities (国际大都市, guoji dachengshi). Some cities, where technology and construction were seen to have had the most transformative effect, were promoted as showcases of development for the rest of China to admire and emulate. Throughout the 1990s the construction of targeted development zones in dozens of Chinese cities reflected the major preoccupations of progress. Shanghai's Pudong district, for example, was conceived as a centre for commercial development, while on a smaller scale, Beijing's Zhongguancun was identified as the locus for an experimental zone focusing on the development of new technologies. There were also the several Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and their equivalents located at strategic junctions along the coast and hinterlands. The buildings and streets comprising these zones were often adorned with cosmetic touches emphasising their intended developmental functions, their futuristic albeit utilitarian lines appearing as post-industrial perfection in glossy advertorials designed to attract domestic and foreign investment.

Modern urban development has often been achieved with the demolition of older buildings situated in hutong districts that possessed heritage value. Michael Dutton notes the ubiquitousness of the character chai (†, to tear down), a conspicuous mark of death painted on the side of old decrepit buildings in Chinese cities. It is an indication, writes Dutton, of "the way, before our very eyes, the cities of China are physically eliminating their own past structural forms as they rush to embrace the new". There is a certain inevitability attached to this cycle of the new replacing the old, a cycle that constitutes a manifestation of the destructive effects of aggressive civilisation on parochial cultural forms. It represents, writes Mathieu Borysevicz, "the turning over of China's post-.

The relocation of residents from condemned hutong housing to modern high rise apartments was promoted by authorities as a step forward in terms of security, amenity, hygiene and living standards in general. But while this “turning over” was positioned within the broader narrative of the construction industry’s contribution to China’s material and spiritual progress, it was seen by some as a threatening, chaotic and ultimately destructive process – a gutting of the city’s soul. Artist Zhang Dali and his Dialogue series of stylised human heads captures this notion of modernisation as a process of estrangement from tradition. According to Borysevicz:

Often found inscribed on buildings demarked for destruction, or on areas already being demolished, these heads surface like the voices of protest, disenchantment and of the memories locked up in these spaces. They are the voices of the city’s unearthed spirits. The small back alleys of Beijing not only hold the history of China but retain both a sense of tradition and community.

While official policy in the main appears to have created a hierarchy of architectural value which prizes the destruction of the dilapidated Chinese old in favour of the nondescript internationalist new, the 1990s have witnessed an increasing regard for China’s architectural heritage. Many restoration projects undertaken during the post-Mao era, such as in Beijing’s Liulichang and Hohot’s Dazhao neighbourhoods, have attempted to blend preservation of the past with commercial profitability. In its aim to bring greater synonymy to the concepts of culture and civilisation, the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation has also incorporated attempts to highlight the value of retaining and rejoicing in characteristically Chinese architectural forms. Street-side posters produced by the local propaganda bureau and positioned in Beijing’s Xidan commercial district, for example, display messages of politeness and civilisation on backgrounds depicting traditional Chinese settings. Restored national structures such as the Summer Palace’s Suzhou Street and the footbridges of Kunming Lake feature prominently in this form of advertising (appendices 25,26,27,28,29,30). Slogans urging passers by to “build a civilised city”, “make a beautiful environment”, “stress civilisation”, “not spit on the ground”, and “not use bad language” are framed by photographs showing off the restored splendour of Beijing’s Summer Palace which appear as an attempt to present an idealised view of

China's "civilised" heritage. Positioned amongst these posters was one which depicted not a restored historical building but a newly constructed multi-level complex rising triumphantly above the skyline within the Beijing West Railway Station precinct, the defining feature of which was its adornment with traditional Ming dynasty turrets (similar to that of the Railway Station building itself). It appeared as no less than an architectural reclamation of Chineseness employed as a metaphor for the pursuit of a quintessentially Chinese notion of civilisation.

Commenting on the need to "respect history" a guidebook on spiritual civilisation for schools discusses the value in retaining and renovating old buildings on school campuses. According to the guidebook:

> These buildings may appear inappropriate to the modern lifestyle. The correct thing to do [however] is not to demolish them. We should fully renovate the interior and make their functions and facilities better suited to today's needs. We should make them become part of modern first class education, and increase their functionality by rejuvenating them.  

According to David Lowenthal, we tend to change the past to our expectations by embellishing its relics. Writes Lowenthal, "restoring an old building to what it might or should have been, and adding to extant remains all in fact aim at improving on what has survived". Michael Dutton describes the structural rendering of the traditional in terms of architectural mimesis. Mimesis relates to imitation or mimicry, and in the architectural sense to the imitation of distinct architectural forms, adorning structures with a value that is not their own. While Chinese officialdom are no strangers to restorative projects for prestige and profitability, the idea of restoration for educative purposes has not been typical of the Party's approach to old buildings. Within the rhetoric of spiritual civilisation, these buildings represent significant features of the environment teleologically altered - as improved relics of the past made relevant, they become environmental props in a setting designed to improve the future.

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32 Street-side posters, from photographs taken by the author in the Xidan commercial area, Beijing, September 1999. Posters produced by the CCP Haidian District Propaganda Bureau.
35 Michael Dutton, op cit. p.222.
While demolition, construction and restoration stood as contrasting metaphors for material and spiritual progress, civilisation rhetoric also stressed the value of making the act of construction civilised. Footpath relaying in Beijing's west during late 1999, for example, featured barricades to separate pedestrians from bicycle traffic and work in progress. Many such barricades bore the slogan “civilised construction, safe production” (appendix 6). Indeed, with the vast number of construction projects undertaken in Beijing during the last decade, there existed a real impetus for less obtrusive and disruptive construction practices. A January 2002 Beijing Evening News featured a photograph of a giant billboard (six by four meters) promoting civilised construction, erected by the City Road and Bridge Construction Company (appendix 5). According to its caption, the billboard featured the figures of three construction employees who were “representing the company as “image ambassadors” [形象大使, xingxiang dashi] and making a solemn promise to society: that the building work shall be carried out in a civilised manner and that no civilians would be disturbed [by the works]”. This reflected a broader relationship between improved levels of service and civilisation – consumers were to be treated with respect. As with other service sector industries, the construction industry was under pressure to become more image and service conscious.

civilised streetscape as virtual environment

In China’s cities, the urban commercial landscape is often punctuated by themed streets which correspond to a specific commercial activity. Shopping area names which employ the term “street”, such as “Women’s street” (女人街, nuren jie), “Beautiful people street” (每人街, meiren jie) and “Good food street” (美食街, meishijie), have become increasingly common. While themed streets may have originally evolved as the unintended product of urban organics and market competition, they have in recent years become a major marketing tool. The street has become a commercially seductive space, a microcosm representative of a broader ideal consumer cosmos. The success of the commercially themed street is such that a trend has developed whereby modern shopping multiplexes in major commercial districts have begun using the term “street” in naming their shopping spaces. In Beijing for example, tenants of the Infinite Fashion Square, jealous of other

36 文明施工安全生产，西城市政处, Wenming shigong anquan shengchan, Xicheng shizhengchu. From a photograph taken by the author in Beijing in September 1999.
shopping centres such as “Women’s street” and “Beauty Street”, have lobbied their management to change their centre’s name to “Beautiful People Street”. According to one tenant, “it seems that business won’t become red hot unless [the centre is] named after some street”. The commercial marketing trend of deriving value from the geographical location of the “street”, and appropriating it for profit, has found its way into Party advertising methodologies. The street has found itself as an urban manifestation of the civilised locality.

In Beijing, the area surrounding Huawei Road has been noted in the press as exhibiting a high degree of civilisation. A Beijing Evening News report states that four million yuan had been invested in the building of Huawei Road’s “Quality Goods Street”. According to the report:

The street is 700 metres long, the footpath is 5 metres wide, and the planted area is 5 metres wide. The main colours decorating the street on both sides are red and yellow paving bricks. The ground is covered by grass that can tolerate the cold seasons and [bordered by] a cast iron fence. There are 28 advertising light boxes featuring the topic “Protect the environment, beautify our homeland”... A series of stainless steel advertising windows will become a space for the promotion of the “two civilisations”.

Such civilised streetscape projects are viewed in terms of “beautification” (梅花, meihua), and fit comfortably within the framework of Miao Qiming’s “people-environment system”. Indeed, the beautification of Huawei Street’s Pen Family Park is described by the journalist in terms of “creating civilisation” (创造文明, chuangzao wenming), thus reinforcing the idea of a positive causal relationship between environmental quality and civilisation.

In a People’s Daily article titled New Scenes in Beijing, journalist Lai Renqiong gives an account of the building of apparently popularly titled “unique streets” (特色街, tese jie) in...
Beijing’s Chaoyang district. According to Lai, these “unique streets” contain such features as:

...portraits of Chinese and famous foreign scientists, heroes and models from the various historical periods of the republic, and quotations which reflect the talents of famous figures [which] are exhibited in the form of light boxes, along with beautifully designed commercial advertising which attracts passers-by to stop and look.

The streets are unique in that each one is uniquely themed, focusing on such subjects as heroes and models, world scenery, national scenery, scientists, cartoons, and famous readings and quotations. Zhou Liangluo, Chaoyang district’s propaganda chief, is paraphrased as commenting that these “unique streets” were built “for the creation of a more civilised and healthy human environment at a cost of millions of yuan”.

In areas such as Beijing’s Xidan commercial district, propaganda posters promoting civilised behaviour and public morality lined certain streets for hundreds of metres in apparent competition with the haphazard menagerie of surrounding commercial advertising. The orderly placement of these posters – and the wholesome and idealised images they portrayed conveyed a sense of order and righteousness that was undermined by the relative disorder and frenetic hustle and bustle of their surroundings. In contrast, reports on the redevelopment of Chongyong Avenue in East Beijing demonstrate the role of the civilised street in reinforcing those aspects of civilisation related to orderly progress. According to an article titled East City District Constructs Spiritual Civilisation Model Street, Chongyong Avenue has historically been characterised by randomly and illegally constructed shopping stands and stalls, and structures encroaching on pedestrian thoroughfares. These haphazard structures were deemed damaging to the city’s image.

According to the article, work on the street included:

The clearing of 16 independent stands, the demolition of 30 scattered stalls, the removal of 160 irregular signs, posts and discarded objects, the renovation of 50 metres of fencing, the paving of a pedestrian footpath,

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42 ibid.
repairs to traffic facilities and electrical advertising boxes...and the maintenance of a green area.\textsuperscript{43}

At the local level, civilised streets are joined by another civilised locality: the “civilised residential district” (文明居民区, wenming jumin qu). According to an October 1996 Beijing Evening News report, 88 residential areas in Haidian District had been determined as “civilised residential districts”, having reached the standard of “beautiful environment, good order, and convenient living”.\textsuperscript{44} The report noted the heavy involvement of the military, work units and community in associated building, maintenance and landscaping projects, and made mention of the areas’ claims that criminal offences and vehicular theft had been eliminated. Because the residential areas are quite distant from the city centre, 10 service facilities were built within their boundaries, such as convenience stores, first aid stations and milk stations. In summary, the major themes of the report focused on decreased crime, improved services, community involvement and greater levels of resident satisfaction. These themes, like other aspects of the civilised environment, appear to conveniently mirror the thematic preoccupations of commercial advertising. In commercial advertising on television and in the press we find countless representations of ideal communities characterised by cleanliness, abundance and convenience. The civilised locality finds marketability and a seductive character as the potential object of consumeristic desire.

I earlier employed the term “multimedia” to describe the network of visual stimuli provided by an “integrated” or environmental approach to visual propaganda. To describe the signification of civilisation through augmentation of the physical landscape, it may be more apt to employ the concept of “virtual realism”. Virtual reality (VR) is an idea that has often been described in terms of technological illusion or cyber induced hallucination. It has been viewed as a kind of alter-reality which exists within, although is separate to, a wider physical reality, or “primary world”. It is a technology which provides for an existential leap, convincing a participant that he or she is in another place by “substituting

\textsuperscript{43} Wang Xiaoping (王小平), “East City District Constructs Spiritual Civilisation Model Street” (东城创建精神文明模范街, Dongchenggu chuangjian jingshen wenming mofanjie), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), No.8883, 24 August 1996. p.2.

\textsuperscript{44} Zhu Xiaohua & Sun Shukun (朱晓华, 孙树昆), “88 Civilised Residential Areas are Constructed in Haidian” (海淀建成88个文明居民区, Haidian jiancheng 88 ge wenming juminqu), Beijing Evening News (北京晚报, Beijing wanbao), No.8927, 07 October 1996. p.1.
the primary sensory input with data received produced by a computer". This "other place", or virtual environment, is a reality of design, constructed by both ontological and normative components which, indistinguishable from one another, synthesise to form an illusionary reality.

The idea of VR finds resonance in terms of the "civilised streetscape", which can be viewed as a kind of geographical alter-reality - a "civilised" microcosm existing in, although visibly distinct from, its physical surrounds. As propaganda medium, the civilised locality is more than mere semiotic signifier in that what is signified becomes what is or what appears to be. The reality offered by the civilised locality is one in which the real and the ideal are synthesised, where official ideals relating to morality, civilisation and the value of Chineseness find expression in the polished bricks of street side paving, the scent of flowers in newly landscaped nature strips, and the comfort derived from recently installed park benches. The civilised locality is, in essence, a signifying totality - a three dimensional metamedium - which possesses scope to not only transfer meaning through communicating with its audience, but also through interacting with its audience.

"Virtual reality", according to Michael Heim, "is an immersive, interactive system based on computable information...[the] defining characteristics [of which] boil down to the "three I's" of VR: immersion, interactivity, and information intensity". These three characteristics may be used in analysing the effect of the civilised locality. It could be argued that the civilised locality - whether it be street, district, town or city - possesses the inherent capacity to immerse its audience insofar as it surrounds its audience, like a device which, writes Heim, "isolate[s] the senses sufficiently to make a person feel transported to another place". It may also be argued that it is interactive to the extent that an individual does not merely view one's environment - one actually experiences it, participates and exists within it. The civilised environment may also support a high level of information intensity in that it is dynamic and inhabited, and has the potential to respond and provide feedback, providing what has been termed telepresence. Chorafas and Steinmann describe telepresence as "the state of being "inside" a virtual world". To

46 ibid. p.7.
47 ibid. p.7.
explain this term, Heim uses the example of the surface of the moon. Telepresence, he states, is the experience created by allowing someone to virtually walk on the moon rather than simply re-presenting the remote environment (represented by the diagram below\textsuperscript{49}). For our purposes, the "remote location" becomes the future state of civilisation achieved, and its virtual manifestation is the civilised locality. As propaganda medium, the civilised locality becomes the virtual environment – a signifier that attracts significance through the establishment of a relationship with its audience characterised by the qualities of immersion, interactivity and information intensity.

Virtual reality may either attempt to simulate physical reality, or indeed simulate an ideal or imagined environment. Michael Heim, for example, relates how Jaron Lanier, a renown VR entrepreneur, once described a future in which cyberspace could “offer solace for the loss of natural, liveable, environmental space”\textsuperscript{50}. In approaching the civilised locality as a type of environmental placebo, we see the civilised locality as contrasting with the somewhat less ideal reality of the typical Chinese cityscape. As noted, heavy industrialisation, population pressures and traditionally poor environmental standards in China have created functional albeit aesthetically challenged cities that inhabit a discursive no-man’s land somewhere between past imperial grandeur and future Singapore-style communitarian urbanity. On a deeper psychological level, the cityscape appears fractured, the unity of work and recreation afforded by compound accommodation giving way to the dislocation of compartmentalised high rise living. We find that the poster of a model citizen contrasts with widely held perceptions of growing crime rates, and the transient comfort of the park bench contrasts with the hardship.

\textsuperscript{49} The user, indicated by the shaded text box, is experiencing a state of “telepresence”.

\textsuperscript{50} Michael Heim, op cit. p.143.
endured by disoriented rural-urban migrants, while the scent of fresh flowers contrasts with an atmosphere thickly laden with coal dust. The civilised locality, in one sense, performs its ostensive function of constituting a model environment – a paradigm of progress holding out a challenge to its surrounds to “catch up”. In another sense, intended or otherwise, the civilised locality performs the function of constituting a staging ground for a form of compensatory escapism – an environmental opiate.

The civilised locality is, in effect, part model, part prototype. In modelling desired societal outward forms, the civilised locality acts as a societal work-in-progress – an intended future society in embryonic form. As such, it is an environment that operates according to the ideas it attempts to signify on the one hand, and unpredictable human behaviour on the other. Virtual reality has found widely acknowledged application in the modelling of possible “real world” scenarios. Using the analytical framework of the virtual environment, we may similarly see the civilised locality as a laboratory or experimental space for the simulation and testing of regulation, exemplification and response. Like the virtual environment testing ground, the civilised locality relies on user input, such as the participation of resident organisations or work units, or the responses of individuals, for experimental results. Within the short term, and the highly politicised context of the “campaign” or “activity” phenomenon, as discussed in the preceding chapter, participation is likely to be sycophantic and skewed. The long term viability of the ideas by the civilised locality is likely to be overstated by analysis of interaction between signifier and participant in the short term. As an experimental environment, the civilised locality is contaminated by the falsity inherent within the “action – reaction” ritual. Furthermore, it is not difficult to imagine that civilised street initiatives along certain Beijing streets, for example, could prove popular among nearby residents, but what about the rest of Beijing’s many streets? And what of the rest of China? Are such streets viewed by wider society as signposts for a civilised future, or are they viewed as a tokenistic effort by metropolitan authorities to improve the city’s image? It would appear that the civilised street blurs the lines between actual “construction” and mere “representation” of an ideal environment.

The role of the civilised locality as metamedium is to effectively visualise the ideal reality – or remote environment - it has been created to represent. In this case, the remote

environment is not an actual place but a matrix of ideas relating to what it means to be civilised. In the context of VR, Chorafas and Steinmann discuss the visualisation of abstract concepts in terms of visistraction, which they define as “the process of visualization of concepts, characteristics, or phenomena lacking a direct physical interpretation”.

In the language of semiology, therefore, visistraction, may refer to the visual signification of ideas. To what extent does the civilised locality provide its audience with a kind of telepresence through visistraction? And even then, how convincing are these virtual environments as signifiers of the CCP’s civilisation narrative? Does this telepresence constitute the meaningful modelling or “test driving” of a new type of society? Or does it merely constitute, in the same way that “virtual reality” is accused by many of providing, a form of mere escapism?

52 ibid. p.245.
11. conclusion

civilisation found?

The epistemic excision of "Chineseness" and traditionally Chinese notions of "civilisation" has characterised the troubled entry of the Chinese civilisation-state into the "modern" era. The adoption of European - and predominantly Marxist - ideas of history as progress in the early twentieth century, coupled with the perceived relative state of civilisation in the West, foreshadowed for the Chinese a century of cultural ambivalence and a perceived need to "catch up". This need manifested itself throughout the twentieth century in a range of officially driven movements and campaigns aimed at economic, social and moral development. These included campaigns as diverse in focus and scope as the New Life Movement, the Great Leap Forward, and, more recently, the promotion of Socialist Spiritual Civilisation. Such campaigns often objectified the West itself as historical villain but its level of civilisation as a type of developmental benchmark. This dual objectification reflected the broader problem of creating a characteristically Chinese historical narrative able to break a perceived link between "modernisation" and "Westernisation" and restore synonymity between ideas of "civilisation" and "Chineseness".

As with the campaigns which have preceded it, the promotion of spiritual civilisation may be viewed in terms of its means and its ends. The campaign was to create a sense of shared values and common destiny between the Chinese populace, the Party, and those at the apex of political power. As a fundamentally political campaign, it has been driven by conservative forces within the CCP, and promoted by party and state organs at every level. Its ends - the development of material and social conditions conducive to, and a citizenry compliant towards, the continuing reign of an ideologically conservative CCP - I have called "power maintenance". The means of the campaign, such as the promotion of positive narratives of Chineseness and the continuing relevance of the Chinese cultural tradition, fall under the collective heading of what I have termed "civilisation maintenance". This means-ends bifurcation of the campaign allows us to analyse where the priorities of the campaign instigators are positioned along a hierarchy of value.

This dissertation studied the means-ends nature of the campaign through an analysis of the semiotic aspects of the campaign, and a positioning of the promotion of spiritual civilisation along a semiological chain. Symbols deployed in support of the promotion of
The myth making associated with the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation has tended to extol the importance of certain elements of China’s traditional, socialist and contemporary culture. It has created narratives of forward historical momentum in which progress is presented as being dependent upon the continuing rule of the CCP. While narratives of past history focus on the appropriated morality and scientism of China’s socialist and Confucian traditions and present these traditions as repositories of wisdom for the future, narratives of the present locate the quest for spiritual civilisation within a discourse of self-fulfilment and improvement. Combined, these narratives forge a metaphorical relationship between the journey of individual self-improvement and China’s collective path towards national self-realisation and international recognition.

As discussed in Chapter 9, the inherent ritualism of the campaign itself contributes to a codification of time and behaviour as manifest in the framework of cyclical “action-reaction”. The ritual components of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation, constituted by countless associated activities and projects, provided a participatory interface between the civilisation narrative and the people. The “action-reaction” ritual demonstrates how the participatory interface provided by campaign ritual constitutes a stage for the acting out of a desired political order. An important function of the ritualistic components of the campaign is the symbolic transformation of the official to the apparently popular, and the mandatory to the seemingly optional. Civilisation “activities” which reflect increasing regularisation, such as various local compacts and rating systems, are promoted as vehicles for dialogue between state and people to the extent that they appear as manifestations of a kind of faux civil sphere. Veiled by ritualism, even the more legalistic components of the campaign appear as the products of concerned individuals as free agents working cooperatively with their communities and with the state towards the achievement of a more civilised society.
Visual symbolism deployed in support of the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation provided for a modelling – a *visstration* - of the eschatology of the civilisation narrative. As the preceding chapter discussed, technologies of visual propaganda have evolved considerably over recent decades, becoming more immersive, interactive and sophisticated. The natural and urban environments themselves have become the canvases of the civilisation drive, and their beautification a metaphorical work-in-progress. The civilised locality appears as a giant gallery installation – a virtual environment – a seductive scale model of the type of ideal civilised society offered by continued CCP leadership. Inherent within the symbolism of the civilised locality is the association of consumerist desires with the type of future society offered by CCP rule. Much of this symbolism tends toward escapism, presenting images of a future that appears picture perfect and utterly desirable. Such symbolism is reflective of the idea that growing levels of wealth and increasing living standards form a kind of eudemonist material basis for ongoing political legitimacy.

So what is the profile of the contemporary “civilised” Chinese citizen? According to the myriad of images disseminated through the narrative of socialist spiritual civilisation, civilised Chinese are, first and foremost, individuals who demonstrate respect for the ideology of the CCP, and who possess communist ideals, culture, discipline and morality. Civilised Chinese have a keen sense of history and of the “shame” imposed upon China by the West, are aware of and value China’s “uniqueness”, and have a degree of personal commitment towards playing a part in the re-emergence of a strong China. While wary of the West and its tainted offerings, civilised Chinese are aware of the need to “learn from the West” in key areas such as economics, management and information technology. Civilised Chinese are educated, have a propensity towards self-improvement, and represent an increasingly sophisticated skills base within the Chinese labour market. Civilised Chinese value science, discount religion and superstition, and have an acute understanding of the importance of harnessing new technologies. Civilised Chinese are keen to broaden their cultural horizons, but have no interest whatsoever in developing a broader political consciousness. Civilised Chinese seek a satisfying job which will allow them to achieve excellence, to produce positive material and social outcomes, and to earn an adequate wage. While civilised Chinese detest rampant individualism and materialism, they practice limited self-interest as consumers within the socialist market economy, they drive the economy through spending on themselves and their families, and they desire greater wealth in order to improve their living conditions and their lifestyle. Civilised
Chinese are increasingly cosmopolitan and profess to embrace world culture, yet at the same time are suspicious of and prejudiced towards outsiders. Civilised Chinese have a sense of community, are concerned about the state of their neighbourhood, have a strong respect for the law, are swayed toward bigotry, and possess little or not tolerance toward deviance or social non-conformity of any type.

The idea of the politically impotent and socially docile consumer, however, is fraught with potential danger. The increasing need for officially endorsed notions of "Chineseness" to be competitive, and for its promotion to be catchy, is evidence that the market economy has had profound consequences for the propaganda industry in China. The changing form and content of propaganda which struggles to be seen and heard within the marketplace is an implicit acknowledgment that the Chinese consumer is increasingly endowed with the ability to exercise choice. Added to this is a certain marketplace morality that, largely neglected in recent decades, is now being actively promoted - a morality of entrepreneurs, vendors, customers, good service and quality products. In terms of professional ethics, for example, it is the market itself, as opposed to government regulators, which appears increasingly to be demanding greater levels of "civilisation" as middle class consumers exercise a preference for superior products and service. Given these circumstances, the potential exists for "public morality" over time to become increasingly dictated by market forces, to be impacted upon by online consumer polls, talkback radio banter, and changing consumer preferences. Could this ultimately lay the ground for the development of an increasingly market driven morality resembling something akin to professional ethics in the West?

At this point, however, we are still left with an underlying confrontation between Chinese notions of civilisation and the civilisation of the West. The promotion of spiritual civilisation has done very little to remove equivocation from the quandary of how to manage this most difficult relationship. Accommodations and critiques of the West throughout the campaign suggest that the importance of dialectical selection is in its form rather than content. The mere act of borrowing from Western civilisation is not considered a case of China selling its cultural soul, and indeed, Chinese discourse on civilisation records as a strength the acculturating prowess of its culture. The central conflict here is between dialectical selection being perceived as a case of "westernisation"

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1 Dialectical selection refers to the concept of taking from the West what is considered useful, and discarding the rest.
and it being perceived as a case of “acculturation”. In terms of perceptions, the promotion of spiritual civilisation continues to radiate mixed messages – highlighting the importance of China’s uniqueness while at the same time highlighting the requirement for the Chinese to become more like everyone else.

The ambiguity over the content of the civilisation campaign’s normative messages becomes a moot point, however, when viewed as a means to political ends. In characterising the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation as the despotic maintenance of a sycophantic moral orthopraxy, it could be said that it represents real civilisation maintenance. The defining feature of the Chinese civilisation-state for the past two thousand years at least has been the adherence to an ethical code which has entrenched hierarchical power relations between the Chinese state and society and within society at large. The action-reaction ritual of the civilisation campaign continues a particularly Chinese tradition of codifying and modelling ruler-subject power relations, flying in the face of the perceived spectre of ideological westernisation. The exercise of such ritual continues not only to convey the power of the ruling elite but indeed to enact it, and in doing so, enact the endurance of an ancient and core thread of China’s cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, the leaders of the CCP by their own admission find themselves in unprecedented times, surrounded by the threatening historical forces of technological revolution and globalisation, and internally aggravated by ideological generation gaps. If the aim of civilisation maintenance, as has been argued, is to serve the interests of those in power, then what we have in the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation is the maintenance of a certain brand of civilisation that has been formulated to best serve those interests. The “civilisation” promoted by the CCP is, in effect, a “civilisation” for the CCP by the CCP – a discourse more about the longevity of conservative Party rule than about the longevity of Chinese civilisation itself. The struggle for Chinese civilisation’s re-emergence from the shadows of the twentieth century thus becomes a metaphor for the CCP’s own quest to find its place in the sun. Cloaked as it is in the passé language of Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping theory, the promotion of socialist spiritual civilisation may well fall victim to its political motivations. Ultimately unable to escape the increasingly archaic rhetoric of socialism – despite every attempt to dress it in the garb of the “new” – the campaign itself may ultimately be perceived as yet another relic of a socialist heritage struggling for relevance.
The ideas of Chinese civilisation dreamed of by visionaries since the early 20th century are still confined to the realms of imagination. The Chinese civilisation-state today inhabits the same no-man’s land it has inhabited throughout the twentieth century – somewhere between the memories of a grand past and the prospects of an uncertain future.
commercial advertising - technology and the environment

(1) Baihuan huayuan advertisement appearing in Beijing Evening News (Beijing wanbao), 13 December 2001. p.60.

(2) Samsung (Sanxing dianzi) Syncmaster advertisement.

(4) *Shu Kang Weightloss Centre* advertisement appearing in *Huanbao zhoukan*, No.61, 17 June 1999. p.4.

(6) Civilised Construction, Safe Production (Wenming shigong anquan shengchan), sign placed by West City Government Office (Xicheng shizhengchu) among streetside construction at the intersection of Chang’an Avenue and Xidan Road at Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
civilisation and the city

(7) Build a civilised city, create civilised city folk (Jian wenming chengshi, zuo wenming shimin). Poster appearing on street side along Chang'an Avenue / Fuxing Road in west Beijing near Gongzhufen. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(8) Must build Haidian into a prosperous, peaceful, democratic, progressive civilised district (Yao ba Haidian jianshe chengwei fanrong, anding, minzhu, jinbude wenmingqu). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
(9) Do good deeds, do real things, solidly raise levels of service (Ban haoshi, ban shishi, zhazha shishi tigao fuwu shuiping). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
slogan banners

(10) Socialist Spiritual Civilisation (Shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming). Large characters in red suspended from external fencing in front of the Military Museum, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(11) Soldiers build Socialist Spiritual Civilisation together (Junmin gong jian shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming). Banner featuring characters in red on a white background positioned at the entrance to a military compound in west Beijing. Photograph taken by the author in September 1999.
(12) **Shanghai Airport has established a creating civilised industry review activity** *(Shanghai hankonggang kaizhan chuangjian wenming xingye zhanping huodong).* Banner featuring characters in white on a red background positioned across the façade of the Shanghai International Airport terminal. Photograph taken by the author in September 1999.

(13) **Our work unit has applied for [the status of] Civilised Work Unit at the provincial level, we welcome all social circles to evaluate us** *(Wo danwei yi shenbao shengji wenming danwei, huanying shehui gejie jiandu).* Banner featuring characters in white on a red background positioned at the entrance to the Liaoning Campaign [War] Memorial *(Liaoning zhanji jinianguan)*, Jinzhou. Photograph taken by the author in late December 2001.
civilisation and the environment

(14) Stress hygiene, don't spit and leave rubbish everywhere (yao jiangjiu weisheng, buyao luantu luanren). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(15) Building a civilised Haidian requires your enthusiastic participation (Jianshe wenming Haidian li bu kai ninde reqing canyu). Poster appearing on street side along Chang'an Avenue / Fuxing Road in west Beijing near Gongzhufen. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
(16) Help others in need to the best of your ability (jing zijì suòneng, bang taren suoxu). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(17) Don’t spit and leave rubbish everywhere, stress hygiene (Bu yào luán tu luanren, yào jiāngjiū weisheng). Poster produced by the CCP Beijing Committee Propaganda Bureau (Zhonggong Beijingwei xuanchuanbu), Office of the Capital Spiritual Civilisation Construction Committee (Shoudu jingshen wenming jianshe weiyanhui bangongshi). Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
(18) **Beautify city space, protect the environment (Meihua shikong, baohu huanjing)**

Poster produced by the CCP Beijing Committee Propaganda Bureau (*Zhonggong Beijngwei xuanchuanbu*), Office of the Capital Spiritual Civilisation Construction Committee (*Shoudu jingshen wenming jianshe weiyuanhui bangongshi*), located near the Beijing International Hotel, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
regulating civilisation

(19) Service Standards (Fuwu guifan), Beijing Subway Company (Beijingshi dixia tiedao zonggongsi). Poster displayed in Fuxingmen subway station, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(20) Passengers Civilised Regulations (Chengke wenming shouze), Capital Spiritual Civilisation Office (Shoudu jingshen wenming bangongshi), March 1996. Poster displayed in a number of subway stations in Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
(21) National Green Food and Beverage Enterprise (Quanguo luse canyin qiye) program, Promissory document (chengnuoshu). Document displayed at the entrance to a restaurant in west Beijing. Photograph taken by author in January 2002.

(22) Capital Resident’s Civilisation Compact (Shoudu shimin wenming gongyue), Capital Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Standing Committee (Shoudu jingshen wenming jianshe weiyuanhui), March 1996. Poster displayed in a number of subway stations in Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
cultivating proper behaviour

(23) Must treat people politely, must not use coarse or rude language (yao limao dairen, buyao shuo cuhua zanghua). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(24) Behave in a civilised way, raise quality (juzhi wenming, tigao sushi). Poster published by the CCP Beijing Committee Propaganda Bureau (Zhonggong Beijingshi wei xuanchuangbu), Office of the Capital Promotion of Spiritual Civilisation Committee (Shoudu jingshen wenming jianshe weiyanhui bangongshi). Photograph taken by the author in September 1999.
(25) Must treat people politely, must not use coarse or rude language (yao limao dairen, buyao shuo cuhua zanghua). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(26) Stress civilisation, establish a new trend, think of the people every moment (Jiang wenming, shu xinfeng, shishi keke xiangzhe renmin qunzhong). Poster appearing on street side in west Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
(27) Build a civilised city, civilised villages, civilised industries, conduct the “three big establishments” activity well (jianwenming chengshi, wenming cunzhen, wenming hangye, gaohao sanda chuangjian huodong). Poster appearing on street side in west Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(28) Establish a beautiful environment, magnificent order, high grade service, raise the quality of citizen’s morality (Chuangzao youmei huanjing, youtiang zhixu, youzhi fuwu, tigao Gongmin daode suzhi). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
(29) Don’t cross the road in a disorderly way, don’t dispose of refuse anywhere, don’t spit on the ground, don’t use rude language (Bu luan chuan malu, bu luan reng zawu, bu suidi tutan, bu shuo zanghua). Poster appearing on street side in west Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.

(30) Standardise service, do not be cold and unhelpful (Yao guifan fuwu, buyao leng ying tuo ka). Poster appearing on street side near Xidan, Beijing. Photograph taken by author in September 1999.
showing support for the civilisation drive

(31) The study of Li Sufi sees action (Xue Li Sufi jian xingdong). Photograph taken by Sima Xiaomeng, Beijing Evening News (Beijing wanbao), 1996. Depicts employees of the Beijing Long Distance Bus Company receiving education in service standardisation (guifanhua fuwu jiaoyu).

(32) Caption reads “Landao Towers stresses the promotion of spiritual civilisation, a news stand has been set up in a customer rest area for customers when they are tired from shopping It is quite an enjoyment to stop and rest a while to read the newspaper.” Photograph taken by Wang Xibao, Beijing Evening News (Beijing wanbao), No.8844, 16 July 1996. p.2.

(33) Caption reads “The picture below shows the Vice-General Manager of Landao Towers, Huang Hao, giving an award to the first prize winning author”. Photograph taken by Bai Dongfa. Bai Dongfa, “Wiping Clean Capital Civilisation’s Service Window” Satirical Essay Prize Ceremony” (“Ca liang shoudu wenming fuwude chuankou” zawan fajianghui juxing), Beijing Evening News (Beijing wanbao), No.9040,28 January 1997. p.11.
(34) Showing support for the promotion of spiritual civilisation online. China Customs (Zhongguo haiguan) website. www.customs.gov.cn/JSWM/TINDEX.asp
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