The green leaves of China.

Sociopolitical imaginaries in Chinese environmental nonfiction.

Vorgelegt von

Matthias Liehr

April 2013

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

First, my thanks go to Prof. Rudolf G. Wagner. It was he who encouraged me to apply for the position as a doctoral student at the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Transcultural Flows" at Heidelberg University. He kindly agreed to become my supervisor, and during the course of this project offered constant guidance, support, and constructive criticism; I profited greatly from our spirited conversations, but also from the constant stream of helpful emails that seem to leave his office regardless of the time of day, many of which found their way into this dissertation in some form or the other. When I struggled to give my thesis the focus and argumentative edge it required, it was Prof. Wagner who urged me on until I finally could tell the trees from the forest. Time and time again, he offered invaluable inspiration from a seemingly endless reservoir of knowledge, alerting me to the connections I had failed to see, and pushing me to develop my argument beyond what I had thought was possible. Without Prof. Wagner, this project would not have come to fruition.

I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Subrata Mitra who accompanied me throughout this journey. His expertise as a political scientist made me sharpen my methodological wits and made me truly appreciate the ways in which scholars from different disciplines can cooperate to enrich each other's perspective. Prof. Mitra's door was always open for me, and behind it I always found an open ear, a warm word, and a cup of tea.

Prof. Barbara Mittler readily agreed to take on the role of second supervisor on short notice, for which I am highly grateful. The dynamism and professionalism with which she stems an impossible work load are admirable.

Thanks to Prof. Wang Nuo 王诺 from the Department of Literature at Xiamen University who gracefully invited me to the first China-Taiwan Conference on Ecological Literature in Xiamen. Prof. Wang was not only a formidable host, but his advice provided an invaluable contribution. Thanks are also due to all the excellent Chinese scholars who were so kind to share their insights with me during this occasion.

Many thanks also to all the volunteers and members of China's environmental NGOs I had the privilege of meeting during my research, such as *Friends of Nature*, *Global Village Beijing*, or *China Dialogue*. Their commitment and dedication amidst difficult circumstances deserve our respect and appreciation.

Finally, my special gratitude belongs to my family and friends, too many to list, who accompanied me through the years of this project, the good times and the bad. When the road seemed uncertain, many helping hands lifted me up again. A special salute goes to the members of the Graduate Program for Transcultural Studies (you know who you are). I fondly remember all we shared, the discussions, the work, the laughs as well as the challenges (not to mention a considerable number of beverages). Working with these remarkable individuals at the Karl Jaspers Center in Heidelberg has been a transformative experience. It opened windows for me into worlds that I would have never known otherwise. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to learn and grow.

I dedicate this book to my parents, Christina and Willi Liehr, to whose unconditional love and support I owe everything.

Heidelberg, April 15th 2013

List of abbreviated book titles

AGWT   TANG Xiyang 唐锡阳 and Ma Xia 马霞 [Marcia B. Marks] (1993): *Huanqiu Lüsexing* [A Green World Tour]. Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe.

BZQ   LIANG Congjie 梁从诫 (2002). *Bu zhonghe de quan* [The unclosed circle]; Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.

CCC   TANG Xiyang 唐锡阳 et al. (2004). *Cuo! Cuo! Cuo! Tang Xiyang lüse chensi yu baijia pingdian* [Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! – Tang Xiyang's green thoughts and critical suggestions from one-hundred authors]. Shengyang: Shengyang chubanshe.

CJH   YANG Xin 杨欣 (1997). *Changjiang hun* [Soul of the Yangtze]. Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe.

FMXL   XU Gang 徐刚 (1997). *Famuzhe, xinglai!* [Woodcutter, wake up!]. Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe.

HB   LIU Jianqiang 刘鉴强 (2009). *Tianzhu. Cangren chuanqi* [Heavenly Beads. Legends of the Tibetans]. Lhasa, Xizang renmin chubanshe.

KKXL   YANG Xin 杨欣 (2007). *Qinli Kekexili 10 nian* [10 years in Kekexili]. Beijing: Sanlian shudian.

LY   TANG Xiyang 唐锡阳 (2007). *Lüse Ying* [Green Camp]. Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe.

WWDZ   LIANG Congjie 梁从诫, LIANG Xiaoyan 梁晓燕, eds. (2000). *Wei wugao de daziran* [Speaking on behalf of nature]. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.

Note

Throughout the text, Chinese terms are transcribed with the Pinyin system. All translations of Chinese sources are by me, unless otherwise indicated. I am solely responsible for any errors in these translations, as I am for any mistakes found in the present thesis.

I.   Introduction

China continues its rise towards a global economic superpower, yet it has become increasingly clear that this economic success story has caused severe damage to China's environment (Edmonds 1994; Economy 2007). In a blue paper released on February 12th, 2014, the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences warned that pollution made Beijing "nearly uninhabitable for human beings."[1] Word of dire environmental deterioration also reaches a broad international audience on an almost daily basis, as news outlets are abuzz with reports[2] whose tone ranges from disconcerting to bizarre to outright apocalyptic. China's bleak environmental situation might potentially have far-ranging implications in China and beyond:

> Water pollution and water scarcity are burdening the economy, rising
> levels of air pollution are endangering the health of millions of Chinese,
> and much of the country's land is rapidly turning into desert. China has
> become a world leader in air and water pollution and land degradation
> and a top contributor to some of the world's most vexing global
> environmental problems, such as the illegal timber trade, marine
> pollution, and climate change. As China's pollution woes increase, so, too,
> do the risks to its economy, public health, social stability, and
> international reputation. (Economy 2007: 1)

---

[1] A report in the Chinese media citing the findings of the paper, "北京污染指数已接近不适合人类居住程度 [Beijing's pollution index makes the city nearly uninhabitable for human beings]" can be found here: http://finance.chinanews.com/cj/2014/02-12/5829935.shtml [2014-09-09], a Reuters report in English here: http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/02/13/china-pollution-idUKL3N0LI02320140213 [2014-09-09]. Meanwhile, China Digital Times reports that the State Council Information Office has directed Chinese online news outlets to censor the report: http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2014/02/ minitrue-delete-beijing-nearly-uninhabitable/ [2014-09-09].

[2] See for example: "Choking on growth", a series of reports run by the *New York Times* that directly links economic growth and environmental crisis, (accessible under: http://www.nytimes.com/ interactive/2007 /12/29 /world/asia/choking_on_growth_10.html; accessed 2011/11/04); "Raising a stink. Efforts to improve China's environment are having far too little effect" in *The Economist* from Aug 5th 2010. (http://www.economist.com/node/16744110, 2011-11-04); *The East is grey* from Aug. 10th 2013 in the same publication [http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/ 21583245-china-worlds-worst-polluter-largest-investor-green-energy-its-rise-will-have, 2013-12-04]; or "China's out of control pollution" in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (October 2009; http://mondediplo.com/ blogs/china-s-out-of-control-pollution [2001/11/04]. The minacious tone and thrust of these headlines are representative of the *gros* of Western reporting on China's environmental situation.

Environmental degradation is now such that it actually is threatening the economic gains China has achieved over the last decades. (Lieberthal/Economy 2007) Some (Sharpiro 2001) have pointed to the Maoist legacy as the source of China's environmental calamities; the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution resulted in very serious environmental damages and notions such as "struggling against nature" are still prevalent today in the mindset of many cadres. Others have documented the long and equally serious imperial legacy of environmental exploitation in China dating back several thousands of years (Elvin 2004).

The Chinese central government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have realized the dimension of the crisis and its potentially disastrous impact on China's future: Pan Yue 潘岳, then vice minister of China's State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), warned in 2005 that "the [economic] miracle will end soon because the environment can no longer keep pace."[3] Beijing has also been addressing China's environmental problems through a number of administrative measures: Since 1979, when the first Provisional Environmental Protection Law was passed (Palmer 1998), the central government has continued to adopt legislation to control pollution and establish an environmental impact assessment regime (Tang/Lo 1997). On various administrative levels, Environmental Protection Bureaus (EPBs) and local service organizations (Lo et al. 2001) have been established to enforce these regulations and increase environmental governance capacity. The government has issued environmental white papers[4], announced a comprehensive policy of ecological modernization (Zhang/Mol 2007) and changed its cadre evaluation system to incentivize environmentally compatible behavior (Golding 2011). Successes are, however, limited, and it must be asked whether the Chinese one-party state is structurally capable to address the issue sufficiently, especially since the CCP has tied its own fate – for better or for worse – to the success of its economic reforms and its capability to deliver economic growth.[5]

---

[3]Interview with the German newsmagazine DER SPIEGEL from 2005/07/03 (accessible under http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,345694,00.html. Accessed: 2011/11/12).

[4] http://china.org.cn/english/2006/Jun/170355.htm.

[5] An example for this double-bind is the issue of the green GDP index: In 2004, Chinese premier Wen Jiabao 温家宝 announced that the Chinese GDP index would be replaced by a "green GDP index" (绿色 GDP 指数) as the key performance measure for government and party officials on all levels of

The environmental crisis has not only provoked a response from the government, but also from the societal level: Ever since the early 1980s, a growing number of Chinese citizens, intellectuals, students, and activists have begun to voice their concerns over China's environmental situation, trying to raise awareness among the populace, and spurn its leaders to address the issue. The rise of such citizen engagement falls into a greater context of changing state-society relations China has been experiencing since the 1980s. After the collapse of the USSR and its East European satellite states, and heightened by the bloody suppression of the student movement on Tiananmen Square in 1989, observers of China have paid persistent attention to the reconfigurations state-society relationships have experienced in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The gradual melting of the totalitarian glacier that was high Maoism has seen a turbulent revival of associational life in China moving to fill the expanding social space.[6] These changes are profound and potentially have wideranging political implications, some have spoken of an "associational revolution" (Wang/He 2004). In this context, environmental issues in particular appear to have a unique potential to challenge established state-society relationships in China, and to result in new forms of state-society interaction:

> The attitude of 'pollute first, clean up later' is illustrative of the clash
> between central versus local authorities, environmental interests versus
> economic interests and China's First versus Third World. There, where the

---

state bureaucracy. The index would for the first time take into account environmental factors such as costs caused by pollution. The first green GDP accounting report, which addressed the year 2004, was published in September 2006. It showed that the financial loss caused by pollution stood at 511.8 billion Yuan Renminbi (66.3 billion US-Dollars), which amounted to 3.05 percent of the nation's economy. When it became clear that the adjustment for environmental damage had reduced the growth rate to politically unacceptable levels, nearly zero in some provinces, the government quietly withdrew its support for the Green GDP methodology and suppressed the 2005 report, which had been due March 2007. Hence, China's festering ecological crisis has the potential to metastasize into a political crisis for the CCP, a danger which is aggravated by an ideological void within the prevalent state ideology of the Chinese socialist leadership: Marxism-Leninism did not foresee how to deal with what Zweig (2003) calls the "externalities of development", meaning the cost burdens that China's economic development imposes on society (such as environmental pollution), and which have to be paid collectively and not by the producer of said costs.

[6] A survey conducted by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs (*minzhengbu*, abbr. MOCA) in 1999 already counted 136,841 social organizations (*shehui zuzhi*) nationwide (Liao 2000: 31). Ten years later, the 2009 survey by the same government agency reported that this amount had almost quadrupled to 431,000, together with over 190,000 non-governmental non-commercial social organizations (*minban feiqiye danwei*) all across China.[see: *2009 nian minzheng shiye fazhan tongji baogao* (Statistical survey of civil affairs development in 2009). http://cws.mca.gov.cn/article/tjbg/201006/20100600081422.shtml?2; accessed 2011/10/16]

> two clash, the limits of existing institutions are being challenged through environmental pressure, social conflict and political calls for reform. This should be a focus of scholarly attention, as it is the locus where shifts in environmental governance are likely to occur and novel rules of engagement between state, civil and market actors will be renegotiated.
> (Ho 2006: 14)

Among the many theoretical paradigms developed to analyze these dynamics, few have held the continuing importance than the concept of an environmental *civil society* emerging in post-Mao China that is accompanied by a more and more vibrant discursive *public sphere*.[7] Scholarship suggests that environmental citizen activism is on the forefront of these developments. Since the 1990s, the People's Republic has witnessed a rising level of citizen involvement, a green activism that addresses environmental issues. (Schwartz 2004; Stalley/Yang 2006; Ho/Edmonds 2008; Mertha 2008; Wu 2009) This relatively new phenomenon of citizen participation is not narrowly limited to specific issue negotioations but has broader political implications. "[...] Rather than dealing solely with ecological issues, the environmental movement in China has increasingly incorporated the issue of civil rights into its arguments" (Lee 2006) and is thusly "promoting civil rights through the environmental movement."

Meanwhile, the number of environmental civic associations has skyrocketed. Within ten years after the founding of the first environmental NGO (ENGO) in 1994, "China was home to 2768 environmental NGOs with 224,000 members by the end of 2005" (Tang/Zhan 2008: 426). Additionally, the Chinese media landscape has been witnessed a "greening" of its programmatic focus (Bo 1998), state and commercial media outlets in print, TV, and radio are increasingly covering environmental issues, while several news outlets have emergerd that exclusively cover green issues, such as the *Green Weekly*, the *China Green Times*, or the *Environmental Protection Herald*.[8]

---

[7] The analytical boundaries between the two terms are not always drawn very clearly in the existing literature. *Civil society* seems to be used more often to refer to the associational dimension of social organizations and their interaction with the state (such as in the study of unions, NGOs, etc.), while *public sphere* is more widely used to describe the discursive and communicational dimensions between societal actors, including the arenas in which such discourses take places, such as newspapers, telecommunication, the internet, etc.

[8] For more information on the history and institutional affiliation of these newspapers, see: Bo 1998:

Alongside traditional media, the internet has become a new key avenue via which environmental issues are shared, discussed, and disseminated (see next chapter).

These developments have caused some to assert that "a fledging green public sphere is emerging in China" (Yang/Calhoun 2007: 229) which in some way is mirroring the green public spheres that had emerged in Western industrialized nations decades earlier. (Torgerson 2000) This raises a series of questions:

- Are the "civil society/public sphere" paradigm at all applicable to the Chinese experience? Is the "green public sphere" in particluar a useful heuristic concept?
- How have the sociocultural and political conditions in China shaped state-society interactions around environmentalism, especially in the context of cultural globalization? In other words: What makes "environmentalism with Chinese characteristics" (Wong 2005) uniquely Chinese?
- Why has citizen participation in China so notably coalesced around environmental issues?

I.1 Thesis outline

This is a study of Chinese environmentalism.

Such a broad claim necessitates clarification: on one hand, the term "Chinese environmentalism" denotes an important form of civic participation in the People's Republic of China revolving around environmental issues. In this context, this study strives to make a contribution to the larger ongoing academic debate concerning the social ontology of state-society relations in China. On the other hand, "Chinese environmentalism" signifies not only a geographical and political, but also a cultural denomination; Chinese environmentalism hence also refers to the sociocultural traits that give Chinese environmentalism its idiosyncratic character, i.e. "environmentalism with Chinese characteristics."

While this basic focus puts this study in the field of political science, its central research focus is not geared towards the institutional arrangements of associational

---

40-42.

structures in China (something that has been addressed in depth before by a great number of studies; see next chapter). Instead, I aim to explore the ideologically and culturally defined superstructures, the "imaginaries", that provide guidance to and meaning for social interaction. More specifically, I will explore the underlying concepts and cultural repertoires through which Chinese environmental activists interact within the sociopolitical landscape of the People's Republic.

The study of such sociocultural idiosyncrasies is complicated by that fact that the notion of "Chineseness" in not only exceedingly difficult to define, but also increasingly untenable given the insights cultural globalization studies have produced over the last years. Not only are national borders increasingly meaningless given the global structure of transnational social interaction, but global transcultural flows of cultural objects, ideas, and concepts have produced "multiple modernities" that are characterized by hybridity, cultural mélange, and conceptual heterogeneity. A study of the idiosyncrasies of "Chinese" environmentalism will hence take into account the fact that sociocultural developments in China are inextricably entangled with global cultural trends through a perpetual process of exchange and negotiation. Hence, the thesis will have to address how the interplay between the local and the global, the native and the foreign, the particular and the universal have shaped the *Gestalt* of environmentalism in China as it presents itself today.

To accomplish this task, the present thesis draws from material usually not employed in political science: environmental nonfiction writing produced by Chinese environmentalists; many individuals engaged in environmental activism in China are not only reporters, NGO leaders, environmental educators, or social critics, but also authors whose collective literary efforts by now have resulted in a considerable body of literature that can summarily be labeled environmental nonfiction literature. These texts represent important source material that allows insight into the discursive and symbolic dimension of Chinese environmentalism. Moreover, given the fact that they are produced by a relatively small number of very committed, highly interconnected individuals who serve as the main driving force behind environmental activism in China, these texts can be regarded as representative for larger environmental discourses in general; given the social status and importance of their authors, their writings are highly influential and circulated widely. The advantage of this approach

is that it offers a relatively narrow, yet rich and representative, body of material through which the otherwise unmanageable amount of material produced on environmental issues in China can be meaningfully analyzed. As far as the transcultural aspect of Chinese environmentalism is concerned, these environmental authors play the role of what I will call "environmental cosmopolitans", crucial intercultural mediators through which global environmental ideas, concepts, and images are integrated into already existing sociocultural frameworks. Given the importance of this source material, it is surprising that it has not yet been the object of a systematic, comprehensive analysis.

In its analytic approach towards these texts, the thesis draws inspiration from what Appadurai, a leading theorist of transcultural studies, has called the "unleashing of the imagination" as a key characteristic of cultural globalization: the way in which processes of cultural exchange shape the socially constructed imaginary worlds social actors inhabit. The thesis argues that Chinese environmentalism as represented the context of environmental nonfiction has to be understood as the result of a confluence between two streams of imaginaries. One is what Castoriadis has called the "social imaginary", the set of shared normative assumptions of a society about the proper order of things. The second imaginary plane is what Buell has called the "environmental imagination", the modes of literary expression that articulate humanity's relationship to nature.

The present thesis combines methodological concepts of political science with insights from literature studies. It has benefitted from postcolonial literature studies in the sense that it is concerned with revealing previously concealed sociopolitical patterns through a close reading of literary sources. At the same time, I am less concerned with unmasking, deconstructing, and denouncing residual asymmetrical power relations between the once-ruling and the once-ruled through literary analysis. In a similar manner, the present thesis is not an exercise in Ecocriticism, by which I mean the study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment, but it regards environmental nonfiction as an important source to understand ideological and normative predispositions that ultimately have a political relevance concerning social interaction. Instead, my focus is on the point of intersection between the point where politics, literature, and nature intersect.

The confluence of imaginaries will be explored in four analytical chapters. Each chapter will introduce a number of important representatives of Chinese environmental nonfiction, and explore the discursive strategies, cultural imaginaries, and framing devices by which environmental activist-writers in China adapt to various ideas about themselves, their role, and their work into already existing sociocultural frameworks. The thesis will show how such deliberative framing strategies not only lend credibility and legitimacy to their causes *vis-a-vis* the state, but also foster the acceptance of their issues as well as their cultural recognizability amongst their intended audience.

II. Looking for environmentalism with Chinese characteristics

II.1 Theoretical considerations: In search for a 'green public sphere' in China.

Hardly any other topic within Sinology has generated the amount of scholarship as has the discussion around the existence, genesis, and specific nature of civil society in China, a discussion that by now has grown to proportions where it is hard to maintain a comprehensive overview. Hence, yet another study that analyzes state-society relations in China will first have to establish the added value of such an endeavor. By reviewing the existing scholarship, this chapter will map out the charted and some of the uncharted territory, and show how the introduction of new material – a body of textual sources summarily called environmental nonfiction – will illuminate facets that differ from those stressed by more traditional approaches such as comparative or quantitative political science studies.

This chapter will make a number of arguments: First, existing scholarship has been characterized by an overly narrow research focus on the structural and institutional dimension of the Chinese public sphere: While environmental civic associations, such as e.g. NGOs form the "pivotal organizational basis" (Yang/Calhoun 2007: 213) for the Chinese green public sphere and thus have been studied extensively as far as their social structure and interdependencies *vis-a-vis* the state are concerned, the focus on particular institutional arrangements has limited explanatory value when it comes to explain the idiosyncratic character of the Chinese case.

Secondly, more attention has to be paid to the transnational and transcultural constitution of the Chinese green public sphere. What influence do the dynamics of cultural globalization - especially the global flow of ideas, concepts and cultural objects – have?

Thirdly, this has led to an imbalance within the existing literature: While the institutional dimension has been mapped out in painstaking detail, other aspects of China's environmental public sphere have received far less attention. The concept of

"greenspeak" (which will be discussed later) hints to a wider discursive dimension, while other studies have touched on the persistence of traditional forms of contention and participation, but these points remain rather vaguely defined and understudied.

This gap in research can be addressed by introducing new, previously neglected, source material. A small number of internationally connected and highly reputable environmental leaders in China has produced a body of textual sources – environmental nonfiction – that so far has not been at the center of any socio-political study of Chinese environmentalism. This source material can provide crucial insight into the discursive modes of state-society relations in China, within the context of both environmentalism and cultural globalization.

II.1.1 Conceptual universalism and conceptual particularism

For argumentative purposes, the following discussion is structured around two theoretical problems that arise within Habermas' immensely influential work on *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.[9] The reason Habermas deserves special consideration in the context of this study is not only because his historical account of the emergence of a discursive *Öffentlichkeit* (normally translated as "public sphere" in English) as one of the defining key features of modernity has become a paradigm which has over the decades spawned an almost innumerable amount of studies on the subject in various academic disciplines. Habermas' concept also is arguably *the* most important – certainly the most-often cited – Western work of reference in any academic study that aims to discuss the question of state-society relationships in China. A study on the Chinese public sphere is almost required to mention Habermas as the minimal acknowledgment towards the dimension of theory.

"By the public sphere", Habermas writes, "we mean first of all a social realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed." He continues:

---

[9] Originally published as *Habitilationsschrift "Strukturwandel der Öffentlicheit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft"* in 1962, translated into English in 1989. All subsequent quotes are from the 1989 English version.

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people coming together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage themselves in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's use of their reason. (Habermas 1989: 27)

It has been pointed out by a number of scholars that the applicability of the concepts "civil society" and "public sphere" for the case of China is fraught with problems.[10] Habermas himself acknowledges that the emergence of the public sphere as he describes it is conceptually necessarily confined to the European historic experience and its very particular sociocultural and political developments:

> We conceive bourgeois public sphere as a category that is typical of an epoch. It cannot be abstracted from the unique developmental history of that 'civil society' originating in the European High Middle Ages; nor can it be transferred, idealtypically generalized, to any number of historical situations that represent formally similar constellations. Just as we try to show, for instance, that one can properly speak of public opinion in a precise sense only with regard to late-seventeenth-century Great Britain and eighteenth-century France, we treat public sphere in general as a historical category. (Habermas: 1989: xvii-xviii)

Is it then methodologically permissible to extrapolate the emergence of the public sphere, rooted in a set of very specific historical and socio-cultural conditions prevalent in Europe, onto other cases such as China, which might not have had a very different set of structural and historical conditions? "In his 'Theories of Postmodernism', Frederic Jameson reminds us of the 'ungeneralizable' national situation in which Habermas offers his defense of high modernism against the ideological assault of the postmodern. Jameson seems to agree with Habermas that

---

[10] On the question of applicability of the civil society paradigm for China, see e.g: Wakeman, 1993; Huang, 1993; Dean, 1997; Chamberlain, 1998; Saich, 2000: 139; Howell, 2004: 163–164; Kang/Han 2008: 36-38.

the classical European *Bürgerlichkeit*, or the Bourgeois public sphere, remains to this day an only partially realized ideal even in the core Western democracies." (cited in Zhang 2008: 148-149)[11] Put differently, is the paradigm of "the Chinese public sphere" just more old wine in new skins, yet another manifestation of a persistent desire by the Western-dominated social sciences to understand (and ultimately, remake) the social world in terms that fit the US-European experience?

> [...] are we in fact not presuming a 'normal' path of sociopolitical development, transcending the specificities of local culture? Is what we hope to find simply a projection of our own, culturally specific path of development – or, worse, of what we merely idealize our own path to have been? Is our very inquiry tautological, formed around a noncontrovertible proposition? (Rowe 1993: 193)

The problem becomes immediately tangible when we compare one of the key assumptions of Habermas' ideal case with the social reality of China: The relationship between the private realm and the state which had been characterized by Habermas as mainly antagonistic and conflictual:

> Society, now a private realm occupying a position in opposition to the state, stood on the one hand as if in clear contrast to the state. On the other hand, that society had become a concern of public interest to the degree that the production of life in the wake of the developing market economy had grown beyond the bounds of private domestic authority. The *bourgeois public sphere* could be understood as the sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body, which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated "intellectual newspapers" for use against the public authority itself. In these newspapers, and in moralistic and critical journals, they debated that public authority on the general rules of social intercourse in their fundamentally privatized yet publicly relevant sphere of labor and commodity exchange. (Habermas 1989: 52)

---

[11] The Jameson quote Zhang refers to here reads: "Habermas' own vision of history, which seeks to maintain the promise of 'liberalism' and the essential utopian content of the first universalizing bourgeois ideology (equality, civil rights, humanitarianism, free speech and open media) *despite the failure of those ideals to be realized in the development of capitalism itself*." Jameson, Fredric (1998): "Theories of Postmodernism." In: *The Cultural Turn*: 25-26 [my emphasis].

While not even wholly applicable to any European case[12], the dichotomy model of "state versus society" fits even less with the Chinese record, where historically, the state played a much larger role in the formation and control of public opinion, and social organizations never managed to achieve full institutional independence from government bureaucracy: In the People's Republic, "[the] party-state, rooted in an autocratic and non-pluralistic tradition, has continuously tried to maintain a high degree of control over social organizations through different forms of 'state patronage'." (Saich 2000: 124) From this perspective, "the Chinese case here may serve to highlight a blind spot in [Habermas'] approach." (Wagner 2007: 2)

The majority of research on state-society relations in China has endeavored to address this issue from a structuralist point of view. This means that most studies focus on civic associations and their particular organizational situatedness within the political system of China. One of the central challenges scholars have faced in the task of mapping out what has been called the "associational landscape" (Ma 2006: 204) of the PRC has been to reconcile the tension between on the one hand the need to remain faithful to the conceptual ideal-case in order to maintain the sufficient methodological rigor, while on the other hand pay sufficient attention to the particularities of the Chinese case. The most attention in this regard has been paid to the role of Chinese non-governmental organizations (NGOs).[13] The founding and institutional set-up of *Friends of Nature* (*Ziran zhi you* 自然之友) in 1994 for example, the first NGO ever to be founded in China by Liang Congjie 梁从诫, has been the focus of a great number of studies, since the organization is generally regarded as a

---

[12] Habermas' representation of the European experience is not entirely congruent even with the historical record for Europe itself: It is certainly true that in Europe a more and more self-confident urban and commercial bourgeoisie fought a long and often bloody battle of emancipation against Europe's *Ancien Régimes*. However, such a view overlooks the fact that often the state was a very active participant in what would become *the public sphere*, and that is was often interaction between private and officially-run newspapers and other publications that constituted the bulk of discursive interaction within the public sphere, as for example Chartier has demonstrated in his 1990 work *Les Origines Culturelles de la Révolution Française*. I am adopting the argument of Wagner 2007 in this context (see: id. 2007: 2)

[13] See Ma 2006 for an excellent monograph on the subject. Also: Young 2004 for an introductory essay on the origins of NGOs in China.

milestone[14] in the history of environmental civil society in China.[15] Moreover, the advantage of this approach lies in the fact that is allows the maintenance of a sharp analytical focus on a relatively manageable number of cases, and allows the application of well-honed methodological tools that especially political scientists are familiar with, namely comparatives studies of various institutional arrangements in particular are a staple within political scientific practice. Another reason why the institutional perspective within the scholarship is so prevalent might lie in the fact that it is relatively easy to obtain quantifiable and/or qualifiable data on a relatively coherent number of social organizations without having a command of the respective language of the case country[16]: A reading of the bibliographies of studies on state-society relations in modern China reveals that many rely entirely on secondary source material that has been translated from Chinese into English. However, it is for these very same reasons that the institutional analysis approach has major limitations when it comes to describe the social ontology of state-society relations in the People's Republic in general and the idiosyncracies of the Chinese case in particular.

In this context, the ideal-typical dichotomy model was very influential in the early research on state-society relations after 1978: scholarly literature that employed the Habermasian "civil society" or the "public sphere" paradigm onto modern China first emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s[17], under the impression of the role

---

[14] The establishment of FoN is considered the starting shot for NGO development in China after which a significant number of environmental citizen groups registered with the authorities. Studies which have analyzed this development have pointed to a distinct regional as well as sociographic pattern: Most of these early NGOs were concentrated in relatively affluent cities and recruited their members mostly from China's young educated urban middle class: In Beijing alone, the number of ENGOs (environmental NGOs) doubled from 9 to 18 between 1995 to 1996 (Ho 2001: 901) According to Yang, the number of ENGOs increased sharply from nine in 1994 (4 of them being student organizations) to 28 in 1997. Between 1997 and 1999, at least 69 grassroots environmental groups were founded, 43 of which were university student associations, and by 2001, the number of student environmental organizations had reached 184. (Yang Guobin 2005: 50). These numbers approximately correspond to a 2003 survey on student environmental groups in China by Lu Hongyan who concluded that their number had mushroomed from 10 in 1996 to 182 in 2002. [Lu 2003]

[15] Ho 2001; Economy 2004; Schwartz 2004; Turner 2004; Yang 2005, Ho/Edmonds 2008.

[16] This phenomenon is not limited to China only. The political sciences in general and even more so the comparative political sciences in particular to a large degree suffer from the fact that too many studies too heavily rely on translated secondary source material as their authors lack the necessary training to access non-English primary source material or interpret it in its original socio-cultural context. For a vivid discussion for the Chinese case, see: Herrmann-Pillath (1995).

[17] See: Gold 1990; Sullivan 1990; Brook 1992; Solinger 1992, Whyte 1992; White 1993; Nevitt 1996; White *et al.* 1996; Brook/Frolic, eds. 1997; He 1997; Frolic 1997; O'Brien 1998.

social organizations such as *solidarność* were playing in the collapse of the Soviet Union. What transpired on Tiananmen Square in the summer of 1989 only reinforced these notions. Early studies almost uniformly operated within an analytical framework that had an overly homogenous understanding of "the state" and "society", and regarded their interaction as antagonistic and conflictual. [18] Reviewing these first tens of years of academic literature on the subject, Saich notes that in the majority of these early studies "almost all types of nonconformity or anti-regime behaviour were cited as evidence of an emerging civil society." (Saich 2011: 256) Moreover, many – Western – observers expressed confidence that these struggles would eventually lead to the toppling of the socialist regime and the installation of Western-style democracy in China. (Sullivan 1990) One is reminded of what Huang calls the "the trap of ideological use" of theory -- the urge by observers to understand social reality in a framework that fits their own political and ideological predispositions. (id. 1998: 185) However, it became increasingly clear that the explanatory power of the state-vs.-society model for the Chinese case was limited: Whatever the nature of the social developments, it became clear that they were occurring embedded within in a larger socio-political context, path-dependent within the continuity of a Leninist-style party state that continued to not only tightly control social organizations, but also to forcefully assert its own position within what could be regarded as an emergent Chinese public sphere: "While social space has opened up, the state has continued to retain a great deal of its organizational power and has

---

[18] Østergaard's 1989 study in which he argued for the existence of a "nascent civil society in China" was arguably the first to operate under this "state versus society" paradigm (see: Gu 1994). He concluded that "the demonstrations in May 1989 [...] were a turning point. The shooting of unarmed civilians meant, furthermore, that an irreversible change took place in the relationship between the State [sic, M.L.] and society." [ibid: 41], an argument that was echoed in a 1990 article by David Strand (Strand 1990). In the same year, Gold argued that "the ruthless campaign of suppression that began on June 4 revealed in turn the degree to which [the CCP; M.L.] remains unwilling and unable to accept the reality of nascent civil society in China." (Gold 1990: 31) And in a 1994 study, Calhoun described the student protests as a "struggle for democracy". Given the precedent of the social movements that were successfully challenging socialist regimes in Eastern Europe at the time, it is not surprising that scholars chose to apply these lessons to China. Perry and Fuller argued that the 1989 student protests had failed because China was "devoid of the institutional stage upon which the revolutions of 1989 were played out elsewhere in the Communist world." (Perry/Fuller 1991: 663) and Cheek similarly attributed the 1989 failure in China to a lack of institutionalized civil society (such as independent labor unions or churches that had provided the ground for the union movements in the Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe). (Cheek 1992) Such perspectives were refuted by studies that rejected the prevalent "state vs. society" model: Already in 1989, Walder argued that "it is tempting, but misleading, to characterize Beijing's popular rebellion as a movement by 'society' against the 'state'" (Walder 1989: 35-40), a view that since then has been strongly supported by a number of other studies (see e.g: Calhoun 1994; Zhao 2001; and Bejá 2006.).

moved to dominate the space and reorganize the newly emergent organizations. This is resulting in new *hybrid* forms of public/private that are difficult to define precisely." (Saich 2011: 256; my emphasis)

With the introduction of hybridity we have left the "high modernism" that characterized the original Habermasian approach, and entered into the complex and at times puzzling territories of postmodernism. *Hybridity* is one of the key concepts with which scholarship has aimed to move away from modernist universalism towards the recognition of particularism. The term, along with closely related terms such as *syncretism*, *creolization*, or *métissage*, has become an almost ubiquitous trope in cultural, literature, or postcolonial studies.[19] "In the West, hybridity thinking is *à la mode*," Pieterse wrote already in 2001, yet precisely because of its popularity "hybridity is fast becoming a routine, almost trite point of reference. […] As hybridity becomes a ubiquitous attribute or quality, by the same token it becomes increasingly meaningless, a universal soup: if everything is hybrid, what does hybridity mean?" (Pieterse 2001: 236)

Given this problem, can we meaningfully combine Habermas' theory with the hybridity concept? First, the notion of hybridity seems altogether applicable to Habermas' concept: "In these usages of the term public sphere, he [Habermas] seems to be referring to a generalized phenomenon of an expanding public realm of life in modern society, which can take on different forms and involve different power relationships between state and society. He is hinting at a typology of public spheres, of which 'the bourgeois' is but one variety." (Huang 1993: 217) Habermas conceived the "bourgeois" public sphere as merely one variant of several possible public spheres. For Habermas, the bourgeois variant represents a "liberal" model, which has to be "strictly distinguished" from, for example, another variant – "the plebiscitary-

---

[19] The term hybridity originally is closely associated with the natural sciences, especially biology. In the *Laws of Mendelian Inheritance*, formulated by 19th century biologist Gregor Mendel, hybridity is a key concept. Like a number of other terms from the natural sciences, hybridity since then has found its entry into the disciplines of social science, and especially in the field of postcolonial studies. Two important text in this regard are Bhabha's 1994 work *The Location of Culture*, and Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) For a good introduction to the historic development of the term "hybridity" in a non-biologist context see: Young 1995: 22-28; also: Hannerz 1987.

acclamatory form of regimented public sphere characterizing dictatorships in highly developed industrial societies." (ibid: xviii)

This notion of a possible *variety* of public spheres conceptually opens the door to the possibility of applying the civil society / public sphere paradigm to societies that do not share the cultural, historical or socio-political preconfigurations of the European ideal type. Schak/Hudson very convincingly sum up this approach when they state that:

> Civil Society is not all or nothing, either existing or not existing. It may appear and make some advances, then stall or go backwards, and this pattern varies with the different levels of authoritarianism as opposed to democratization in the societies concerned. Moreover, it is not unilinear, but path dependent. This, while there is some convergence between societies with or in the process of developing civil societies, each will have its idiosyncrasies." (Schak/Hudson 2003: 1)

Hence, scholarship suggests that it is possible to move away from simply applying a preconceived ideal type onto the Chinese case towards the recognition of its essential hybridity. But hybrid in what way? Exactly because hybridity is a term so open to analytical interpretation, its usefulness for the analysis of a social phenomenon such as "the Chinese green public sphere" depends on the analytical category through which one is approaching the concept: Pieterse has produced a critical typology of "hybridities" that shows its applicability in various fields of scholarship. He notes that in this context, the concept more often refers to cases of cultural, and less often to instances of institutional or structural hybridity, and is less common in political science literature. (Pieterse 2001:222-223)

In this context, the voluminous body of scholarship on "civil society in China" can be understood as a growing effort to map out and account for its hybrid character, "its Chinese characteristics" so to speak. But the degree to which these studies have succeeded in this endeavor depends on the analytical focus of the respective study: In my view, the associational perspective is less qualified to satisfactorily do so, because of the limitations of its analytical scope, and its tendency to produce

diagrams of social structures and their interconnections that suffer from a certain ahistoric statism:

Much ink has been spilled in efforts to introduce new theoretical labels that aim to accurately describe the "new hybrid forms" of associational life in China. As discussed above, one key idiosyncrasy in which the Chinese case deviates from the Western-derived ideal case is the often cooperative and non-conflictual relationship between state and non-state actors. Even more, from an institutional point of view it is sometimes almost impossible to distinguish state and non-state actors within the associational landscape of China.

Due to the extraordinary size and diversity of China's societal reality, but also the at times breathtaking pace with which social change in China has been taking place over the last decades, the search for the label that describes Chinese social reality best has proven to be an exceedingly difficult task which has yielded mixed results. Indeed, the issue at hand is so complex that it is extraordinary challenging to refer to the whole picture all at once by employing just one conceptual framework. Thus, there has been a trend amongst scholars to selectively label state-society relations in China according to the aspect, perspective or particular facet of investigative focus.

Examples of such attempts of re-conceptualizations include Frolic's 1997 study that coined the term "state-led civil society" which is "created from the top down as an adjunct to state power." (ibid: 48) Alternatively, Huang has proposed the concept of "the third realm" (1993), while Foster (2002) used the term "embedded within state agencies" to describe the institutional situation of business associations in the city of Yantai. Gu (1999) in his study on the relationship between Chinese intellectuals and the state during the reform period had made a similar observation: "It is methodologically problematic and empirically misleading to use such conceptions as 'civil society against the state' in discussions of Chinese intellectual culture". According to Gu, Chinese intellectuals were "a highly segmented" group "with different segments having different links to the state." As a result, "the institutional base for the opposition of intellectuals to the party-state was weak." Actions against the state were not mainstream and instead intellectuals generally "utilized the institutional leeway […] to develop their group life and to get the intellectual

groupings institutionalized", a relationship which Gu calls "dependent independence"[20]:

> [...] Chinese intellectuals had their own ways to shift the relationship between state and society during the transitional period. To grasp the multilinear picture of the transition from communism to pluralism, we need an alternative approach that enables us to explain not only those phenomena that have originally been labeled "civil society," but also those that have little to do with the term "civil society. (Gu 1999: 427)

Kang and Han (2008) have introduced the concept of a system of "graduated controls" in which "[t]he state permits citizens limited freedom to organize, but social organizations are permitted neither to exist independently of the state nor to challenge the power of the state. At the same time, the state fully uses the capabilities of social organizations to provide public goods." (Kang/Han 2008: 51-52) He Baogang has described this phenomenon as "semi-civil society in China", a "feature of partial autonomy and overlapping with the state that makes Chinese social associations a semi- or quasi-civil society." (He 1997: 8) The problem of this sort of eclectic labeling has prompted no small amount of criticism that has been summed up most poignantly by Baum and Shevchenko (1999) when they write that the "labeling debate" reminds them of "the parable of the blind men and the elephant" (ibid: 333–334, also: 346), with each one trying to divine the overall shape of the massive beast from the respective extremity they are touching.

A form of social organization in China that perfectly illustrates this conceptual confusion is the case of so-called GONGOs (government-organized non-governmental organizations), which is a paradoxical label in itself. GONGOs are social organizations that were founded by and operate under the direct control of government agencies but enjoy differing degrees of autonomy from their supervisory government agency. [21]

---

[20] Gu borrows the term "dependent independence" from White, Howell, et al. (1996) in: *The Search of Civil Society in China*.

21 For a list of environmental GONGOs in China see: Wu 2002: 51. Among the most prominent are: The China Environmental Science Association (CESA) founded in 1979 under the State Environmental Protection Administration; The China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA) founded in 1983 under the Ministry of Forestry, now State Forestry Bureau; The Beijing Energy

> The core criteria differentiating a GONGO from a genuine independent
> societal group is that the initiative to establish a GONGO is taken by a
> government agency or institution. An important distinction between
> GONGOs and government agencies is that GONGOs do not implement
> projects directly through formal administrative systems but instead
> function more as research centers or consultants for government
> agencies. (Wu 2002: 46)

The conceptual difficulty here lies in the fact that often there is little difference between a GONGO and a NGO when it comes to their institutional relationship to the state bureaucracy: While most studies agree on the general fact that the relationship between citizen-organized social organizations and the state bureaucracy in the PRC are not primarily antagonistic, but rather cooperative, there remains significant disagreement over the degree of autonomy these groups enjoy. (see: Young 2004, 2009; also Raab 1996). Just as GONGOs, NGOs that operate in China also are subject to a strict and at the same time constantly changing set of government-enforced supervisory laws and cannot be said to operate in a truly independent manner. [22] At this point, the institutional differentiation between different organizational forms becomes not only exceedingly difficult, but at some point also increasingly arbitrary. Unger (2008) himself – maybe unintentionally – concedes the limits of the institutional analysis approach in the introduction to an edited volume on the question of corporatism in China.[23] In the introduction, he states that the contributors' aim is "to *divine* whether civil society or alternatively state corporatism better describes China's circumstances" (ibid: 7; my emphasis).

Efficiency Center (BECon) founded in 1993 under the Resource Institute of the State Development Planning Commission.

22 Büsgen 2006: 1. On the legal regulatory framework for NGOs in China, see: Ma 2006: 76-103;

23 Corporatism emphasizes the institutionalized incorporation of state influence into civic associations. Several scholars (Oi 1992; Chan 1993; Unger/Chan 1995; Saich, 2001; Unger 2008) argue that this concept describes state-society relations in China more aptly. By choosing the civil "society or corporatism" dichotomy, they put the analytical focus on the question on how (at times conflicting) interests that occur within the Chinese body politic are aggregated and accommodated: According to Chan (1993), "[...] the implicit ideology of state corporatism recognizes conflictual societal interests, in that the very purpose of establishing a corporatist structure is to keep these interests under control." (Chan 1994: 36).

Divination appears to exceed the limits of scientific endeavor, but the choice of words in this context is indicative of the epistemological limitations of this approach.

II.1.2 Methodological nationalism and transnationalism

Another factor preventing a comprehensive picture of what is called the Chinese public sphere has been what Beck and Sznaider call "methodological nationalism" (Beck/Sznaider 2006: 2).

> Methodological nationalism takes the following premises for granted: it equates societies with nation-state societies and sees states and their governments as the primary focus of social-scientific analysis. It assumes that humanity is naturally divided into a limited number of nations, which organize themselves internally as nation-states and externally set boundaries to distinguish themselves from other nation-states. And it goes further: this outer delimitation as well as the competition between nation-states, represent the most fundamental category of political organization. (Beck/Sznaider 2006: 3)

Habermas himself remained firmly in the boundaries of methodological nationalism when he mapped out emergence of the public sphere in Europe. Other important works for the discussion of the development of the public sphere have followed a similar approach, for example Benedict Anderson's hugely influential account on the role of "print-capitalism" for the formation of nationalism within the confines of the modern nation state at the end of the 18th century. His observation that nations, "imagined communities", are "conceived in language, not in blood" (Anderson 1991: 149), and are therefore "joinable in time" implicitly accepts Habermas paradigm of the importance of a (linguistically homogenous) public sphere as a key feature of modernity (although Anderson does not mention Habermas by name) However, his focus on the nation state as *the* central analytic category has been one of the main points for critique of Anderson's argument.[24]

---

[24] It has to be asked whether such a critique is valid only now that high modernism has been thoroughly challenged by the rise of cultural globalization, or whether the national perspective had been too narrow from the outset: Even before the publication of Anderson's study, Darnton in his *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (1982) had demonstrated how major portions of what surely both Habermas and Anderson would consider relevant for their approaches, a French-speaking public

As has been pointed out by Wakeman (1993) or Wagner (2007), the limitation of the "public sphere" concept to the nation state ignores the transnational character of the social phenomenon at the heart of its analysis. This is not only true for contemporary issues; by now, a substantial body of literature on the genesis of public spheres in late Qing and early republican China has demonstrated that transnational interaction, and especially Western agency, played a crucial role in shaping its social constitution.[25]

The notion of a globally organized public, a "transnational civil society" that operates beyond the boundaries imposed by nation states has increasingly stimulated academic debate: "[Transnational civil society] refers to self-organized advocacy groups that undertake voluntary collective action across state borders in pursuit of what they deem the wider public interest." (Price 2003: 580) According to Castells (2008) who had previously argued for the emergence of a "network society" as the new social morphology of societies, "[t]he process of globalization has shifted the debate from the national domain to the global debate, prompting the emergence of a global civil society and of ad hoc forms of global governance. Accordingly, the public sphere as the space of debate on public affairs has also shifted from the national to the global and is increasingly constructed around global communication networks." (ibid: 78) The revolution in the IT sector, most notably the internet, has been the

---

sphere in pre-revolutionary France – newspapers, gazettes, flyers, pamphlets, etc. – were printed outside France and then smuggled into Paris, in order to avoid persecution by the agents of the *Ancien Régime*.

[25] Rankin (1986) acknowledges the importance of the Shanghai-based, Western-style Shenbao newspaper as a voice for business interests, Rowe in his studies ignores the fact that the merchants in Hankou where almost all either compradors of Western businesses in Shanghai or Westerners themselves. Another dimension of the role of the foreign community for the emergence of a civil society in late-Qing/early-Republican China is the role of the Chinese city, especially the treaty ports and Beijing. Shanghai has consistently been cast by different authors as the cradle of Chinese modernity, as a shining model ready to be emulated by the rest of China (see e.g. Lee 1999). Being a modern city existing within the boundaries of a deeply backward country, with its large community of Westerners, Shanghai confronted Chinese with a cultural and societal model wholly different from their own and provided an example of what Western concepts in a Chinese environment might look like. (Strand 1989, Wagner 1995) However, 'modernity' within Shanghai itself was highly asymmetrical (Wagner 1995): modernity existed only in the city parts where the Westerners had settled in, and contrary to its universalistic claims, it proved to be highly exclusive when it came to the acceptance of the native Chinese. (Wasserstrom 2002) The case of Shanghai deserves special attention also because it is the place where one feature that is particularly important to a vibrant public sphere first emerged: the modern Western-style newspaper in Chinese language. The early newspaper business in China has been the subject to extensive research (see e.g. Elvin 1995; Janku 2003; Vittinghoff 2002) Especially the Shenbao newspaper, founded by the British businessman Ernest Major, has been in the focus of attention (see Mittler 2004 and 2007; Wagner 1995 and 2007).

crucial factor in the emergence of these global networks. Not only has it made organization and interlinking of single groups much easier, but it also provides new modes of information dissemination and new platforms such as global "salons" in cyberspace for discussion. (Dean 2001) Brown (2008) in this context explores the role transnational civil society actors play in enhancing accountability and legitimacy in global governance regimes, which Florini (2000) sees as the emergence of a "third force" on the global stage,

> Although the state system that has governed the world for centuries is neither divinely ordained nor easily swept away, in many ways that system is not well suited to addressing the world's growing agenda of border-crossing problems. (Florini 2000: 3)

This statement points to the fact that it might not only be the means of circulation which undergo profound change, but that the issues themselves are increasingly transcending not only the borders but also the capacity of the nation state, a phenomenon that is not restricted to but maybe most notable for the case of environmental issues. It is hence no surprise that the new global public sphere is very notably coalescing around environmental issues. By now, the reality of global climate change has caused a profound rethinking of the role of the nation state, and cross-national environmental issues such as water rights (Chellaney 2011) or cross-border pollution (Vogel 1997) increasingly pose the question whether environmental governance is beyond the capacity of singular nation states, and whether new modes of governance are necessary. (Mason 2008: 8-24) The reality is "that global environmental change decreases the capacity of nation states to fulfill their definitional functions without the cooperation of other states. The added stress due to environmental change also increases the demand for adaptive capacities of nation states, which further diminishes their resources to fulfill other core functions." (Biermann and Dingwerth 2004: 1) Increasingly, a transnational civil society is growing into a supportive and complementary role to facilitate and enhance global environmental governance.

The connection between governance and transnational civil society involvement has also drawn attention from scholars studying China: Some have remarked upon the transnational linkages of Chinese and Taiwanese NGOs and other civic associations

(Chen 2001; Morton 2005a), such as governmentally-sponsored GONGOs (Wu 2002), to cooperate on specific issues. "China's revolution in associationalism is not confined within its borders. It is also creating opportunities for expanding transnational linkages. Over the past few years an increasing number of Chinese NGOs have established extensive international networks (Sun 2001); they now participate in international conferences and promote Chinese concerns in international campaigns. Higher levels of cooperation between local and international NGOs have created a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and share experience. At a more practical level, many local NGOs now work directly with international partners to bring about change on the ground." (Morton 2005a: 522-523)

II.2   Bringing culture back in: traditional repertoires of public contention within Chinese environmentalism

Given the problems sketched out above, the modernism that characterizes the Habermasian approach has increasingly been challenged, mostly in the context of heightened efforts to map out the dynamics of cultural globalization. A number of scholars have sought to "bring culture back" into the analysis of popular participation and protest in China, in order to map out the "Multiple Modernities" that account for cultural particularities but at the same time all share certain features of modernity.[26] Taylor touches on this issue when he differentiates an "acultural" and a "cultural theory of modernity" (Taylor 1995: 24).

---

[26] Eisenstadt's article on *Multiple Modernities* (2000) by now has become a standard reference to the argument of the cultural heterogeneity of modernity. For Eisenstadt, the 20th century can be understood in terms of the various patterns modernity took, even within the cradle of modernity itself: Communism, Fascism and National Socialism all represented forms of modernity, with the added irony that they all claimed to be able to overcome the upthrows "liberal-bourgeois modernity" had wrought. On the side of Africa, Asia, and South-America, modernity made its way over by mostly violent means, in the form of colonialism. Moreover, Eisenstadt argues that we cannot merely conceptualize the flows of modernity in terms of push factors, but also have to consider the pull factors, that is agency at the receiving end of the flow. Here, according to Eisenstadt, Western science and technology played a crucial part. On the one hand, it undermined the traditional systems of belief and power and therefore was met with considerable resistance. On the other hand, technology (especially of military nature) was seen as the paramount source of the Westerners' power, and therefore was something to be desired, emulated and copied: "The appropriation of these themes and institutions permitted many in non-European societies—especially elites and intellectuals—to participate actively in the new modern universal (albeit initially Western) tradition, while selectively rejecting many of its aspects—most notably that which took for granted the hegemony of the Western formulations of the

In this light, scholars are increasingly paying attention to the cultural dimension of public participation in environmental issues. They have, for example, commented on the enduring use of ancient rituals in modern protests that draw on the long tradition of popular contention, from peasant rebellions in imperial times to twentieth-century revolutions. Claims and repertoires of many instances of contemporary resistance are strikingly similar to protests found in pre-modern China, as Perry and Selden put it: "Significant strains in contemporary popular protest can be traced back to imperial and republican era precedents." (id. 2000: 8-9)

Perry (2002) in her study on "Social Protest and State Power in China" finds that one of the most developed means of challenging authority in this enduring tradition is the creative appropriation of state rituals and official rhetoric. (Perry 2002: xxiii) Esherick and Wasserstrom in their analysis on "Political Theatre in China" in the context of the Tian'anmen protests of 1989 highlight the importance of the creative appropriation and subversion of official state rituals (that in turn are modeled on earlier, imperial traditions) by student protesters. (Esherick and Wasserstrom 1990: 848)

Some observers have made the point that Chinese environmental NGOs and activists are able to cope with political constraints, and in fact have been able to achieve their goals, overcome policy obstacles, and convince the government of their intentions through noncontentious means that have precedents in earlier, traditional modes of contention. This type of micro-politics has been called "negotiating with the state" (Saich 2001), "pushing the envelope" (Turner 2004), or "boundary-spanning contention" (O'Brien 2003). Chinese environmentalism seems to be uniquely qualified in this regard to serve as a vehicle for the advancement of citizen participation in general, since green issues have legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese government.[27] As Yan Baohua, an associate of *Friends of Nature* puts it (as quoted in Cooper 2006): "This is our way in", pointing to the fact that environmental issues

---

cultural program of modernity. The appropriation of themes of modernity made it possible for these groups to incorporate some of the Western universalistic elements of modernity in the construction of their own new collective identities, without necessarily giving up specific components of their traditional identities […]." (Eisenstadt 2001: 14-15) For further discussion of the concept, see: Taylor 1995; Gaonkar 2001; Inda/Rosaldo 2002.

[27] See: Schwartz 2004; Yang 2005, Cooper 2006.

are perceived by many citizen activists as the avenue towards greater public participation in Chinese politics.

For the particular case of Chinese environmentalism, Hung (2007) discusses the historic roots of Chinese environmentalism and comments on the changes and continuities in the political ecology of popular protest: Comparing official Qing-era documents from the 18th and 19th century detailing peasant protests caused by environmental calamities, he argues that popular contention of government activity depended on the capacity of the Qing state to adequately respond to citizen needs; action repertoires employed by peasant activists oscillated between peaceful remonstrance and petitioning (at the height of Qing power), and violent protests and outright guerrilla warfare in later years.

> [P]eople in the early 19th century were confronted with threats of environmental crisis similar to those in the previous century, the particular political context of the period, namely, the falling capacity of the state, meant that people had to struggle for survival in ways very different from their fellow countrymen in the early 18th century. Local communities were no longer eager to organize nonconfrontational petitions to make their voices heard by the government official; for they realized that the officials could do little to help them anyway. As a result, victims of environmental disasters increasingly tended to resort to confrontational action to solve their problems. (Hung 2005: 318)

Hung concludes that "the form of contention that was predominant in the early 19th century can be found in rural China today. Confrontational and disruptive protests have been increasing since the initiation of market reform in 1978. […] The dynamics of protest in these confrontational actions is reminiscent of the dynamics of collective violence in the early 19th century, as most documented cases of violent resistance show that the people resort to confrontational direct action only after they lose confidence in local officials' willingness and capacity to help them. Another parallel between contemporary and early 19th-century protests is that appeals and complaints to higher-level governments about local officials is an increasingly popular method of protest. Again, it can be explained by the people's increasing doubt in local

governments' capacity and willingness to do justice." (Hung 2005: 318-319) Similarly, Yang (2005) describes what he calls "mixed collection action repertoires":

> The diverse ENGOs in China all aim to promote environmental consciousness, sustainable development and public participation. To achieve these goals, they have adopted a mixture of traditional and new collective action repertoires. Typically, they avoid confrontational methods and adopt approaches that encourage learning, co-operation and participation. Common practices include public lectures, workshops and conferences, salon discussions, field trips, publication of newsletters and multimedia documents, and new forms of "electronic action" such as online discussions, online mailing lists and internet petitions. Although some organizations are edging their way into more contentious areas, the general tendency has been to shy away from radical issues and tactics. (Yang 2005: 52)

As appealing as these perspectives might appear, one should avoid the mistake to replace the statism of the institutionalist approach with similarly imprecise culturalist arguments that ascribe the idiosyncrasies of civil society in China to a variable summarily labeled "Chinese culture": The quote below – arguing that Chinese state-society relations are more suitably labeled corporatist because of "Confucianism" – is representative of this line of essentialist reasoning:

> In the Confucianist teachings that pervaded all of East Asian cultures [sic], giving primacy to private interests had been viewed as equivalent to selfishness. The greater good as ideally manifested in a consensus overseen by the moral authority of the leadership, reflected in a moralistic father-knows-best paternalism.
>
> The notion that individual and sectoral interests should be compromised for the greater good, as represented by a higher leadership, was conducive in the modern age to patriotic appeals, and East Asian governments have not been slow to wrap themselves in the garb of nationalism and 'national interest' in their promotion of corporatist solutions. (Unger/Chan 1995: 33)

Instead, a more nuanced approach must again focus on the *hybridity* of socio-cultural configurations in China that have been shaped by the entanglement of East Asian societies with the global currents of cultural flows.[28] Indeed, the emergence of hybridity as an analytical concept is closely linked to the increasing attention scholars have been paying to these processes of cultural globalization. It is particularly the object of interest for authors who see globalization as a number of – more or less connected – processes occurring simultaneously, or what Pieterse calls "globalizations in the plural" (id. 1995: 45). Scholars from various disciplines are exploring its dynamics in the cultural realm (cultural globalization), and in particular its explanatory potential for a broad variety of issues such as ethnicity, identity, gender, and transnational communities. "Hybridity is a central term in post-structuralist cultural theory and in some variants of globalization theory. It is, in fact, difficult to understand the importance given to notions of hybridity outside the debate on cultural globalization." (Anthias 2001: 621) Broadly speaking, cultural globalization refers to the movement of cultural objects such as ideas, meanings, and values across national borders.[29] Initial (often highly critical) approaches to cultural globalization often perceived cultural globalization as a process of mere global cultural homogenization, Westernization, or "McDonaldization"[30] (a mocking term coined to describe the homogenization of global popular culture due to Western

---

[28] The "flow" concept has not solely been used by one single discipline, but rather has been receiving attention from various academic disciplines. What they all have in common is that they focus on objects (be they physical, cultural, technological or else) in a state of movement as well as the dynamics of processes of exchange. For example, Lash and Urry hint at the great heterogeneity of these flows when they state that the late-twentieth century societies are characterized by flows and "these flows consist of capital, labor, commodities, information and images." (Lash/Urry 1994: 12) Lee and LiPuma see the processes of circulation as a key constituting aspect of twenty-first century capitalism: "The contemporary processes of globalization demonstrate that capitalism, in its cycles of creative destruction and resurrection, has again reinvented itself. It is in transition from a production-centric system to one whose primary dynamic is circulation." (Lee/LiPuma 2002: 209) For the field of market economics, an illustrative example of the sometimes confusing diversity of flows is Czarniawska and Sevon (2005) have traced the flow of a variety of objects ranging from managerial education to stockfish, and have studied incorporation into local sociocultural settings. Flows as a concept also play an important role in anthropology. Appadurai who is maybe the most prominent (certainly one of the most often-cited) theorist in this field is also co-founder of the journal *Public Culture* (strictly speaking a transdisciplinary journal but leaning towards anthropology), whose essays in its self-description "have mapped the capital, human, and media flows drawing cities, peoples, and states into transnational relationships and political economies."

[29] The term cultural globalization is highly complex and multi-facetted, and in the context of this book can only be addressed in a highly condensed fashion. Inda/Rosaldo 2002: 1-34; Pieterse 2001; Hopper 2007: 30 ff.

[30] Coined by sociologist George Ritzer in 1993.

cultural dominance).[31] Such critique in hindsight proved all-too simplistic, and increasingly, it became clear that "globalization of culture is not the same as its homogenization" (Appadurai 1990: 307). Instead, theorists of cultural globalization increasingly recognized the highly complex, indeed chaotic, processes of exchange, adoption, negotiation and metamorphosis at the heart of cultural globalization, and the resulting hybrid state of social forms, concepts, and institutions. While authors do use the term hybridity in many different ways in varying contexts, and employ it a useful conceptual tool for different purposes, as for studies on topics such as e.g. ethnicity, identity, gender, space, etc. studies on cultural hybridity draw interest especially from postcolonial scholars who since have made impressive efforts to theorize and analyze the circumstances, conditions and dynamics of the emergence of cultural hybridities.[32]

The recognition of the transnational dimension of the public sphere hence has strong implications for the way in which academic discourse views the issue of culture. It points to the fact that what has been called the environmental public sphere in China is not only trans*national*, but also trans*cultural[33]*, hence not only challenging the notion of whether the boundaries of the nation state are the adequate analytical unit to approach the issue, but also whether the notion of "a green public sphere with Chinese characteristics" needs to overcome essentialist notions by taking into account the processes of global cultural exchange. In his introduction to the 1947

---

[31] For example, Albrow states that cultural globalization "refers to all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society" (id. 1990: 9).

[32] While the origin of the term hybridity is closely associated with the natural sciences, and especially with 19th century biologist Gregor Mendel, the term was soon appropriated by proponents of Social Darwinism in the form of discourses on racial purity, degeneracy, and theories on the intellectual, psychological and moral differences between certain "types" of Homo Sapiens. This discourse proved instrumental in perpetuating structures of colonial rule. For an exhaustive study on this topic, see: Young 1995, esp. chapter one.

[33] The term "transculturation" was arguably coined by Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz in 1940, when he published a study titled *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*.[33] In it, he painted a heterogeneous and complex picture of Cuban culture: not only were economic and technological determinants, namely the tobacco and sugar industry, in two quite different but predictable ways responsible for the shape of Cuban culture. Moreover, there was a puzzling intermingling of various cultural influences that all contributed to the condition of Cuban culture: it incorporated amongst others African, European, and American influences. Ortiz was fond of comparing this hybrid culture to *ajiaco*, a Creole stew that consists of many different ingredients that are boiled together. Cuban culture – *Cubanidad* –, then, was a product of this blending process for which he introduced the term transculturation. (Font/Quiroz 2005: 181)

English translation of Ortiz' *Contrapunteo*, Malinowski summarized transculturation as

> "a process in which something is always given in return for what one receives, a system of give and take [...] a term that does not contain the implication of one certain culture toward which the other must tend, but an exchange between two cultures, both of them active, both contributing their share, and both co-operating to bring about a new reality." (cited in *Cuban Counterpoints*, p. xvi)

In cultural anthropology, the term "transculturality"[34] has been revised to describe "the many different processes of assimilation, adaptation, rejection, parody, resistance, loss, and ultimately transformation" (Spitta 1995: 24) that are characteristic for the highly intricate processes of cultural globalization.

For example, some studies have explored the dynamics of transculturation in the context of the substantial global Chinese diaspora that despite its regional disparity maintains closely-knit networks of kinship and patronage, while at the same time struggling to maintain and re-negotiate a sense of cultural identity and "Chineseness" (Ong 2004): Ong has drawn attention to the transnational "flexible citizenship" overseas Chinese engage in by making use of family networks and job opportunities spanning various countries, while at the same time feeling a cultural affinity to their "Chineseness", which is often accompanied by a sense of cultural nostalgia. Ong argues that her approach would avoid the usual paradigms of either conceptualizing the phenomenon of transnationalism in terms of the cultural-imaginary or the economic-political, and instead proposes to focus on "cultural specificities of global

---

[34] Wolfang Welsch is – among others – credited with revising the term transculturality to employ it in a larger field of study. He does not completely follow Ortiz' procedural understanding of the term, but uses it to occupy a new understanding of culture free from the traps posed by essentialism. His 1995 essay which established Welsch as one of the proponents of transculturality ("Transkulturalität. Die veränderte Verfassung heutiger Kulturen" [english title: "Transculturality – the puzzling form of cultures today"]) begins by expressing his unease over the dominant concept (or concepts) of culture as they exist in academia while his paper is written: In his view, this concept does not fit the ontological state of cultures around the globe anymore, and therefore, he proposes a new concept (which he calls transculturality) that is better fit to describe this new state of cultures. Against this perspective, Welsch positions his own concept, which he calls 'transculturality' [Transkulturalität], which he first distinguishes from the concept of "interculturality": The latter, he states, still carried with the notion of separate cultures, between which exchange (the "inter") was occurring. Since the word still connoted this in Welsch's view outdated model, one should abandon in favor of transculturality

processes". (Ong 2004: 4) The maintenance and spread of these transnational linkages has been greatly helped and facilitated by the rise of new information technology, most importantly the internet. (Sima 2011; Wong 2003; Yang 2003a, 2003b, and 2003c) In a 2009 book on Chinese citizen online activism, Yang (2009) points to the "persistence of traditional rituals" in Chinese cyberspace. Chinese netizens, according to Yang, engage in a variety of various "contentious rituals", both verbal and non-verbal, readily available from what Yang calls "a cultural toolkit", while at the same time using the chances and interconnectivity offered by new information technology to elaborate on and create new rituals, resulting new forms of civic online participation "with Chinese characteristics": "China's time-honored culture of contention endures in the Internet age. Many long-established practices are replicated online. Yet even as traditional forms persist, people create new ones. Some new forms are creative adaptations of traditional practices to the new media; others are expansions made possible by the new media." (Yang 2009: 69)

Similarly, Choy (2005) in an insightful article analyzes the various framing strategies employed in transnational environmental negotiations between Hongkongese ENGO members, experts, officials, and citizens. He shows how actors chose from a wide repertoire of framing devices, such as claims to scientific expertise ('universalist claims'), cultural heritage, or local ancestry ('particular claims') to advance their own agenda. These findings lead Choy to proclaim that the transcultural character of environmental politics has led to "universality's demise" in anthropological studies and suggests "that a different mode of anthropological engagement is necessary. Our concepts of 'universality' and 'particularity' – so crucial not only to anthropology but also to political theory and critical science studies – reach a point of analytic failure when confronted with transnational environmental politics. In such environmental arenas, the very concepts of 'universality' and 'particularity' are in a constant process of self-conscious deployment, production, and articulation." (Choy 2005: 6)

Language seems to play a key role in this regard: Yang Guobin, one of the most prominent researchers on "the green public sphere" in China argues alongside Craig Calhoun that "one major indicator of the rise of a Chinese green public sphere is the proliferation of environmental discourse—a greenspeak. Contrary to an earlier Maoist and Marxist view of the human conquest of nature, this new discourse warns

about the dangers of irresponsible human behavior toward nature and calls for public action to protect the environment. "[…] the emerging green sphere consists of three basic elements: an environmental discourse or greenspeak; publics that produce or consume greenspeak; and media used for producing and circulating greenspeak." (Yang/Calhoun 2007: 212) While the concept of "greenspeak"[35] points in a right direction as far as it emphasizes the connection between language and sociopolitical aspects in the context of environmentalism in China, the idea that it relates exclusively to a "green public sphere" – i.e. non-state actors and media – again underestimates the importance of state agencies to participate and actively shape such discourses. As Williams has shown in his study on "desert discourse in China", discourses on environmental issues in China are often conducted between government officials and scholarly "experts" without inclusion of the broader populace. Moreover, such discourse often is conducted within clearly defined ideological frameworks.

> There exists in China an operative ideological framework that is directly relevant to desert research and rangeland policy. It affects not only how scholars and officials gauge the scope and severity of degradation but also how they spin a national narrative about the causes and culprits, as well as how they direct public interpretation of the social significance of desert land. The reality of this official discourse and its power to construct knowledge on environmental issues too often lies hidden behind the authority of scientific pronouncements. (Williams 1997: 329)

Hence, the term "greenspeak" as an essentially apolitical and issue-oriented mode of discourse seems rather problematic: In the context of Chinese political system, any mode of discourse that establishes itself as a legitimate alternative (or even challenge) to the officially sanctioned state policy will by the very nature of its existence have a political dimension. While it is true that most green activists in China do not express any political ambitions *expressis verbis*, and might actually not pursue a political agenda at all, I would argue that they cannot ignore the political implications of their

---

[35] "Greenspeak here refers to the whole gamut of linguistic and other symbolic means used for raising awareness of environmental issues." (Yang/Calhoun 2007: 214) My understanding of the term is based on: Harré/Brockmeier 1999; Heinz/Cheng et al. 2007.

work, and this will have to show in the framing of their "greenspeak" (if one wants to use this phrase). Hence, when addressing the discursive dimension of the green public sphere, special attention needs to be paid to the particular ways in which environmental activists frame their issues.

> In the framing of environmental issues, there is one noteworthy feature of Chinese green activism that we might term the "de-politicization of environmental politics." This sounds like a contradiction in terms because if there is one thing that the East and Central European experiences have proven, it is that the environmental question is inseparably linked to politics. However, in China's semi-authoritarian context the overall majority of green activists stays clear from any suggestion that any political objectives are involved even though inevitably there is a political aspect within each movement. (Ho/Edmonds 2008: 8)

While this argument again operates under a false analytical dichotomy between "contentious" and "noncontentious" behavior, it nevertheless points towards a much more important question, that is the role of language in general, and particularly how Chinese environmental activists frame their issues in a way that legitimizes their existence politically *vis-à-vis* the state, while at the same time advancing their issue-oriented goals. Ho and Edmonds observe that environmental activists in China are careful to frame their issues in a way that puts them in cooperative rather than an antagonistic relationship to government agencies. And Yang and Calhoun note on the growing importance of "greenspeak" in Chinese media and society as a key medium through which environmental activists not only address environmental issues but also discursively negotiate their own role with the Chinese state. (Yang/Calhoun 2007): They argue that these new green public sphere "engages politics and public policy without being primarily political. Carving out a space for 'nonpartisan' advocacy is a new development in China. (ibid: 212).

While "in terms of framing, it is interesting to look at the potential links between environmentalism and traditional Chinese religion and culture" (Ho/Edmonds 2008: 8), and several studies have endeavored to do so, the concrete mechanisms of such discursive framing strategies (nonconfrontational or otherwise), the cultural vocabulary they rely upon, as well as the discursive dimension of the "mixture of

traditional and new collective action repertoires" still remain notably understudied when it comes to environmentalism in the People's Republic of China. Moreover, these studies fail to account for the question how cultural repertoires of public contention within the *environmental* sector differ from other issue areas. It is this gap in the research that forces some observers to resort to rather imprecise circumscriptions, such as when it is asserted that "Chinese green activists profess a 'female mildness' – a greening without conflict, an environmentalism with a safe distance from direct political action." (Ho 2001: 916)

The present thesis represents a modest effort to contribute to a deeper understanding of Chinese environmentalism. The previous discussion suggests that this social phenomenon has to be considered in a "thick" context, in which the dynamics of cultural globalization and the particular socio-cultural and political configurations of the People's Republic of China interact in complex ways. In order to draw on a manageable yet representative body of source material, I will focus on the role of a number of key representatives of China's environmental movement, while expanding the field of analysis beyond their institutional entanglements to the literary production of these individuals. I focus particularly on the linguistic strategies, imaginaries, and framing devices of Chinese environmental discourses. The last part of this chapter will flesh out the approach.

II.3   A cosmopolitan perspective on Chinese environmentalism

Previous scholarship on Chinese environmentalism has hinted at (yet seldom elaborated on) the pivotal importance of a small number of highly committed, globally connected, and locally prominent individuals that serve as the driving force, mediators, and information nodes around which environmental activism in China is organized. Such a prominent role in the processes of social transformation in the PRC is not only limited to environmental issues. The existing body of research on the long (and troubled) history of the relationship between Chinese intellectuals and the state (see e.g. Cheek 1992; Gu 1999; Goldman 2002; Gu and Goldman 2004) has often emphasized the complex dynamics of mutual distrust and collaboration between China's intellectual elite and the powers that be. Intellectuals have thus always operated within an uncertain framework of constraints and liberties often

subject to the political winds of the day. An example illustrating both the importance of public intellectuals within the political framework of the PRC, as well as the dangers of being counted in this club might be the 2004 discussion on public intellectuals that reached the PRC after the 2002 publication of Richard A. Posner's book *Public Intellectuals: A Study of Decline* (Harvard University Press, 2001; (Gonggong zhishifenzi: shuailuo zhi yanjiu 公共知识分子：衰落之研究. Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe).

> In a special issue cover-dated Sept. 8, 2004, Nanfang renwu zhoukan [南
> 方人物周刊] presented a list of fifty intellectuals and public personages it
> considered essential in shaping public discourse in the PRC (in fact, the
> list adds up to fifty-six if a "honorary list" is added, the latter comprising
> the names of six intellectuals deceased in recent years, but whose
> contributions continue to influence current debates). The list was
> accompanied by short biographies of each individual, as well as several
> articles discussing the concept of "public intellectuals."[36]

Eventually, within the discussion a consensus began to appear for the need of a stronger, more independent position of Chinese intellectuals to speak on behalf of the public good. It was then when the government intervened and ordered an end to the debate: "A November 15 editorial in the Shanghai Jiefang ribao 解放日报 criticized the concept of "public intellectuals" for its foreign origins and alleged that the debate was designed to lead to the estrangement between the intellectuals and the CCP. The editorial was consequently reprinted by Renmin ribao in Beijing, and newspapers, magazines, and other media outlets were ordered to discontinue the use the term "public intellectuals" and bring the debate to an end" (ibid).

An annotated list of these fifty individuals has been reproduced by The Digital Archive for Chinese Studies (DACHS) at Heidelberg University (see n36). It subsumes Chinese public intellectuals into a number of different categories, such as *Economists 经济学家*, *Lawyers and Legal Specialists 法学家*, or *Historians 历史学家*.

---

[36] A full introduction to the debate by Nicolai Volland, alongside the full list of the fifty intellectuals, can be found here: http://www.zo.uni-heidelberg.de/boa/digital_resources/dachs/special_collections/fipi.html#zhengzhixuejia [accessed: 2014-06-06]. I am grateful to Prof. Wagner for pointing me to this material.

Intellectuals engaged in environmental activism are not on the list with the exception of the aforementioned Liang Congjie who is described as "b. 1932; historian and environmental activist. Liang Congjie is the son of architect Liang Sicheng 梁思成 and the grandson of Liang Qichao. In 1994, he founded 'Friends of Nature', the earliest Chinese environmental pressure group and one of the first Non-Governmental Organizations in the PRC." (ibid)

II.3.1   Public Intellectuals and Issue Entrepreneurs within Chinese environmentalism

Intellectuals in China not only have to navigate political restrictions imposed by the Chinese state and the CCP. Other socio-political factors exert influence as well, in this context Yang (2010) points to the sociological structure that shapes Chinese environmentalism:

> For the most part, Chinese environmentalists are well-educated urban professionals. On the spectrum of the burgeoning middle class, they represent the more intellectually-oriented elements and are distinguished from the business and political elites. The membership survey of a Beijing -based ENGO […] provides a rough picture of the demographics of Chinese environmentalists. Of 607 respondents (out of a total membership of about 1,500 at the time of the survey), 95% have a college or post-graduate education. In terms of occupational composition, college students make up 34% of the membership, teachers about 15%, and journalists and editors about 6%. In other words, at least 55% of the members of this organization belong to what conventionally would be considered the intellectual stratum. The membership also includes scientists, accountants, management personnel, doctors, lawyers, engineers, salespeople, and office clerks. Only 13 (2%) of the 618 respondents identify themselves as workers. The sociological characteristics of Chinese ENGOs influence the kind of issues they are engaged in. The largely urban and middle-class character of Chinese ENGOs is a source of both weaknesses and strengths. On the one hand, the middle class background of Chinese environmentalists and their strong educational and professional credentials and experiences are

> essential cultural and social resources. These resources enable them to reach out to Chinese and international media. On the other hand, it partly explains why ENGOs tend to focus on urban environmental concerns rather than the more challenging issues of rural pollution. Their physical location shapes their social location and their scope of action. (Yang 2010: 115-116)

Yang in his study hence focuses on the work of several what he calls "issue entrepreneurs" in China who broker interests between government bureaucracies and local citizens affected by governmental policy. He shows how only a relatively small number of key leaders have the necessary connections, prestige, and training to serve as arbiters in cases of "issue creation" (ibid: 103): "[The research] indicates that there is a major gap on the agenda of environmental protection in China today may be an information gap. This gap exists at multiple levels – between the rural and the urban population, between local and central governments, between citizens and governments, and between media and citizens." (Yang 2010: 118) Hence, it falls onto a relatively small number of activist leaders to bridge these gaps. Yet at the same time, this particular structure of advocacy necessarily influences the outcomes: "Because of the resources of issue entrepreneurs and China's political context, politically safe and innocuous issues and issues of concern to the urban population are more likely to enter the public sphere." (ibid. 103) These issue entrepreneurs wield an even more important role in the context of the specific character of social interactions in the People's Republic, where personal connections (*guanxi* 关系) often are more important than institutionalized avenues.

Many studies argue that these issue entrepreneurs are taking advantage of the gradual retreat of the Chinese state after the enactment of the reform and opening policy in the early 1980s that has resulted in a diminishing state capacity to address environmental issues. The Chinese state increasingly depends on citizen action to address, monitor, or otherwise deal with environmental issues:

> [China's] structural reforms of the government apparatus and the state's withdrawal from many of its former service-provision functions have created new social spaces for various forms of auto-organization outside the realm of the state. In this context, the Chinese state has welcomed

> the contributions of social organizations to economic growth, poverty
> alleviation, environmental conservation and social service delivery.
> (Büsgen 2006: 2)

It seems to be especially environmental groups that are at the forefront of these developments. Often, they are among first and the most prominent to receive international aid from international organizations such as the Ford Foundation (Morton 2005b), and they also have the benefit of capacity building measures, technology and knowledge transfer, and international awards and recognition, often by virtue of their charismatic and well-connected leaders (Chen 2010).

Economy (2004) in her analysis of the "New politics of the environment in China" introduces several "pioneering environmental activists" and provides short portrays of some important representatives: Tang Xiyang 唐锡阳, He Bochuan 何博传, and Dai Qing 戴晴, along with "conservationists" such as Liang Congjie 梁从诫, Liao Xiaoyi 廖晓义, and Yang Xin 杨欣. The author again takes an institutionalist perspective, focusing on their situatedness within Chinese society, and their extensive connections to officials and citizens alike, making them pivotal nodes of mitigation between various interests and groups "They possess the full complement of skills necessary to organize effectively: technical expertise on the environment, strong backgrounds in journalism and media, and extensive ties to environmental activists both throughout China and abroad." (Economy 2004: 173)

Büsgen (2006) in his study of the campaign against the damming of the *Nujiang* (the Salween river) in Yunnan province describes the interplay between sympathetic officials within the local and central state bureaucracy with prominent NGO leaders such as Wang Yongchen 汪永晨 in order to lobby for the position of the conservationists, as well as their role in coordination grass-roots activities such as petition-signing to put additional pressure on state agencies and "linking up" [*chuanlian* 串联] with critical hydropower within the system to appropriate the necessary expertise. (ibid: 29 ff.) Again, the personal component of single, well-connected individuals emerges as one crucial factor for the success of the campaign. (ibid: 32) The campaign "relied upon the dedication of individual members, rather than the collectively approve strategy of an entire organization or network." (ibid: 28) Important figures such as NGO leaders hence become indispensable power brokers

and mediators for "negotiating with the state" in the context of Chinese environmentalism.

Mertha (2008) in his portrayal of "China's Water Warriors", environmental activists in the field of hydropower projects, pays attention to the role well-connected activist leaders are playing in organizing grass-root campaigns and lobbying media outlets. According to the author, their position is where "a lot of the power of China's NGOs comes from." (ibid: 60) For example, he shows how "policy entrepreneurs" (ibid: 101) such as journalists Zhang Kejia and Wang Yongcheng – nationally and internationally renowned and connected journalists and activists that often insert their political clout into individual campaigns – help drive the (initially local) campaign to save the historic Dujiangyan dam. "Environmental groups have very limited formal, institutionalized channels to impact on environmental policies and decisions. Informal channels such as social networks and personal ties are then becoming an alternative route of access to policy-making and a way to organize collective actions in Chinese society. The complex connections or 'guanxi' that widely permeate Chinese culture and society prove to be also essential in environmental activism. Individual connections and relations among friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbors, and so forth are key building stones in the construction of the Chinese environmental movement." (Xie/Mol 2006: 272) Tang and Zhan in a 2008 survey find a similar gap asymmetry in the social dispersion of what they consider a Chinese green public sphere:

> From more or less developed regions of the country, however, almost all the NGO officials we have interviewed can be considered as social and political elites – some are college professors; some started environmental work while they were students on university campuses. In addition, most of the leaders of non-Beijing NGOs have strong political connection with the local party-state system. These facts, however, do not imply that Chinese civic environmental NGOs have a solid middle class foundation. In our sample we find only two civic NGOs in which membership fee is among the major financial sources. The vast majority of civic NGOs are highly reliant on either personal funding of the NGO founders (leaders)

43

or international funding. Overall, civic environmental NGOs in China still lack widespread middle class support. (Tang/Zhan 2008: 434)

II.3.2   Cosmopolitan environmentalists

The sociopolitical importance of China's environmental civic leaders finds parallels in their equally pivotal role as cultural brokers for the dissemination of cultural flows, a status I propose to analyze within the framework of cosmopolitanism. Simply put, cosmopolitanism proposes that a number of individuals – sometimes referred to as cosmopolitans, travelers, or intercultural brokers – are entangled with global cultural trends, and these global linkages constitute a major factor for social transformation on the local level. Cosmopolitanism is hence characterized by "in-betweenness", a status of mediation and negotiation in which notions of home and abroad, the self and the other are in constant (often uneasy) deliberation.

> "Cosmopolitanism refers to the multiplicity of ways in which the social world is constructed in different modernities. Rather than see cosmopolitanism as a particular or singular condition that either exists or does not, a state or goal to be realized, it should instead be seen as *a cultural medium of societal transformation* [emphasis added, M.L.] that is based on the principle of world openness, which is associated with the notion of global publics." (Delanty 2006: 27).

Breckenridge, Pollock at al. (2002) in this context argue that there is not one "cosmopolitanism", but rather different types or "cosmopolitanisms"[37] which are characterized by their cultural idiosyncrasies. (ibid: 8) As such, cosmopolitanism as a conceptual framework lends itself as a methodological tool to study the highly complex processes of cultural globalization, identify the actors driving it, and exploring their intrinsic positionalities within larger political and sociocultural frameworks. In this perspective, cosmopolitan individuals become the main motor of for what Robertson 1992 has called "glocalization", the adoption of globally moving cultural objects into particular socio-cultural environments:

---

[37] For a typogragpy of cosmopolitanism variants, see: Delanty 2006: 28-36.

> Cosmopolitanism thus concerns the multiple ways the local and the
> national is redefined as a result of interaction with the global. The
> resulting situation will vary depending on the precise nature of the
> interaction. Hybridization, créolization, indigenization may be the result
> of interactions in which the local appropriates the global or in the case of
> global diaspora communities where the local is transformed into a new
> cosmopolitan global flow. (Delanty 2006: 36)

Cosmopolitanism offers a methodological tool to substantiate the very complex[38] processes of cultural flows that are at the heart of transculturation by "putting a human face" on them, focusing on a select number of individuals, their situatedness within particular sociocultural and institutional arrangements, and their agency within these structures as far as preferences, actions, and strategies are concerned.. Hannerz, for example, comments on the importance of individual agency when he proposes a procedural understanding of the genesis of cultural complexity. He sees culture as an object that is constantly waxing and waning in the stream of time, and in the process constantly subjected to formulation, interpretation, and negotiation which is largely driven by individual agency (Hannerz 1992: 221). "The cultural flow

---

[38] Already in 1983, Edward Said attempted to conceptualize the concept of flows in an article on "traveling theories", but failed to provide a satisfying answer for precisely the most crucial question: What motivates theories to travel? What causes the flow of flows? Studying literary development and cultural appropriations in the cases of Lucien Goldmann, Georg Lucács and Raymond Williams, he argued that the process of a theory traveling takes place in four distinct stages: "First, there is the point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth and entered discourse. Second, there is a distance transferred, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence. Third, there is a set of conditions – call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistances – which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extend transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place." (Said 1983: 157-58) However, there seems to be an analytical disconnect between Said's points one and two. Why would motivate a theory to leave its "point of origin" and "transfer distance" to begin with? Who or what initializes this movement, what is the *agens movens* behind a flow of ideas? And maybe even more importantly, why do some ideas travel and find their way into a new context, while others do not? In his text, Said does not provide an answer for this, his vision is too mechanistic, and does in no way reflect the extraordinarily complicated processes of transcultural flows: "Such a linear path cannot do justice to the feedback loops, the ambivalent appropriations and resistances that characterize the travels of theories, and theorists, between places in the 'First' and 'Third' worlds." (Clifford 1989) Liu, when discussing the merits of Said's theory for her own work on *Translingual Practice*, remarks that "his [Said's] discussion does not go beyond the usual argument that theory is always a response to changing social and historical circumstances, and the traveling aspect of his theory is abandoned along the way", while speculating "that perhaps the notion itself lacked the kind of intellectual rigor needed for its own fulfillment." (Liu 1995: 21)

thus consists of the externalizations of meaning which individuals produce through arrangements of overt forms, and the interpretations which individuals make of such displays – those of others as well as their own. […] In one way or other, also, the flow is everywhere, for as soon as people make themselves accessible to the senses of others, through physical co-presence or artefactual extensions, they render themselves interpretable. (ibid: 4) Hannerz sees cosmopolitan individuals in particular as having a special importance in this interpretative circle, since they possess certain personal characteristics such as education that allow them to access sets of meaning from various sociocultural environments: "There is, first of all, a willingness to engage with the Other, and intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences. There can be no cosmopolitans without locals, representatives of more circumscribed territorial cultures. But apart from this appreciative orientation, cosmopolitanism tends also to be a matter of competence, of both a generalized, of both generalized and a more specialized kind." (Hannerz 1992: 252-253)

II.3.3 "Ecocosmopolitanism" in Chinese nature writing

China's environmental leaders are not only cosmopolitans in the sense outlined above, engaged in environmental activism as reporters, environmental educators, social critics, or NGO leaders, but often also as authors whose collective literary efforts have by now resulted in a considerable body of literature in which they address specific environmental issues, propagated their values, or more generally theorize on the relationship between nature and humankind. NGO leaders such as Liang

Congjie[39] 梁从诚, Liao Xiaoyi[40] 廖晓义, Ma Jun[41] 马军, Tang Xiyang[42] 唐锡阳, Wang Yongchen[43] 汪永晨, Yang Xin[44] 杨欣 have all published books which have been receiving considerable attention within China's environmental community and sometimes beyond. While the social and politiccal activism of these individuals has received considerable attention as outlined above, their literary efforts have largely not only gone virtually unnoticed, but so far no study has addressed the sociopolitical relevance of their writings in the larger context of Chinese environmentalism in general. With one exception, none of these works that form of basis of my analysis have been translated into a Western language.[45]

Their literary efforts have to be understood in the context of an increasingly globalized awareness of environmental conditions that form the basis of their literary expression. Thornber (2012) in a recent extensive volume explores the highly intricate perspectives in which relationships between man and nature are represented

[39] Liang Congjie is the founder of the NGO *Friends of Nature*. His publications include: Liang Congjie (2002). *Bu zhonghe de quan* [The unclosed circle]; Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe; Liang Congjie and Kang Xue 康雪, eds. (2005). *Zou xiang lüse wenming* [Marching towards a green civilization]. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe; Liang Congjie and Liang Xiaoyan 梁晓燕, eds. (2000). *Wei wugao de daziran* [Speaking on behalf of nature]. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.

[40] Liao Xiaoyi is the founder of the NGO *Global Village Beijing*. Her publications include: Liao Xiaoyi (2010). *Dong zhang xi wang. Liao Xiaoyi yu Zhongwai zhexueren liao huanbao yaofang* [Environmental Remedies: Sheri Liao's Talks with Eastern & Western Thinkers]. Beijing: Chenyingku yinxiang chubanshe.

[41] Ma Jun is the director of Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs which developed the China Water Pollution Map (*Zhongguo shuiwuran ditu* 中国水污染地图), the first public database of water pollution information in China. He is the author of "China's Water Crisis. Id. (1999). *Zhongguo shui weiji.* Beijing: Zhongguo huanjing kexue chubanshe.

[42] Tang Xiyang is the founder of the educational *Green Camp* organization. Publications include: Tang Xiyang. (2007). *Lüse Ying* [Green Camp]. Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe; Tang Xiyang and Ma Xia 马霞 [Marcia B. Marks] (1993). *Huanqiu Lüsexing* [A Green World Tour]. Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe; Tang Xiyang et al. (2004). *Cuo! Cuo! Cuo! Tang Xiyang lüse chensi yu baijia pingdian* [Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! – Tang Xiyang's green thoughts and critical suggestions from one-hundred authors]. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe.

[43] Wang Yongchen is a journalist who organizes the *Green Salons* (lüse shalong 绿色沙龙), a discussion forum for environmental journalists. Publications: Wang Yongchen (2004). *Lü jingtou. Daziran de zuotian yu jintian* [Green lens. Nature's yesterday and today]. Beijing: Sanlian shudian.

[44] Yang Xin is the founder of the NGO *Green Rivers* and he also runs the "Sonam Dargye Environmental Protection Station" located on the Kekexili high plateau. His writings include Yang Xin (1997). *Changjiang hun* [Soul of the Yangtze]. Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe; and Id. (2007). *Qinli Kekexili 10 nian* [10 years in Kekexili]. Beijing: Sanlian shudian.

[45] One exception in this regard is Ma Jun's *Water Crisis*: Ma Jun (2004). *China's Water Crisis*. Norwalk: East Bridge.

in modern East Asian fiction. She points out that East Asian literature addressing ecological issues is "environmentally cosmopolitan". This form of "ecocosmopolitanism" "implicitly or explicitly [takes] up ecodegradation beyond a single time or place." (id. 2012: 14) Literary expressions of environmental cosmopolitanism are self-consciously situating themselves into a global framework that not only reflects the global reality of transnational environmental issues, but also draws artistic inspiration from the global exchange of literary exchange. "Ecological globalization has arguably facilitated its literary counterpart, and literary globalization has brought increased attention to its ecological counterpart" (ibid: 14-15) Thornber bases her notion of ecocosmopolitanism of a series of other studies that only recently have begun to explore the global dimension of the environmental imagination in nature writing. Heise in this context refers to "the environmental imagination of the global" and writes that

> Ecocosmopolitanism is an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary 'imagined communities' of both human and nonhuman kinds. Ecocritcism has only begun to explore the cultural means by which ties to the natural world are produced and perpetuated, and how the perception of such ties fosters or impedes regional, national, and transnational forms of identification." (Heise 2008: 61)

Modern Chinese nature writing[46] has only recently become the focus of academic attention but has already been the object of a limited number of studies on the subject. Within Chinese academic discourse, such works of literature are generally labeled as "ecological literature" (*shengtai wenxue* 生态文学). According to Zhang and Wu,

> Ecological literature denotes works of literature on natural ecology and environmental protection, they that are based on bioethics and earth ethics as their guiding principle, and [with the purpose of] raising awareness and concern for the ecological environment. They regard the relationship between man and nature as harmonious, as a song whose melody is jointly written by the two sides. Ecological literature is closely related to ecological problems and environmental protection; it usually

---

[46] I am consciously using the phrase proposed by Lawrence Buell (1995) here.

condemns and criticizes the destruction of the ecological balance, and promotes the protection of the environment. Generally speaking, the author of ecological literature presents a perspective that is more tolerant, loves nature, and respects life. [Ecological literature] reflects on the position of humankind on the Earth through discourse that is both global and cultural. (Zhang/Wu 2007: 10)

This quote is indicative of the fact that the concept of *shengtai wenxue* as a category is rather vague; it does not distinguish between different discursive modes, for example scientific fact-stating and activist agenda, nor does it sufficiently distinguish between genres, especially between ecological fiction and ecological nonfiction. This conceptual fuzziness is not confined to Chinese scholarship on nature writing alone; the differentiation between environmental fiction and nonfiction is often addressed in Western scholarship as well, especially in studies in ecocriticism. The label "fiction" and "nonfiction" is delusive in this context since works of environmental fiction often employ scientific data to a considerable degree, while in turn works of environmental nonfiction often employ deliberate embellishments and other literary devices in order to enhance the cohesiveness of their narrative. Murphy (2000), commenting on the difficulty of differentiating between the two literary modes, suggests a categorization that considers the relationship between narrative, aesthetics, and information:

When narrative and its various aesthetic dimensions drive the writing of a text, I would prefer to label the text fiction, regardless of the quantity of information that constructs the message. Hence, I would label Thoreau's Walden fiction because of the aesthetically driven narrative strategy and rearranging more than two years of experience into a single year. (Murphy 200: 7)

When [...] the narrative and its various aesthetic dimensions are placed in the service of the provision of information, so that the narrative is broken and its aesthetic quality downplayed in order to foreground facts and verifiable information, then I prefer to label the text a nonfiction, regardless of the degree of afactual - that is, nonverifiable or abstract - detail and language to be found in. (ibid: 8)

> Many of the works that would appear on any list of nonfiction nature writing are actually fictions, if someone uses the distinction between narrative as drive and narrative as service in terms of how decisions are made between aesthetic emphasis and factual reportage. Such a recognition enables readers to better appreciate the vision, concern, and zeal of writers they admire. (ibid: 9)

> The point at which a work ceases to be nonfiction - because ot the amount of tinkering with the facts, the inclusion of things that happened to someone else but not to the author or narrator, or the degree to which the actually occurring events have been arranged and rearranged, with some events being omitted and others being foregrounded for the benefit of the plot - remains a highly contested yet very dimly perceived swamp of presuppositions, biases, and unstated agendas. (ibid: 9-10)

Chinese scholars studying the development of "ecological awareness" (*shengtai yishi* 生态意识) in modern Chinese literature agree that the late 1970s and early 1980s have to be regarded as the initial incubation period of environmental writing in China.[47] "Chinese literature of the 1980s experienced a nature worship unprecedented in the history of new [socialist] literature." (Cao 1988: 61) This scholarship also supports the notion of literary "ecocosmopolitanism" that the development of this body of ecoliterature from its outset was strongly influenced by the introduction of Western writing on the subject; translated foreign works of fiction in which environmental issues played a key role, as well as environmental nonfiction writing that either represented a critique of Western developmentalism (*Silent Spring*), and later also Ecocriticism (especially the work of Buell).[48] In this context, the development of

---

[47] See: Wang Shudong (2008); Wang Shudong and Zhou Xufeng (2009); Wu Jingming and Liu Zhongshu (2009); Zhang Yanmei and Wu Jingming (2007); Wu Jingming (2007b).

[48] Prof. Wang Nuo 王诺 of the Department for Chinese Literature at Xiamen University is one of the most authoritative and prolific Chinese scholars on the issue of Ecocriticism. As such, he has not only introduced key works and theoretical approaches of European and American Ecocriticism to a Chinese readership, but has also made considerable strides towards establishing the discipline within China's academic landscape in its own right. See: Wang Nuo 王诺 2007; id. 2008; i. 2011. For a very detailed account of the translation history of Western ecoliterature into Chinese, see especially "Fulu: Shengtai piping zai Zhongguo [Appendix: Ecocriticism in China]", in WANG 2008: 237-252.

Chinese ecoliterature is generally divided into several phases that roughly span the three decades since the early 1980s in China.

Modern ecological literature in China stands on the shoulders of literary works that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially the *zhiqing* 知青 literature[49], and

[49] During the Great Leap Forward, the government initiated a "Campaign to Mobilize Youth to Participate in Socialist Construction in Minority Areas", aimed at sending up to 5.7 Million youths into China's less developed interior areas between 1958-1963. (Pan 2003: 41) However, the mass mobilization of young Chinese "volunteers" – and especially educated urban youth, referred to as *zhiqing* 知青 - to "go up the mountains and down to the countryside" (*shangshan xiaxiang* 上山下乡) reached unprecedented levels starting within the early years of the Cultural Revolution. It is estimated that between 1968/69 and 1980, up to 17 Million youths were dislocated. (For a discussion of the concrete numbers and the difficulties of statistical accuracy, see: Bernstein 1977: 21-32.) Upon their return after the end of high Maoism in the late 1970s and early 1980s, many participants of the movement set out to put down the experiences of these frontier years into writing, which has produced a large number of memoirs, novels and other forms of literary accounts, a rich literary field of memoirs, fiction, poetry, reportages, etc. now labeled as *zhiqing* 知青 literature (zhiqing wenxue 知青文学，for general surveys over the genre, see: Liu 1994: 269-287; Shi/He 1996: 431-441.). For our purposes here, *zhiqing* writers that were sent down into the remote territories of China and in whose accounts the experience of nature plays a certain role are of special relevance since their writings contributed to the emergence of ecological reporting literature or ecoliterature in general in China in the 1980s. Among these writers are literary figures such as Kong Jiesheng 孔捷生 ("On the Other Side of the Stream" *Zai xiaohe nabian* 在小河那边 1979; "The Southern Shore" *Nanfang de an* 南方的岸 1982; "The Jungle" *Da Linmang* 大林莽 1984), Zhang Chengzhi 张承志 ("Green Night" *Lü Ye* 绿夜 1982; "River to the North" *Beifang de he* 北方的河 1984)，Liang Xiaosheng 梁晓声 ("A Land of Wonder and Mystery" *Zhe shi yipian shenqi de tudi* 这是一片神奇的土地 1982), Zhu Lin 竹林 ("The Path of Life" *Shenghuo de lu* 生活的路 1979), Lao Gui 老鬼 ("Blood-Red Sunset" *Xuese huanghun* 血色黄昏, written 1978, published in 1987), or Deng Xian's 邓贤 piece of reportage literature "Dream of a Chinese Educated Youth" *Zhongguo zhiqing meng* 中国知青梦 1996) , some of which over the years have acquired considerable literary fame. (see also: Bonnin 2004: 22; Leung 1994: xxxvii-xliii) These and other examples of *zhiqing* literature for the most part do not explicitly deal with ecological or environmentalist issues; however the experience of wilderness, of untamed pristine nature, does play an important part in these writings. Even in Mo Yan's early novel "Red Sorghum" (*Hong gaoliang* 红高粱 1986), which established his national and international fame, the natural environment of his native home village in Gaomi county, especially the vast oceans of reed fields surrounding the human settlements, do play an important part in the narrative structure of the book. As Wang Shudong 汪树东 remarks, the literal description of nature within many of these texts oscillate between two distinct perspectives: one concentrates on the beauty and majesty of the natural surroundings the impressionable youths are thrusts into. The other perspective perceives the natural world as cruel, harsh, unforgiving and dangerous. (id. 2008: 136) Often, the two perspectives can be found together within the same text, recreating the deeply ambivalent attitude carried by the *zhiqing* towards the natural world. While they carry within themselves the strong indoctrination to "struggle against heaven" (*yu tian dou* 与天斗), as Mao Zedong once put it, they simultaneously are deeply impressed by nature's unyieldingness and the sense of futility of their own actions in respect to vast nature. However, as I would argue, the main point here is that these literary works are not driven primarily by a concern for environmental issues. In most instances, the natural environment merely serves as the background for the human dramas that unfold in the harsh environments the inexperienced and often naive young people are thrown into, while often, the harsh environmental conditions of the locations serves as a literary device to further amplify the difficulties the human protagonists have in respect to their *social, not ecological*, environment. "At times, writes transplant their expressions towards society that are considered illegitimate onto their literary descriptions of nature." (Xu/Gao 2009: 69) In other words: it can be argued that *zhiqing* literature often has the main purpose the express *political* or *social* grievances. Often, the destruction visited upon the land by ignorant or fanatical youths parallels the experiences of suffering endured by the very same people.

the root-searching *xungen* 寻根 literature.[50] During this phase, which coincides with the beginning of the "Opening and Reform Period", only a relatively limited number of key Western environmental works were introduced into China via translation; most notably, Rachel Carson's 1962 classic *Silent Spring* in 1979, translated by Lü Duanlan 吕端兰 and Li Changsheng 李长生, and *The Limits of Growth* in 1983, originally commissioned by the Club of Rome in 1972, translated by Li Baoheng 李宝恒 (Wang Nuo 2008: 225). The next phase, labeled the "spontaneous" (*zifa* 自发) phase by Wu and Liu (id. 2009: 257), ranged from the mid-80s to mid-90s. Western theories on environmental issues were just in the process of being introduced in China and had not yet settled in or been systematically absorbed into a theoretical framework. Authors writing on ecological topics did so not yet with a notion that they were producing "ecological literature". In the center of attention of most works in this context stood the increasingly apparent environmental crisis in China, which had already begun under Maoism and was aggravated by the economic take-off following the Dengist reforms. Most commonly, such accounts took the form of "Ecological Reportage Literature", written by intellectuals and reporters such as Sha Qing 沙青 or Xu Gang 徐刚 (see chapter 4) Moreover, these years saw the rise of what could be called "Chinese eco-journalism". The "China Environmental News" (*Zhongguo huanjing bao* 中国环境报) published its first edition in 1984, and official papers such as the People's Daily (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报) or the China Youth Daily (*Zhongguo qingnian bao* 中国青年报) payed increasing attention to environmental issues (Zhang Wei 2007: 13). In 1991, the "Society for Environmental Literature" (*Huanjing wenxue yanjiuhui* 环境文学研究会) was founded with the intent to address China's continuing ecological malaise. (Thornber 2012: 53) In 1992, the periodical "Green Leaves" (*Lüye* 绿叶) began to exclusively publish environmental literature penned by authors such as Feng Mu 冯牧, Yang Mo 杨沫, Yuan Ying 袁鹰, Xu Chi 徐迟, and others. (ibid: 14).[51] Meanwhile, works of environmental fiction, such as Zhang Wei's 张炜 "Yearning for the blackfish from the black pond" (*Huainian heitan zhongde heiyu*

---

[50] Wu Jingming includes pieces of *zhiqing* literature as the earliest examples of ecological literature in the appendix: "Chronology of contemporary Chinese eco-literature works" (*Zhongguo dangdai shengtai wenxue zuopin nianbiao* 中国当代生态文学作品年表) of his dissertation, one of the few comprehensive accounts on the development of nature writing in China. Wu Jingming 2007b. See also: id. 2007b.

[51] For a detailed account of the development of environmental reporting in China, see: Zhang Wei 2007: 13-17; Thornber 2012: 51-55.

怀念黑谭中的黑鱼) expressed a longing for cultural ancestry and simple joys that continued to coincide with the topoi of *xungen* writers. The third phase (mid-1990s to the end of the millennium) is labeled the "age of self-discovery" (*zijueqi* 自觉期) by Wu and Liu (id. 2009: 257). Authors' voices were becoming more assertive, as they now consciously began to produce "ecological literature". (Wang 2008: 253) The growing diversity in environmental issues addressed by authors during this phase was reflected by an equally more diversified body of Western translations on environmental issues that also addressed theoretical issues in a more comprehensive form.[52] In 2001, the Chinese term for Ecocriticism, *shengtai piping* 生态批评 was employed for the first time. (Wang 2008: 226)

However, what is largely missing from these scholarly accounts on *shengtai wenxue* (in both Western and Chinese academia) is a recognition of the importance (indeed, the existence) of environmental nonfiction produced by Chinese environmental activists and its role in the larger context of China's environmental movement. Such academic disregard echoes the marginalization of environmental nonfiction in American literature studies; according to Buell, environmental nonfiction still is considered a mere medium through which scientific facts can be obtained, but has not been subjected to an in-depth meta-analysis of its inherent values, biases, discursive mechanisms, and positionalities.

> American nature poetry and fiction about the wilderness experience have been studied much more intensively than environmental nonfiction. Apart from *Walden* and a few other works by Thoureau, for practical purposes nonfictional writing about nature scarcely exists from the standpoint of American literature studies even though by any measure it has flourished for more than a century and has burgeoned vigorously in the nuclear age. [...] Environmental nonfiction, however, gets studied chiefly in expository writing programs and in 'special topics' courses

---

[52] Examples include: Hans Sachsse (1967): *Einführung in die Naturphilosophie*, translated by Wen Tao 文韬 et al. in 1991; Donald Worster's *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (1977), translated by Hou Wenhui 侯文蕙 in 1999; Roderick Nash (1989): The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics, translated by Yang Tongjin 杨通进 in 1999; Carolyn Merchant (1990): *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, translated by Wu Guosheng 吴国盛 et al; the complete works of Holmes Rolston III; for a comprehensive list, see: Wang 2008: 225-226.

> offered as the humanities' tithe to environmental studies programs or to
>
> indulge a colleague's idiosyncrasies, rather than as bona fide additions to
>
> the literature curriculum. (Buell 1995: 8-9)

As the basis of its analysis, the present thesis focuses on a select number of works of environmental nonfiction produced by environmental activists during the 1980s and 1990s, since many of the books that were written during this period have become "green classics" (*lüse jingdian* 绿色经典), as will be discussed in greater detail later.

Taking an anthropocentric resp. a sociocentric perspective, I aim to eschew the ecocentric dimension of Chinese environmental nonfiction as well as its preservationist message, and it primarily interested in the discursive modes by which sociopolitical relationships within the Chinese environmental public sphere are established, negotiated, and maintained. Hence, the analytical thrust with which the thesis approaches these texts primarily aims to satisfy an interest in the particular discursive modes, framing strategies, and imaginaries that contribute to the sociocultural idiosyncrasies that characterize Chinese environmentalism. I am aware of the fact that such a meta-reading might do injustice to the original intent of these texts, which is primarily concerned with environmental and ecological issues. "No intellectual vice is more crippling than defiantly self-indulgent anthropocentrism." (Wilson 1978: 17) Hence, this study should not be understood as an exercise in Ecocriticism, since such an endeavor would be defined, as Buell puts it in his seminal *The Environmental Imagination*, as "study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis". (Buell 1995: 430; n20).[53] In contrast, I will focus on the point where the dimension of literature, politics, and nature intersect.

---

[53] That is not to say that this thesis does not draw valuable insights from works of Ecocriticism. An obvious point of intersection is the argument - raised mainly by early accounts of ecocriticism - that literary representations of nature can and mostly do have implications that transcend the mere natural but rather reach into the social realm. Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) advises us that what Thoureau says about the location of meaning and value is "that it does not reside in the natural facts or in social institutions or in anything 'out there', but in consciousness," in the "mythopoeic power of the human mind." In short, Thoureau was not really that interested in nature as such; nature was a screen for something else. (Marx 1964: 11) And ecocritic Jonathan Bate remarks concerning British romantic studies, "some of the most eminent literary critics of our time have believed that Wordsworth was not a nature poet, or that there is no such thing and Wordsworth was interested in it then that interest was very suspect on political grounds." (cited in Marx 1964: 11)

II.3.4 The confluence of two imaginaries

Thus, the present thesis focuses on the confluence of environmental cosmopolitanism as a social force, and ecocosmopolitanism as a literary phenomenon, in the context of ongoing processes of cultural globalization and transculturation. The central screen onto which this analysis is projected is formed by the concept of the *imagination* or the *imaginary*, the ideological and sociocultural superstructure that lends meaning and guidance to social action.

> The central defining characteristic of a cosmopolitan perspective is the '*dialogic* imagination'. By this I mean the clash of cultures and rationalities within one's own life, the '*internalized* other'. The dialogic imagination corresponds to the coexistence of rival ways of life in the individual experience. Which makes it a matter of fate to compare, reflect, criticize, understand, combine contradictory certainties. (Beck 2002: 18)

This approach is supported by theoretical arguments on cultural globalization: for Appadurai, cultural practices have moved into the realm of collective psychology – Benedict Anderson (1991) would speak of imagination – intrinsically tying culture and imagination together, mainly through the role of mass media and new IT technology:

> The world we live in today is characterized by a new role for the imagination in social life. [...] The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes. The imagination as a social practice [emphasis in the original; M.L.]. (Appadurai 1996: 31)

Appadurai in this context speaks of an "unleashing of the imagination", which "is now central to all form of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order." (ibid: 31) As an analytical framework, he proposes the introduction of five dimensions of global cultural flow – "scapes" – which he terms (a) ethnoscapes (b) mediascapes (c) technoscapes (d) finanscapes (e) ideoscapes (Appadurai 1990: 296, also: 1996: 33), which he (in reference to Anderson) calls "imaginary worlds", that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe."

(id. 1996: 33) It is in these imaginaries that Appadurai sees the dynamics of flow take place (id. 1990: 296) These imaginary "landscapes" are the coagulated manifestations of processes of collective imagination that form the main locus for cultural globalization.

> The suffix -scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles. These terms with the common suffix -scape also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors. [...] These landscapes thus are the building blocks of what (extending Benedict Anderson) I would like to call imagined worlds, that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imagination of persons and groups around the globe. (Appadurai 1996: 33)

Adopting Appadurai's argument, two "–scapes" are of crucial importance in our context: the *social imaginary*, and the *naturescape*.

Social imaginary

The social imaginary is a concept developed by Castoriadis in *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.[54] In traditional Marxist thought, it is the material basis of a society that produces the (ideological) superstructure – it is man's (material) being that determines his consciousness. Castoriadis inverses this thought and argues that quite to the contrary it is the "superstructure" (which he calls the "social imaginary") that provides the structural framework in which any meaningful social agency is eventually possible:

> This element—which gives a specific orientation to every institutional system, which overdetermines the choice and the connections of symbolic networks, which is the creation of each historical period, its singular manner of living, of seeing and of conducting its own existence,

---

[54] Originally published as *L'Institution Imaginaire de la Société* in 1975, Paris: Ed. du Seuil.

> its world, and its relations with this world, this originary structuring component, this central signifying-signified, the source of that which presents itself in every instance as an indisputable and undisputed meaning, the basis for articulating what does matter and what does not, the origin of the surplus of being of the objects of practical, affective, and intellectual investment, whether individual or collective—is nothing other than the imaginary of the society or of the period considered. (Castoriadis 1987: 145)

We can therefore see that in this theory, any notion of change, alteration, exchange – essentially: dynamic process – will have to occur within the social imaginary. In this procedural understanding, the term "social imaginary" is an important tool to account for the plurality of modernity as it presents itself today.

> The imaginary hereby provides actors with an understanding of where they are in time, space and society. It helps them to make sense of the world they find themselves in, and through norms and beliefs gives them guidance for how to behave appropriately. (Gaonkar 2002: 10)

For Charles Taylor, changes in the social imaginary are a key to understand the roots of multiple modernities, since it is within the imaginary that changes first gain hold:

> What exactly is involved when a theory penetrates and transforms the social imaginary? For the most part, people take up, improvise, or are inducted into new practices. These practices are made sense of by the new outlook, the one first articulated in the theory; this outlook is the context that gives sense to the practices. And hence the new understanding comes to be accessible to the participants in a way it wasn't before. It begins to define the contours of their world and may eventually become the taken-for-granted shape of things, too obvious to mention. (Taylor 2002: 111)

The social imaginary as an analytical concept appears to be rather vague. Yet in our context it is its very fuzziness that allows the exploration of the various means, cultural tropes, rhetoric devices, and framing by which social action is endowed with meaning.

Naturescape

The concept of "naturescape" follows examples of previous studies on literary representations that have emphasized the aesthetic setting of its subject matter, the "scape", as a crucial analytical point. Laughlin, for example, in his very insightful study on the history of Chinese labor reportage, employs the term "factoryscape" to show how the physical environment that provides the background for labor journalism, such as the factories, machines, brick walls, and other aspects of industrial reality, provide the basis for an imaginary landscape that is heavily endowed with connotations which transcend the merely physical, especially when considered in the context of Socialist literary production:

> Chinese labor reportage is literary insofar as it constructs a vivid factoryscape symbolic of capitalist exploitation and class struggle. The factoryscape includes not only the physical factory environment but the extension of the factory's spatial logic into other social spaces [...] that manifest the industrial transformation of the modern social environment in general. [...] Thus, the factoryscape is the basis of the symbolic structure of labor reportage as a form of literature as well as the basis of the expression of consciousness in these works. (Laughlin 2002:142)

I consciously refer to "naturescapes" in the plural, since it emphasizes the great ambiguity concerning the relationship between man and nature prevalent in pre-modern as well as modern nature writing. In this conceptualization, I can rely on a number of excellent recent studies on Chinese conceptions of nature that have all emphasized the great heterogeneity and ambiguity that characterize attitudes towards nature in China. Mark Elvin, for example, in his *Retreat of the Elephants* has remarked that

> Through more than three thousand years, the Chinese refashioned China. They cleared the forests and the original vegetation cover, terraced its hill-slopes, and partitioned its valley floors into fields. They diked, dammed, and diverted its rivers and lakes. They hunted or domesticated its animals and birds; or else destroyed their habitats as a by-product of the pursuit of economic improvements. By late-imperial times there

58

> was little that could be called 'natural' left untouched by this process of exploitation and adaptation.

> At the same time there developed among the elite an artistic and philosophical attitude toward the landscape that saw it as the exemplification of the workings of the deepest forces in the cosmos. (Elvin 2004: 321)

> A paradox thus lay at the heart of Chinese attitudes to the landscape. On the one hand it was seen, not as an image or reflection of some transcendent being, but as a part of the supreme numinous power itself. Wisdom required that one put oneself into its rhythms and be conscious of one's inability to reshape it. On the other hand the landscape was in fact tamed, transformed, and exploited to a degree that had few parallels in the premodern world. (ibid: 325)

Another important study addressing notions of and attitudes towards nature in pre-modern China is the edited volume *Concepts of Nature* published by Vogel and Dux in 2010 which explores these issues from an intercultural perspectives. In his contribution to this volume, Roetz points to the conflicting attitudes towards nature found in the Confucian and Daoist traditions and attacks the "cliché of 'harmony' between man and nature in China" (Roetz 2010: 200) prevalent in earlier Western conceptions and popularized by scholars such as Joseph Needham and Max Weber.

> In contrast to these doctrines, which enjoy wide dissemination and are well established even in China itself, it is precisely a differentiating and not a generalizing approach to the relationship of nature and culture that is the starting point for an understanding of Confucianism and Daoism, and thus of the two competing, fundamental directions of Chinese philosophy. The emergerence of the two schools is an expression of precisely the break of culture with nature, whereby they themselves come to stand in a modus of difference, not unity. This does not exclude 'sympathetic' thinking - but only sympathetic in the sense of a consciously chosen philosophical position with an awareness of the problem, not in the sense of a 'substantial' mode of thought. The background of this problem consciousness is a destructive practice that views nature

> primarily as the raw material for the realization of human purposes and
> one that is not even slightly characterized by empathy. The ever so
> appealing image of an empathetic Chinese approach to nature
> completely different from that of the West belongs in the romantic realm
> of counter-images. (ibid: 200-201)

Such premodern conflicting attitudes towards nature continued with China's entry onto the world stage by the 19th century. Transcultural flows were sweeping new concepts, understandings, and imaginaries with regards to nature into China. Weller remarks on the new spectrum of possible attitudes towards nature in the context of early globalization when he writes that

> Unequal globalization from the middle of the nineteenth century offered
> China a new palette of options for thinking about how people relate to
> environments. In contrast to simple theories of globalization that see the
> flow of one set of ideas from a single center […], this flow contained
> multiple and interacting streams that changed character at various nodes
> along the way. (Weller 2006: 60)

Proceeding from there, Weller details the transformations which have taken place in Chinese and Taiwanese literary responses to the environment across the twentieth century. He focuses on issues such as nature tourism, anti-pollution campaigns, and policy implementation to show how the global dissemination of Western ideas concerning the natural environment has interacted with Chinese traditions. Different understandings across groups have caused problems in administering environmental reforms.

In another insightful study of relevance here, Thornber shows in her *Ecoambiguity* (2012) the often contradictory complexities with which the natural world is approached in East Asian literatures.

> Environmental ambiguity manifests itself in multiple, intertwined ways,
> including ambivalent attitudes towards nature; confusion about the
> actual condition of the nonhuman, often a consequence of ambiguous
> information; contradictory behaviors towards ecosystems; and
> discrepancies among attitudes, conditions, and behaviors that lead to

actively downplaying and acquiescing to nonhuman degradation, as well as to inadvertently harming the very environments one is attempting to protect. My readings of hundreds of creative works from diverse cultures reveal these imbricated forms of ecoambiguity as fundamental attributes of literary works that discuss relationships between people and the nonhuman world. Most interesting is how creative texts articulate the permutations and implications of these discrepancies vertically in time and horizontally in physical and social space. (Thornber 2012: 6)

The subsequent four chapters will explore four distinct domains in which Chinese authors of environmental non-fiction have employed the confluence of the social imaginary with the naturescape to establish discursive modes that provide meaning, legitimacy, and purpose to their role in the context of Chinese environmentalism. These domains are

civil society and governance,
morality and environmental consciousness,
environmentalism as an agent of progress,
nonconformity and alternative lifestyles.

III. "Woodcutter, wake up": Governance in Chinese ecological reportage literature

This chapter discusses the issue of environmental governance, and the role of non-state actors within the Chinese social imaginary in this context. In a recent volume dedicated to questions of global governance, Armstrong and Gilson (2011: 3) point out that civil society involvement is widely believed to augment governance capacity. This chapter is primarily concerned with the ways in which way ideas of citizen participation in environmental governance have been framed within Chinese environmental nonfiction to fit into established sociocultural frameworks.

The chapter explores this issue through an analysis of Xu Gang's 徐刚 1987 eco-reportage "Woodcutter, wake up!" (*Famuzhe, xinglai!* 伐木者, 醒来!) The piece belongs to a body of textual material referred to in China as "ecological reportage literature" (*shengtai baogao wenxue* 生态报告文学). There are a few works that may be said to have become canonical as they have been widely read in the activist community and beyond and have come to form a shared framework of reference. Within this canon, Xu Gang's *Woodcutter* is repeatedly cited as amongst the most influential examples of Chinese ecological literature in general. (Zeng/He 2010: 120, Thornber 2012: 52). Written in September and October of 1987, it was originally published in the second issue of the 1988 edition of *Xin Guancha* ("New Observer"), a popular biweekly magazine of national circulation, where it received considerable attention. Later, in 1997, a collection of Xu Gang's ecological reportages was published by the *Jilin People's Publishing House*, amongst which *Woodcutter* was the first and also the title-giving reportage. This volume is part of a "Green Classics Library" (*Lüse jingdian wenku* 绿色经典文库) published by the same company that comprises mostly important Western environmental books in Chinese translation, such as Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), or *The Limits of Growth* (commissioned by the Club of Rome in 1972). Among the eleven titles featured in

the 1997 collection, Xu Gang's *Woodcutter* is one of the only three volumes from Chinese authors.[55]

Xu Gang was born in 1945 in Tianjin, and joined the People's Liberation Army in 1962 as a soldier (he began to write in 1963) before enrolling as a student at Peking University in 1970. Upon graduation, he worked as an editor within the literature and arts department of *People's Daily*, and also held jobs as deputy director of the editorial department of *Zhongguo Zuojia* 中国作家 (Chinese Writers), a prestigious literary periodical, and deputy editor-in-chief of *Xiandairen Bao* 现代人报. He also held various official posts, such as the head of the Chinese Writers' Association of Chongming county (Shanghai).

Ecological Reportage Literature constitutes a sub-category of the much wider genre of *baogao wenxue* 报告文学, which has been translated as "Literary Reportage", "Reportage Literature" or simply "Reportage". The name established itself in the 1930s, although some of the roots of this genre stretch back to literary traditions that well predate the Chinese modern era (which will be addressed later). There exist several fine academic accounts that focus on the formation and development of the genre, in Western as well as in the Chinese language(s).[56] Given this scholarly scrutiny, it is not my intention to provide yet another comprehensive account on its overall development in this chapter, or once again re-tell the story of the creation of a canon of Reportage Literature.[57]

What this chapter will focus on is the fact that Reportage Literature holds a specific sociopolitical relevance[58] within the Chinese *social imaginaire*, and moreover how its

---

[55] The two other works are Qu Geping's 曲格平 "We need a transformation" (*Women xuyao yichang geming* 我们需要一场变革), and Ma Yinchu's 马寅初 "New Population Theory" (*Xin renkou lun* 新人口论). These two works are not part of the "ecological reportage literature" genre and will be addressed in a subsequent chapter.

[56] See Wagner 1992; Klaschka 1998 for an extensive German-language account; or Laughlin 2002 which focuses on Chinese pre-war and war reportage; for Chinese secondary literature, see e.g.: Zhao Xiaqiu 赵遐秋 1987, the first monograph on the subject in the Chinese language; or Ding Xiaoyuan 丁晓原 1999.

[57] See Laughlin 2002: 1-37, for a very informative account on the development of a canon of *Baogao Wenxue*.

[58] This self-understanding should not so much be understood in terms of a specific program dictated by one single political or ideological agenda (although there can be detected a clear pro-communist, anti-imperialist streak amongst its practitioners), but more in the sense that Reportage Literature was

message, its sociopolitical role, and its cultural recognizability is amplified through the subject matter it deals with, the natural environment. From its very beginnings, inherent in the self-conception of the pioneers and authors of *baogao wenxue* there existed an awareness of the latter's sociopolitical relevance that exceeded the frame of mere literary production. Moreover, authors of *Ecological* Reportage Literature specifically employ the naturescape to amplify certain sociocultural connotations of Chinese nature writing that are heavily endowed with notions relating to good governance, such as remonstrance against corruption, and seclusion from political office within nature.

III.1 Background: Economic Reform and Environmental Destruction in the 1980s

In December 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the 11ᵗʰ CPC Central Committee of the CCP under Deng Xiaoping's 邓小平 leadership agreed to implement a comprehensive and ambitious program of economic change, a program which would become known as the Reform and Opening Policy of post-Mao China. Deng – who is said to have uttered the phrase "To be rich is glorious!" (*Zhifu guangrong 致富光荣!*) – threw open the door to what is now known as China's path to "Socialist Market Economy" which resulted in to date unprecedented economic growth. The reform of the country's economic system created what was essentially a hybrid system illustratively described by Chen Yun 陈云 as "bird cage economics": Freedom for private entrepreneurial initiative within the framework of a planned economy. The nation-wide introduction of the "household responsibility system" relieved the population of the commune system, as land was de-collectivized and opened for private farming. Additionally, a dual-price system was established that split commodity prices into a plan and a market component: After fulfillment of plan quotas for which the state would pay a guaranteed price, enterprises were allowed to sell any post-plan surplus goods at market prices (which often were higher). This dual system encouraged innovation and rewarded entrepreneurial spirit, as businesses now had incentives to boost production above quota and work more efficiently.

---

created, perceived, and practiced as a useful governance within China.

These combined policies resulted in a veritable explosion of small-scale rural (later also urban) private enterprises throughout China that soon began to constitute a major proportion of the overall industrial output of the Chinese economy.

While these reforms, combined with the unleashing of the Chinese population's entrepreneurial spirit, created an economic dynamism previously undreamt of in China, they also proved devastating for the country's environment, as literary millions of peasants descended on whatever natural resources promised quick profit, and local private enterprises set up shop with little knowledge of or regard for environmental protection. The nation's forests were among the first natural resources to bear the impact of China's economic take-off. Thus, the issue of deforestation was amongst the earliest and foremost to gain national attention during the 1980s. Modern China's struggle with deforestation did not originate in the reform policies enacted in the 1980s, and references to this issue can be traced back to centuries before the founding of the People's Republic of China: Widespread deforestation was a problem that had been known to occur throughout the Imperial era, and with the Ming dynasty (1403) started what Qu and Li call an era of "escalated degradation" (id. 1992: 23). Responsible for this development was especially the population explosion under the Ming and subsequently the Qing dynasties, as well as the introduction of new crops that opened up previously non-arable regions to farming. For example, Chen Qiaoze documents the deforestation of the mountainous regions of Zhejiang province under the reigns of the Kangxi and the Qianlong emperor (1661-1795). The PRC inherited much of this legacy of environmental destruction that had occurred over centuries, and after 1949, the situation of China's forests continued to deteriorate. He Bochuan estimates that between 1949 and 1981, 164.7 million acres of forests were destroyed in China (id. 1991: 29) Three waves of major deforestation can be identified in this respect, which peeked in "the three big cuts" (*san da fa* 三大伐) (Shapiro 2001: 10): the first during the Great Leap Forward 1958-1961, the second during the Cultural Revolution 1966-1976, the last one during the early 1980s.[59] Yet, after the start of the Reform and Opening policy, forest destruction which had continued throughout much of the 19th and 20th century accelerated at breakneck pace:

---

[59] For an extensive account on environmental destruction during the first two waves, see Shapiro 2001: 67-94.

He Bochuan reports that by 1985, Heilongjiang province's annual lumber production exceeded state plans by 39%, and that "eight of the 40 bureaus under the administration of the Heilongjiang Forest Industry Bureau had run out of forest to administer." (id. 1991: 25) The situation was just as bleak in the southwest. In Xishuangbanna Autonomous region forest cover had vanished from previously 60% in the early 1950s to about 30%, and in Guizhou province only 14.5% of the once proverbially lush forests of the province remained. (ibid. 26) Qu and Li compared national forest covers and concluded that China with 12.98 % of total forest cover now ranks far behind Japan (68%), Sweden (53%) and the USA (32%). (Qu and Li 1992: 58)

What is noticeable is the fact that these developments did not occur due to a lack but rather despite an existing legal and institutional framework meant to ensure forest protection in the People's Republic. Even beginning with the 1970s, the central government had acknowledged environmental destruction as a major problem, and had taken significant steps towards establishing a legal framework to address the issue.[60] Jahiel notes that "[b]y the mid to late 1980s China could boast of a host of environmental laws, regulations and standards, and a nation-wide organizational structure including environmental protection units at the central, provincial, city, district, county and, in some places, township levels." (id. 1997: 82) However, the Chinese leadership at the time perceived environmental protection as an issue that required a *bureaucratic* approach, and it thus established a legal framework and political institutions that were to implement protectionist policies in the top-down fashion the center had grown accustomed to over decades. Paradoxically, while the Chinese central government in the 1980s adamantly upheld a top-down approach towards the implementation of its reform agenda, it at the same time enacted policies that shifted not only economic but also political power away from the center towards the localities: These very reforms actually resulted in a significant decline of the regulatory capacity of the Center and made it ever more difficult to force local governments to comply with laws and regulations passed on the national level: Zhao

---

[60] For comprehensive accounts on China's early protectionist legal framework refer to: Jahiel (1998); also Economy 2004: 96-117. For Chinese language sources, see *Zhongguo huanjing nianjian* [China Environmental Yearbook]; Beijing: Huanjing kexue chubanshe, particularly the 1990 and 1995 editions.

Suisheng (1994: 21-31) argues that by the early 1980s, virtually all the institutional instruments through which the center used to exercise its control over local governments had seen a significant decline in efficiency.

Decreasing capacity of the central state, however, is just one of the systemic factors that caused environmental degradation in China: Edin (2003) draws attention to the fact that that the Chinese central government's priorities are often contradictory in themselves, and that at times, local governments disregarded certain requirements by the government so as to pursue other priorities imposed on them by the very same authorities: "the reason behind the failure to implement some policies, such as burden reduction, is not so much inadequate control over local leaders as the centre's own priorities and conflicting policies. The Chinese party-state maintains the ability to be *selectively effective* in the beginning of 2000s." (Edin 2003: 36, my emphasis) Even more importantly, this argument is closely tied to the way in which China's state bureaucracy incentivizes certain policy choices at the expense of others. Edin suggests "that this inability [of the center to have its way; M.L.] is not primarily because of the centre's lack of control over its local agents but because the centre's actions are constrained by its other policy priorities. […] The cadre responsibility system transmits the goals of higher levels to local agents, but the system cannot cope with more than a few state goals simultaneously, especially when those goals conflict." (ibid: 51)

Thus, the environmental crisis on the local level was caused not only by systemic disfunctionalities within, but also by the very logic of, the structure of the Chinese one-party state. Local officials – by the very nature of the demands the party bureaucracy places on them – have every incentive to pursue economic development at the expense of environmental protection.

> Economic decentralization has given officials at the provincial level and below the means and incentives to develop their local economies. The pervasive emphasis on development, consumerism and profit in government proclamations and through-out society has further provided local governments with the justification to intervene against regulations - such as environmental protection - deemed unfavourable to growth.
> (Jahiel 1998: 757)

At the same time, local cadres had every incentive to muzzle voices of caution, silence popular unrest caused by environmental destruction, and prevent any information from the local level to leak out, in order to maintain "social stability". Thus, the central government was often left in the dark as to the true size of local environmental problems. Mol refers to this as "information-poor environments":

> Information-poor environments can arise from political constraints on information collection, processing, spreading, access and use – whether from conditions of nondemocratic government, the quashing of opportunities for independent voices and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to circulate countervailing evidence, manipulating search machines on the Internet, or limitations placed on information disclosure (such as occurred in the US following 9/11). (Mol 2009: 115)

The same is true for the issue of reforestation in which triumphant reports in the Chinese press about "great victories" in reforestation efforts were largely exaggerated: "False reporting, ineptitude, and bad management are the main causes for the huge discrepancy between the impressive claims and the meager results of China's reforestation campaign." (He Bochuan 1991: 27)

The institutional disfunctionalities inside China's protectionist framework were the reason behind a major ecological catastrophe that took place in Northeast China in 1987, and its aftermath provided the incentive for Xu Gang to take an active interest in forest protection and eventually pen *Woodcutter, wake up!*.

III.2 The narrative: *Woodcutter, wake up!* – A tale of two mountains, and one problem

On May 6th 1987, a wildfire broke out in the forests of Daxing'anling 大兴安岭 prefecture in Heilongjiang Province, Northeast China. After local emergency respond forces lost control over the situation, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had to be mobilized, but the fire raged on and was eventually defeated only one month later on June 2nd. By then, the blaze had consumed a vast area of over one

million hectares of land, 70% of which had been forestry. 193 people had been killed, 263 injured, and over 50,000 people had lost their homes.[61]

An article in *People's Daily* from June 6th, four days after the fire had effectively been brought under control, reported that the State Council had addressed the matter in general assembly. Wan Li 万里, then first-ranking Vice Premier of the PRC, was quoted saying that the fire had "exposed the severe bureaucratism of several leading cadres in the Ministry for Forestry", and hence had become a question of "improving the Party's conduct": Every state or party official had to serve the people wholeheartedly, "and must not abuse their power for own selfish gains once they held power and office."[62] In a subsequent "Decision of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress concerning the Great Wildfire Incident of Daxing'anling" (*Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui changwu weiyuanhui guanyu Daxing'anling teda huozai shigu de jueding* 全国人民代表大会常务委员会关于大兴安岭特大森林火灾事故的决议) from June 23rd 1987, the central government reiterated its position:

> The council holds the view that the occurrence for the fire catastrophe has to be attributed mainly to disorderly management practices, eroding discipline, violating of legal requirements, illegal business practices and severe bureaucratism by those in charge. The council approves of the decision to remove Yang Zhong, head of the Ministry of Forestry, from his post.
>
> The council stresses that the protection of the valuable forest reserves, as well as the appreciation, protection and creation of forests is the honorable duty of all people and of the state institutions on all levels. Ministerial departments on all levels as well as all prefectures and districts concerned with forestry must seriously take this lesson to heart and in a practical manner improve their work and working style. They must strictly enforce the legal regulations of forest protection and fire prevention as stipulated in the "Forest Law of the People's Republic of

---

[61] These numbers are based on an article in the *People's Daily* from June 6th 1987, entitled: "State Council Discusses Consequences of Daxing'anling Wildfires"; accessible online under: http://dangshi.people.com.cn/GB/146570/198299/199543/199558/12464006.html (2010/12/20)

[62] All three quotes are found in the article quoted above.

> China" and the "Fire Prevention Regulations of the People's Republic of China".
>
> The Council of the opinion that this incident should serve as a profound lesson that all national ministries, all regional prefectures and all *danweis* should take to heart very seriously. [They] must firmly reject and redress the seriously irresponsible bureaucratism that makes them act as overlords and grand-seigneurs, as well as the evil working style that leads to dereliction of duty and break of regulations. They have to adopt every conceivable measure to avoid a similar incident in the future. [63]

It is crucial in our context to fully appreciate the use of the term "bureaucratism" which is identified as the main culprit for the catastrophe: The Western understanding of the expression bureaucracy is largely neutral, and merely connotes a complex administrative structure. In contrast, the Chinese term for bureaucracy (*guanliao* 官僚) and the respectively derived "bureaucratism" (*guanliao zhuyi* 官僚主义) not only has a decisively pejorative meaning, but it is also a political term pointing to a specific set of institutional dysfunctions.[64] The entry on "bureaucratism" in the 1979 edition of the official encyclopedia *Cihai* ("Ocean of Words") almost verbatim echoes the language provided in the 1987 *Decision*: Bureaucratism is characterized by "separation from reality[65] and from the masses" (*tuoli shiji、tuoli qunzhong* 脱离实际、脱离群众), and "adopting a work and leadership style of acting like overlords and grand-seigneurs" (*zuoguan dang laoye de lingdao zuofeng* 做官当老爷的领导作风). "To be out of touch with the grassroots units and the masses, to not understand the real conditions on the ground, […] to not face responsibility." (*bu shenru jiceng yu qunzhong, bu liaojie shiji qingkuang, [...] yushi bu fu zeren* 不深入基层和群众, 不了解实际情况,[...] 遇事不负责任.) Thus, the main problem with bureaucratism is that it prevents the information input from outside necessary for effective governance, due to the increasing self-encapsulation of administrative organs.[66] As this chapter will show,

---

[63] The Chinese text of the document is accessible at the website of the National People's Congress under: http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/wxzl/2000-12/26/content_1950.htm [2011/09/14]

[64] See: Burns 1983.

[65] The term *shiji* 实际 in Chinese can mean both reality and practice, and is a political term. A more accurate translation would be "correct practice based on a true perception of reality".

[66] 66 Unlike their Western counterparts, Chinese government institutions are not referred to as "bureaucracies" but rather as "organs" (*jigou* 机构) or "agencies" (*jiguan* 机关).

the dysfunction in China's governmental framework is a key factor in understanding the framing of Xu Gang's *Woodcutter*:

The narrative of *Woodcutter, Wake Up!* (FMXL) is constructed in form of a travel account that retells the experiences of the author, Xu Gang, during his journeys to various locations in China in between September and October 1987. The wildfire at Daxing'anling having occurred only month before, Xu Gang sets out to investigate the condition at several of China's famous forest regions.

His first trip takes Xu Gang to *Wuyishan* 武夷山, a mountainous region in Fujian province. The author's intent is to acquire a first-hand impression of the environmental situation on the ground after having followed the Daxing'anling news coverage with increasing frustration. *Wuyishan* is famous in China for representing an aesthetic ideal often emulated in Chinese traditional landscape painting (*shanshui hua* 山水画): Green trees cling to bizarre rock formations, and with the passing of the centuries the mountain slopes have become covered with a net of tangled roots which protect it from erosion through wind and water. But, as Xu Gang informs the reader, "the discrepancy between the imagined and the real [*Wuyishan*] is too great" (FMXL: 4): The forests have almost completely fallen prey to extensive logging: King's Peak (*dawang feng* 大王峰), the crown of the mountain range which used to boast "old trees that reach up to heaven" (*gumu can tian* 古木参天; FMXL: 6) and impenetrable brush that provided a haven for bird life, has been nearly stripped of any forest cover:

> "Until 1974, all but 300 trees had been cut down, which might be a small number, but it was still enough to somewhat cover King's Peak and not make it seem too naked. But now, at this late hour, the axes have cut away another 298 of them, and all that remains are but two trees."

> [...] In 1984, farmers from to Ji'an county (belonging to *Wuyishan*) kept felling and felling trees until Jade Maiden's Peak (Yunü feng) – yes, that very same Jade Maiden's Peak that appears on the television screens every evening as the symbol of Fujian province – until even this maiden's skirt had been pulled down! [...] I would kindly like to warn the reader: If

> this continues for any longer, will not the whole of *Wuyi* Mountains then become 'the mountains without clothes'?"[67] (FMXL: 6)

What are the reasons for this calamity? On the one hand, the local villagers themselves are to blame. Once trapped in bitter poverty, Deng Xiaoping's "To be rich is glorious!" resonates; the *Zeitgeist* of the economic reform era has unleashed the local population's entrepreneurial spirit. The fastest and most convenient way the villagers know to make money is just to cut a tree and sell the timber. "Want to make a buck? – Cut trees!" (*yao fu? kan shu!* 要富? 砍树!). The reason why this behavior goes unchecked is not a lack of rules, since a legislative framework actually exists on the national level in form of the "Forestry Law" (s*enlin fa* 森林法). Rather, the problem is that the law is not enforced by the local cadres in charge: "The people living in the mountains have all but one rule: 'Heaven is high, and the Emperor is far." (FMXL: 8)

The second problem is the corrupt and immoral behavior of the local cadres themselves whose duty it would be to carry out the central government's orders: "They [the villagers] only fear the cadres actually in charge on the village and on the county level; the real power is in the hands of these lower officials, who will always grant protection to the people of their own native villages. What good is a law in this situation?" (FMXL: 8) But the cadres not only do nothing to prevent illegal logging, often they themselves are the first ones to actively lead the way in this illegal activity: As Xu Gang wanders around the endangered forests, he meets a villager who just comes back from cutting trees up in the mountains:

> Xu Gang: "Are there no forest rangers in your village?"
>
> Villager: "Those are the first ones to cut trees! Whether it's the forest officers, or party cadres, they're all the cousin of some village head, or the nephew of some party secretary: They pocket 40 Yuan a month for 'forest protection', and continue logging as before. Why should we common folk not also cut some trees ourselves then?"

---

[67] The last remark is an untranslatable pun, based on the homophonous pronunciation of the name "Wuyi" 武夷 and two similar characters, *wuyi* 无衣, meaning "without clothes."

XG: "But what about the higher-ranking cadres?"

V: "Oh, they all do it. But for them, it doesn't matter, because they can have [the timber] delivered right to their doorstep, isn't that even better?" (FMXL: 16)

Increasingly distressed, the author leaves the scenery at Wuyishan and heads on. However, the writer finds the local ecosystem at his second destination, Tianmushan 天目山, largely intact, the region's subtropical primeval forest unspoilt. The striking contrast piques the author's curiosity, as he starts to investigate the causes: It is not as if, as Xu Gang remarks, "the local peasants at Tianmushan do **not** own axes, and do not know how to cut trees." (FMXL: 25) Indeed, the conditions given at Tianmushan would suggest that its forests would have fallen prey to logging much more easily: "[Nearby] Hangzhou city's cafés, dancing halls, night clubs and discos attract many young people. And Tianmushan - other than Wuyishan - is far more accessible to traffic. Tianmushan's natural resources promise much more wealth than Wuyishan's." (ibid) Yet here, nature is intact. What can be the cause for the different outcome of two areas of essentially the same political conditions: "Both are under the same blue sky, both are governed by the Communist Party, in both places CCP cadres are in charge, to both the same laws apply, and both fall under the national protection reserve [regulations]." (ibid)

Xu Gang quickly discovers the answer: The strict enforcement of national law by the authorities in charge: Loggers, poachers and thieves are swiftly caught regardless of their status and severely punished. Regulations and quotas on what and how many trees can be cut annually are strictly enforced, and after the great fire catastrophe at Daxing'anling, the local authorities have taken effective fire prevention measures, even though this meant a decline in revenue for the district. Xu Gang salutes the cadres for their foresight and moral integrity: "Suppose that today's wealth is gained by robbing it from our sons and grandsons, by destroying our culture and civilization… Well then this wealth is a sin, and there is nothing dirtier! An illustrative example is this: In some places, the cadres grow fat, and the people get rich, but the green waters and clear mountains wither!" (FMXL: 25)

III.3　The form: Literary reportage, and its role within the Chinese social imaginary

Woodcutter's framing of the problem behind Wuyishan's environmental calamities echoes the institutional failure discussed above: A breakdown in government capacity and a dysfunctional informational exchange system between the center and the localities have resulted in environmental catastrophe. The local government is corrupt, greedy, or ignorant, in any case does not enforce the enlightened regulations provided by the center. This diagnosis becomes even more poignant when contrasted with the author's experiences at the second destination, where the central government's policies have been successfully implemented by dutiful local officials. Drawing a parallel between his own experiences and the catastrophe at Daxing'anling, Xu Gang reminds his readers:

> The Daxing'anling Wildfire has been caused by a bunch of irresponsible and conniving people, the tinder that caused this fire blaze has been sown by these bureaucrats [*guanliao zhuyizhe* 官僚主义者][68] who were derelict of their duty. Amidst these green forest, where the sun shines bright and the air smells fresh, there are at least some black corners: The fire that devoured Mohe county did not devour the county secretary's villa; faced with raging flames that consumed the forests, the head of one fire department actually did not order the fire trucks to fight the blaze or rescue the civilians, but rather had his men save the county secretary's and his own villas, and to be more effective even bulldozered the surrounding houses of some ordinary people to create a fire barrier. It does not get more graphic than these examples! [FMXL: 37]

The center, although having issued the correct policies, is not aware of the situation on the ground, and hence the problem is allowed to fester. The underlying implication is that if the center only knew what was going on, they would take the appropriate countermeasures.[69]

---

[68] The term Xu Gang employs here strictly speaking translates to "bureaucratism-ists" and carries the decisively negative connotation discussed above.

[69] On the issue of bureaucratism as an impediment to Socialist progress, and its relationship to literary production, see: Wagner 1992: 78 ff.

Framed in this way, it is precisely the weakness in China's administrative system in terms of informational exchange between center and localities that provides a breach for reporters such as Xu Gang to assert their role: Their work has to be considered inherently useful since it provides government agencies at the center with the information they need to adequately perform their tasks and enact the necessary supervision of lower-level institutions. The crucial connection between information and governance – and environmental governance in particular – has recently been receiving intensified attention within the wider framework of literature concerned with new modes of governance. (Esty 2004; Mol 2006; Treib et al. 2007): "Within the broader governance framework, the concept of informational governance emphasizes the key importance of information (together with informational processes and resources) in fundamentally restructuring the processes, institutions and practices of (environmental) governance. Information is increasingly regarded as a (re)source with transformative potential, not just an enabling condition for environmental policy formulation." (Mol 2009: 114)

III.3.1 The avenues of speech

The situation described here, and the importance of information gathering to achieve good governance, is neither unique nor new in the context of China's political history. The idea that the ability of the central authority to gather information from the periphery is a key aspect to good governance has been an important *topos* in Chinese political philosophy for a very long time: Kuhn argues that the connection between information and governance has represented a continuing challenge to every Chinese administration throughout the ages: "One of the most enduring ones has been the question how the central government can effectively assess the people's needs, and make local government comply with the orders issued from the center." (Kuhn 2002: 8 ff.) Given the vast territory of dynastic rule, and the inaccessibility of China's topography, this concern is even more comprehensible. "Heaven is high, and the Emperor is far", as the villagers say in Xu Gang's reportage.

Hence, as previously mentioned, local governments have often been reluctant to comply with orders issued from the center, or have had every incentive to quell any form of complaint to arise from below to reach the center's ear. To alleviate this

problem, Chinese rulers from very early on developed what Burns calls "anti-distortion devices" (Burns 1983: 694): The mystical Emperors Yao 尧 and Shun 舜 were said to have made special arrangements for ensuring that information reached them and that the common people had possibilities to make their grievances heard: Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* for example praises the establishment of a "drum hall" (*gu tang* 鼓堂) in front of the imperial palace. Any man with a petition could make himself heard and present his grievance to the emperor himself, a practice that was lauded as exemplary for the sublime skill in statecraft that the revered ancients possessed. (Li Qiuxue 2009: 32-35) Within the traditional Chinese social imaginary, these arrangements were referred to as the *yanlu* 言路, the "avenues of speech": A good ruler was expected to keep open means of what Mittler calls "intercommunication between the ruler and the ruled 上下之通" (id. 2004: 28) that allowed information to flow upwards the Imperial hierarchy to bring problems on the local level to the attention of the Sovereign, his "sacred gaze" (*shengjian*), whilst Imperial decrees – for example in the form of public reading of "sacred edicts" during the Kangxi reign – traveled downward. Only if this communication was maintained would the central authority be able to pass the necessary and appropriate policies that corresponded to the needs of the people: "The 'avenues of speech' traditionally signify those channels at the emperor's disposal that serve to inform him of what happens in his empire, in an allegedly objective manner, and outside of the regular channels of bureaucratic information flows; they are the means though which the ordinary people can turn with their views and complaints directly to the emperor." (Volland 2003: 166) The importance of this concept is evident for example in the *Dijian tushuo* 帝键图说 ("Illustrated Mirror for the Emperor"), a volume compiled to serve in the education of the ten-year old prince who was to become the *Wanli* Emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1563–1620). It contains illustrative anecdotes of emperors of old, some cast as an example of how to engage in good governance, others proving a bad example. In many of these stories, one of the key concepts is that a good ruler keeps an open ear to popular grievances and needs to understand *minxin* 民心, lit. "the people's heart", and acts accordingly.[70] Hence, in order to ensure a smooth flow of information, the Chinese imperial system from a very early stage

---

[70] Reprinted in Zhang Juzheng (1993).

on instituted several fixed procedures that allowed petitions, criticism and praise to reach the center: It was during the Qing dynasty, that the appeals system experienced its full extent: Ocko (1988) provides a comprehensive account on the judicial system that managed the complex bureaucratic processes of acceptance, rejection, and deliberation of written appeals, before turning to the main focus of his study, the capital appeal (*jingkong*).

> Having exhausted all the judicial remedies at the provincial level, appellants could bring their charges to Beijing and bang the "grievance drum" outside the offices of the censorate and the capital gendarmerie (*bujun tongling yamen*), both of which were authorized to accept capital appeals. As the emperor's judicial triage officers, they decided which cases warranted the emperor's personal attention, which could be remanded to the provinces for trial, and which could be dismissed. To circumvent this system and reach the emperor directly by either kneeling before the palace gate or along the way of an imperial procession (*kouhun*) was not impossible but was illegal and unusual, for in general petitioners were harshly punished regardless of the veracity of their charges [...]. In every instance the aim of the capital appellant was the same-to enlist the interest of the emperor in one's cause. The hope was not farfetched since emperors seem to have been sympathetically predisposed to capital appeals. (Ocko 1988: 294)

In the 20th century, the CCP followed these precedents and maintained its own information-gathering mechanisms, be it through the dispatching of "work-teams" (*gongzuo dui* 工作队) to the localities to circumvent mid-level bureaucracy, or the maintenance of a system of "Bureaus of Letters and Visits" (*xinfangju* 信访局)[71] tasked solely with the revision of letters of complaints from the populace to the provincial and central governments. An illustrative example just how alive the imaginary is to this very day is provided by the following caricature, published in 2010 in *Zhongguo Baogao* ["ChinaReport"]:

---

[71] For a comprehensive history of the *Xinfang* system, see: Li 2009.

The Grievance Drum is broken.[72]

The article is headlined "The serious problem of clogged *xinfang* channels" (*Xinfang liangdao de fang'ai nanti* 信访渠道的妨碍难题). Illustrating the article's argument that there are serious problems with the *xinfang* system that should allow ordinary citizens to level complaints against local and central government is a caricature which depicts an ordinary citizen who is ready to beat the grievance drum, drumstick already in hand, his papers and documents stashed neatly right next to him. In the background hangs a sign with the four-character expression *ming jing gao xuan* 明镜高悬. This phrase refers to the legend of a mystical magic mirror said to have been in the possession of Qin Shihuang, China's first emperor: The mirror allegedly revealed the hearts and minds of those who came before it, and thus enabled its possessor to judge the impartiality and competence of his officials. Later, official hung up signs referring to the mirror in their court halls to profess their own fair-mindedness and the transparency of their decisions. In the case of this caricature, the sign is included as an ironic signifier: It boastfully promises transparent government (as envisioned within the Chinese social imaginary) but as the caricature shows, the means by which this is to be achieved, the drumhead, lies in tatters, leaving the citizen to wonder how he might make his issue known to the authorities.

In the context of this imaginary, a clogging of the avenues of speech means an impediment to good governance, since it robs the center of its ability to accurately assess the situation on the ground. Arguably the most tragic incident of clogged

---

communication channels in modern Chinese history occurred during the Great Leap Forward, when an already deeply flawed governmental policy was aggravated by widespread inaccurate and exaggerated reporting of local grain supplies. Without independent critical input, the central government was unable to accurately assess the situation on the ground, leading to the greatest famine catastrophe in Chinese history. This incident provides the background for Amartya Sen's famous argument for the importance of independent civil society voices for achieving good governance:

> What was lacking when the famine threatened China was a political system of adversarial journalism and opposition. The Chinese famine raged on for three years without it being even admitted in public that such a thing was occurring, and without there being an adequate policy response to the threat. Not only was the world ignorant of the terrible state of affairs in China, even the population itself did not know about the extent of the national calamity and the extensive nature of the problem being faced in different parts of the country. Indeed, the lack of adversarial journalism and politics hit even the government, reinforcing the ignorance of local conditions because of politically motivated exaggeration of the crop size during the great leap forward and the fear of local cadres about communicating their own problems. (Dreze and Sen 1989: 212-213)

III.3.2 The role of literature

Literature, from a very early time onward, played a crucial role in this regard, its task was thought to admonish the ruler and lend voice to the people's grievances: The "Great Preface" of the *Book of Odes* (*shijing* 诗经), arguably the most important source for literary theory in pre-modern China, enunciates the role of literature to provide remonstrance to the ruler (Murck 2000: 2-3). Following this precedent, China's men of letters have traditionally seen it as their obligation to admonish, advice, and guide China's rulers through their writings.

> Literary speech is thus a part of the arsenal available to the literati to admonish and criticize the ruler and the imperial court, which both are considered responsible for the social conditions. (Wagner 2009: 598)

Thus, producing literature in China never has been an innocent endeavor, and it can be taken for granted that all sides concerned are acutely aware of its political implications.

This is also the case with a second, equally important element of the discussion on public spheres in late Imperial China: The emergence of modern, Western-style newspapers, a topic that has been the subject of extensive research.[73] As these studies have shown, early reception of the (previously unknown) institution of commercial newspapers in China heavily relied upon the traditional Chinese imaginary outlined above, for various strategical reasons: firstly, by linking critical newspaper reporting to the *yanlu* tradition, editors and publishers could at least partly escape government repression, since their task was essentially a patriotic contribution to enhance government efficiency and legitimacy. Liang Qichao 梁启超, arguably China's most influential intellectual at the time, wrote an article in 1896 entitled "On the benefits of newspapers for state affairs" (*Lun baoguan you yi yu guoshi* 论报关有益于国事) in which he stated that "the greatness of a country depends on whether the avenues of speech are open or closed". Mittler (2004: 28 n104) notes that "the need to open up channels of communication is perhaps the most frequently encountered trope in late Qing writings on the newspaper." Secondly, by linking a new cultural object such as the newspaper to a framework with which the potential audience (China's educated *literati* class) was already familiar, the publishers made the new medium much more acceptable, hence ensuring not only social embedment but also commercial success.

If literature in general was a key vehicle through which good governance was to achieved, then Reportage Literature in particular was designed to fulfill this role. As Wagner (1982) points out in his essay on the functionalist approach towards literature under Chinese Socialist Political Culture, literature (and particularly reportage) followed the Leninist notion that art and literature had to be "cog and screw" in the revolutionary machinery (Wagner 1982: 336), an idea that was wholeheartedly embraced by Mao Zedong in his famous *Yan'an Talks on Literature and Art*. The

---

[73] I am especially referring to the efforts of the Research Group "Struktur und Entwicklung der öffentlichen Sphäre in China [Structure and development of the public sphere in China]" at the Institute for Chinese Studies at Heidelberg University created by Professor Rudolf G. Wagner which has produced a substantial body of studies on this topic. See for example: Janku 2003; Mittler 2004 and 2007; Vittinghoff 2001 and 2002; Wagner 1995 and 2007.

special role reportage was expected to fulfill in this regard was not only to be subservient to the Socialist leadership, but specifically to support the leadership in maintaining an accurate picture of what was going on on the local level. Chinese Reportage Literature in this regard was heavily influenced by Soviet models, in particular Ovechkin's sketches (translated as *texie* 特写 in Chinese)[74] which cast socialist writers as "scouts" or as "the light cavalry" of literary production. Nimble and agile, socialist reporters were expected to be able to investigate the situation on the ground much more effectively (and discretely) than the state bureaucracies with their vested interests. Reportage writers were "scouts for the leadership, informing them both on these local activists and the problems they are facing. The internal channels of communication (party, state) being clogged by bureaucrats, literature establishes an independent outside link." Moreover, Reportage Literature ensured itself against accusations of disloyalty by casting its protagonists "as an independent force in the stories, being neither bound to the (inarticulate) people nor to the institution or party. The writer is, however, endowed with a high degree of socialist idealism enabling him to see the obstacles to socialist progress and to support the forces trying to overcome them." (Wagner 1982: 342) Liu Binyan's "Inside News from our paper" (*Benbao neibu xiaoxi* 本报内部消息) from 1956 is the archetypical reportage in this regard: While the hero of the story is an enthusiastic journalist who wants shake things up and find an outlet for this revolutionary idealism, the villains are bureaucrats and pencil-pushers who due to their inflexibility and stubbornness stand in the way of progress.[75] While fictional, Liu Binyan – just like the protagonist of his story – tries to circumvent the obstacles he encounters on location, and appear directly to the central authorities who have to be made aware of this situation.

"Beijing has lost its balance" (*Beijing Shiqu Pingheng* 北京失去平衡) which is commonly considered to be the first piece of eco-reportage of mainland China (Yang/Zhou 2005; Luo 2002; Zhang 2008) follows the same pattern. It appeared in 1986 in *Baogao*

---

[74] For a very detailed account on how and to which extent the Chinese version of reportage literature is indebted to non-Chinese literary models and forms, and particularly the close interactions of its most famous exponent Liu Binyan 刘宾雁 with Valentin Ovechkin and the process of the former's adoption of the literary sketch (*texie*) from the model of the latter's ocerk, see Wagner 1992: 243-376; also: Wagner 1982: 335 ff.

[75] For a detailed study of this reportage, see: Wagner 1992: 171-191.

Wenxue (Vol. 4), a periodical exclusively dedicated to the publication of literary reportage. The author, Li Shaqing 李沙青, better known under his pen name, Sha Qing, himself a Communist Party member, had worked as a journalist for the "Beijing Evening News" (*Beijing Wanbao*) and the "Beijing Daily" (*Beijing Ribao*) in the late 1970s. In this piece, he addresses the severe water crisis in and around the Chinese capital. The reportage was groundbreaking at the time because it identifies the problem as a man-made disaster, and not - as had been habitually asserted in Chinese media outlets - as a consequence of unfavorable natural conditions. Overuse and waste of water, pollution, outdated agricultural practices and heavily subsidized water prices had created a situation in which China's capital was increasingly feeling the impact of draughts, desertification, and sinking ground water tables. What lent additional weight to Sha Qing's reportage was the fact that he not only combined extensive usage of government statistics, interviews with affected locals, and haunting personal impressions from various locations he had visited in the course of his research, but that he also brought in statements of several high-ranking government officials who had been willing to go on the record to support his allegations. Amongst them were Guo Zhongqing 郭中庆, then the head of EPA (Environmental Protection Agency, the forerunner of the later Ministry of Environmental Protection), Huang Zhendong 黄震东, the chief engineer of the national water-control bureau, and a leading functionary for water management. One point in particular crystallizes the relationship between literature and informational governance we have discussed so far: Guo Zhongqing had prepared an urgent report concerning the illegal construction activities of a water management bureau and a telecommunications company that threatened the water supply of a district at the outskirts of Beijing in favor of business interests that wanted to use the water for a resort for wealthy clients, reducing the now dried-out river bed to stinking mud. Guo is eager to pass his report up the command chain, yet is reprimanded and his report silently buried. (Li Shaqing 1896: 10-11) Li Shaqing's piece created substantial impact not only in the media, but also in the literary scene and was awarded the

"Fourth National Award for Outstanding Reportage Literature" (*Disi jie quanguo youxiu baogao wenxue jiang*). (Zhang and Wu 2007: 11)[76]

Hence, when framed in the context of this traditional imaginary, journalism not only serves as an avenue for the lone dissenter to voice grievances, but much more provides a crucial tool to achieve good governance, and thusly is something that the central authority must have an invested interest in. Often, the authors engaged in producing reportage literature simultaneously occupy several posts, or played multiple roles apart from their writing. They were state-employed journalists, not seldom officials, intellectuals or university employees who portray themselves as engaging in the messy business of journalism, investigating ecological and social wrongs in order to help their government to improve the situation.

Such is also the case with the role of the writer. Xu Gang positions himself in a long tradition of remonstrating scholar officials willing to sacrifice their lifes in order to admonish the ruler. Qu Yuan 屈原 (340 BC–278 BC), a scholar of the Warring States period, is the archetype of the loyal official who falls victim to court intrigue and eventually drowns (i.e. martyrs) himself as a final dramatic act of remonstrance. Following the social imaginary of the upright official who offers remonstrance against social evil, writers of reportage literature emphasize moral righteousness together with a duty to voice unpopular grievances. Wagner (1992) in his discussion of Liu Binyan 刘宾雁 remarks that "Liu [Binyan] set up a behavioral model for young intellectuals. To them it appealed in its decided modernism, in its high moral pitch of social responsibility, and in its boldness, freedom, and promise of warm human relationships with like-minded peers." (Wagner 1992: 311)

---

[76] Its literary success, combined with the nation-wide attention it generated sparked a blossoming of the genre of the eco-reportage. Most examples of reportage literature feature a single topic of concern. Texts that featured topics on water pollution and water shortage during these years include "Rescue the *Fen* River!" (*Wan Fenhe!*) by Mai Tianshu 麦天枢 (*Baogao Wenxue* 1989 (1)), Liu Guixian's 刘贵贤 "Our Life Source in Crisis" (*Shengming zhi yuan de weiji*) (published in 1989 by Kunlun chubanshe) and Chen Guili's 陈桂棣 "Warning from the *Huai* River" (*Huaihe de jinggao*) (in *Dangdai* 1996 (2)). This last piece was a study conducted in Lujiang County, Anhui Province, in which the author alleged that mortality rates due to stomach and liver cancers were caused by the high levels of inorganic substances in surface water, especially fertilizers and industrial waste dumped unfiltered into the river *Huai*. Amongst other honors, it was awarded the Lu Xun Literary Prize in the category "Outstanding National Reportage Literature". These authors represent merely a selection of a larger body of eco-reportage produced from mid-1980s onward. For comprehensive surveys over the genre, see: Yang/Zeng 2010; and Zhang Xiaoqin 2008.

A similar self-understanding can be found with authors of eco-journalism: Chen Guidi 陈桂棣, himself a well-known environmental journalist, writes that "reportage literature has to foster an atmosphere of righteousness, and must not shy away from sensitive issues. Because some sensitive issues are problems and fractures caused by the reforms, and those are social focal points and popular hot topics. [...] One might say that courage and artistic skill are equally important for a writer. Without painstaking analysis and sufficient bravery, there will be neither real discovery nor literary works of the highest quality." (cited in Wu Jingming 2007b: 202) An example of how this role model is applied in environmental reportage literature can be visited in a literary reportage on soil erosion penned by Wang Zhi'an 王治安, born 1936, also known under the pen name Anran 安然 or Xinran 欣然, similarly to Sha Qing an author of eco-reportage literature who has both official as well as journalistic credentials. (He is, for example, both a member of the Chinese Communist Party and of the Chinese Writer's Association.) In 1992, he published the literary eco-reportage "Troubled Thoughts on Our Nation's Soil" (*Guotu yousi* 国土忧思) in which he discusses the relationship between China's growing population, the resulting increase in grain demand, and the simultaneous loss of arable soil due to erosion and pollution.[77] For our purposes, it is very illustrative to take a closer look at the post-script to the second edition of this very successful volume, composed by the Hong Kong based writer and poet Liu Jikun 刘济昆. He describes the author's role in the following words:

> When professors in the 1960s taught classes on the history of literature,
> they certainly to a large degree reviewed writers such as Qu Yuan, Du Fu,
> Xin Qiji or Lu Xun who had felt concern for the nation and worried about
> its people (*you guo you min* 忧国忧民). But as soon as the topic turned to
> the achievements of contemporary literature, "concern" and "worry"
> were terms deemed to be no longer necessary anymore. Instead, they
> were turned into expressions such as "singing the praise of the

---

[77] Originally published as "Ah, Mother Soil! – An Alarm Bell of Concern" (*A, guotu! – Youhuan de jingzhong* 阿国土. 忧患的警钟). The piece received numerous literary awards, and was later turned into a two-part TV program with the title "Blood Sacrifice of the Yellow Earth" (*Xueji Huangtudi* 血祭黄土地). (Wu 2007: 201) The text was later, together with a collection of other reportages by the same other, published in a book-length "Trilogy on Human Existence" (*Renlei Shengcun Sanbuqu* 人类生存三部曲).

fatherland", and "extolling the people" (*gesong zuguo, gesong renmin* 歌颂祖国, 歌颂人民). Because if one had for example mentioned how so-called "rightist" men and women of letters had "felt concern for the nation and worried about its people" during the One-Hundred-Flowers campaign in 1957, one could have been charged with some sort of offense. But again, Chinese intellectuals love noting better than to trouble themselves with the well-being of the nation and the people; and even if their front lines may fall [in battle], others will step over their bloodied bodies [and advance], singing with solemn fervor.

It has been over ten years since the beginning of the Reform and Opening Policy, and the voices of approval here and abroad still have not faded away. Yet still, there are intellectuals who do not want to be silent, who insist on staying concerned about the nation, and worry for its people. Recently, I read "Troubled Thoughts on Our Nation's Soil", and it made my palms sweaty out of concern for its author, Wang Zhi'an. Because if that book had been published during the Anti-Rightist campaign, or during the Cultural Revolution, this gentleman would have been in big trouble. [...] This book talks about how China's soil is destroyed, abused. In the text, the reader will find neither fairy tales nor exercises in sycophantic praise; instead, it reveals to us a "dark side", and reminds us fellow countrymen that we should love and cherish our nation's soil!

Intellectuals with concern for the nation and its people are China's backbone. Those in power (*dang zhengzhe* 当政者) would do well to ask this sort of "stinking number nine"[78] for advice and guidance, because loyal advice has never been pleasant to the ear, and yet it is most beneficial for administering state affairs and ensuring national security (*zhi guo an bang* 治国安邦). [...] (Wang Zhi'an 1993: 306-308)

In the context of China's rigid state-imposed controls over literary production, such high-temperature intensity of language, the confrontational stance, and the violent metaphors it employs (the idea that Chinese intellectuals are being slaughtered for performing their role) are remarkable. Yet it is made possible not only by the author's

---

[78] The expression "Stinking Number Nine" (*chou lao jiu* 臭老九) was a pejorative, officially used term for intellectuals during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

self-understanding as performing a necessary (albeit possible dangerous) role in the greater scheme of things, and his convictions are presented in the self-righteous language of total dedication to the higher public good. The last paragraph especially is noteworthy in this regard: "loyal advice" (*zhong yan* 忠言), given from intellectuals to those in power, is presented as an essential component to achieve good governance (as opposed to the chaos during the Cultural Revolution when intellectuals were despised, to which the mentioning of the "Stinking No. 9" refers). Dissent in this framework is thusly inherently patriotic, with the implications that good political leaders will accept the input provided to them by social actors outside the government apparatus. By framing the issues in terms of an ancient social imaginary, the text is rendered not only culturally but also politically more acceptable to the audience and somewhat ensures itself against accusations from official side.

III.4   The subject matter: Naturescape and governance

The social imaginary described so far is applicable not only to environmental reportage literature, but to reportage literature in general. The difference, however, is that the naturescape into which Xu Gang embeds his reportage serves as a crucial amplifier to the social imaginary the authors wants to convey. Through the naturescape, ecological reportage literature is able to tap into a rich pool of cultural connotations that lend its persuasive power to it sociopolitical message.

Wuyishan in the context of the text represents more than just a physical locality or a natural phenomenon. Instead, we have to appreciate the fact that the destination of Xu Gang's travel to a Chinese readership possesses a greater significance, both in aesthetic as well as in cultural terms, connotations that he author himself is quick to reinforce: His initial descriptions of the natural landscape unfold before the reader's eye a scenery of great natural beauty, a naturalness that immediately reminds the reader of an aesthetic ideal which is often emulated in Chinese traditional art, especially landscape painting (*shanshui hua* 山水画): "At *Wuyishan*, the rocks are picturesque, the trees mysterious, and the water is beautiful and pristine" (*Wuyishan shan guai, shu qi, shui xiu* 武夷山山怪树奇水秀) (FXL: 4) As the author informs us, the bizarre shape of the rock formations of Wuyishan are called "bone rocks" (*gu shan* 骨山), and they play an important role in Chinese landscaping and garden architecture

for their "natural" look. Hence, already in the introduction, Xu Gang makes it unequivocally clear that there is an inextricable connection between nature and Chinese culture, yes that the former *is representative of* the latter, at least in aesthetic terms. As Xu Gang declares, the natural beauty of Wuyishan is wholly attributable to its tree population: "The reason why the mountains are green and the water is beautiful is all owed to the green of the trees" (*shan qing shui xiu yuanyu shu lü* 山青水秀源于树绿" (FMXL: 5)). The term *shan qing shui xiu* is actually reminiscent of a number of classical Chinese phrases meant to describe natural beauty, such as *shan qing shui xiu* 山清水秀, or *shan ming shui xiu* 山明水秀. Critics of Xu Gang's have remarked on the "poem-like narrative" (*shixing xushi* 诗性叙事) that permeates his style of eco-reportage. (Zeng and Yang 2010). The repeated usage of Chinese *loci classici* to describe the natural scenery throughout the text not only serves as a further linguistic amplification of the connection between nature and culture, but establishes a particular naturescape that is charged with cultural connotations.

The connotation in this case is points to the long and well-established relationship between nature, governance, and remonstrance in China: The world of men was thought to be a mirror of the heavenly order. The Daodejing states that "Man takes his law from Earth; Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tao. The law of the Tao is it being what it is (*ziran* 自然)." (in the Legge translation) Dynastic rule was legitimized by heaven through the Heavenly Mandate *tianming* 天命, any disturbances in its legitimacy would manifest themselves in the natural world through natural catastrophes. The natural world (also one has to not that "nature" as concept in its Western sense did not exist in pre-modern China) was hence endowed with political implications and thus lent itself to political interpretations: Murck has shown how landscape painting and nature poetry in Song dynasty China, in this case artistic representations of the famous *Eight Views of Xiao Xiang* were employed to exercise the "Subtle Art of Dissent" (id. 2000: 203-227).

Examples for the appropriation of nature by scholar officials to remonstrate against social ills are can be found for example in poems such as *Encountering Sorrow* (*Li Sao* 离骚) by Qu Yuan who had been exiled from the court of Chu to the southern region of Xiao Xiang after losing a power struggle with a rival faction. The poem is written in form of a (fantastic) journey through an imaginary landscape undertaken by a

virtuous man who has been slandered by his political enemies at court and banished by the king of Chu. The poet laments the moral degeneration that has befallen the once powerful state of Chu, and proclaims that he nevertheless will adhere to his own high moral standards. Centuries later, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), himself an admirer of Qu Yuan, met a similar fate: After having lost a power struggle with the palace eunuch faction he was banished to Yongzhou (on the territory of today's Hunan province in Southwest China). There he spent the next ten years of his life in modest circumstances in the position of an assistant-prefect, having at times to life in an abandoned Buddhist temple. His prolific writing during the time in exile often employs descriptions of the remote natural scenery as a metaphor for his banishment from court. (Murck 2000: 25-27; also: Davis 1996)

Specifically, I would like to address two points in Xu Gang's *Woodcutter* in which the naturescape plays a significant role in this regard: nature as a space of reclusion for the morally superior man, and the appropriation of natural sights (mountains in this case) as places of political power.

III.4.1 Nature as a refuge for the superior man

As Xu Gang wanders around the endangered landscape of Wuyishan, he meets a remarkable person:

> "I recognize him at once, skinny and dark, his hand holding a bamboo straw hat, and only his sparkling eyes set him apart from ordinary men. I think he must have absorbed some spiritual force of Mount *Wuyi*. Some say he is a strange man, an eccentric, an obnoxious troublemaker. The villagers say he protects the forests, repairs the roads. He is the management office's section chief for capital construction [...]. His name is Chen Jianlin." (FMXL: 6-7)

It is not entirely clear from the text whether the person is fictitious and serves as a plot devise to advance the narrative, or if Xu Gang actually encountered this person. The fact that some of his distinguishing features as described in the quote above seem to endow him with supernatural attributes point to the former possibility. It is likely that Xu Gang here draws on a rich literary tradition that portrays nature as the dwelling place for superior individuals who have voluntarily withdrawn from the

world of men only to re-emerge once the right time has arrived. As such, Chen Jianlin displays all feature of an archetype of noble recluse that Berkowitz labels "the wise rustic":

> He [the wise rustic] is encountered fortuitously, standing by the road or just passing by on his way from one anywhere to another; he imparts his often homespun yet always profound notion, which has not necessarily been solicited nor is it always appreciated [...]. The Wise Rustic is a literary invention and lives only as the personification of a recurrent leitmotif and as a mouthpiece for someone else's views. Berkowitz 2000: 28-29)

Soon it becomes clear that Mr. Chen is no ordinary man, and neither is he an ordinary bureaucrat. Although his rank as a cadre of the CCP would entitle him to be set above the ordinary village folk, he does not display the airs of grandeur that characterizes many of his fellow colleagues. To the contrary: Mr. Chen refers to himself as "the dog official" (*gou guan'r* 狗官儿), a rather unflattering name that no normal cadre would ever self-apply. Not so Chen Jianlin, who says about himself: "I am Wuyishan's watchdog (*kan shan gou* 看山狗), I bite whoever tries to cut down trees, I am the dog official!" But it is not only his role as the guardian of the forests that makes him pick this humble name, it is also his attitude of serving the people. Mr. Chen, through Xu Gang's description, is presented to us as the highest ideal of a Communist cadre, assigning to himself a subservient role towards the common people, and being utterly devoted to a higher cause. He detests the bad habit of feasting and drinking at the expense of the public purse that has become so common amongst cadres, and instead rides his humble bicycle home every noon to eat lunch there so to save the tax payer's money. He patrols the mountains tirelessly to prevent illegal logging, and when he cannot persuade the villagers, he often pays them out of his own pocket to keep them from felling a tree for money. But it soon becomes clear that Chen Jianlin is fighting a lonely cause, even while he is writing letters of warning to other officials, and publishing articles in the local gazette: one man will not be able to stand against all the hungry axes eager to devour the forests to the last tree.

For these fellow cadres Mr. Chen, the only committed protectionist in the area, reserves the bulk of his ire: he curses them as a bunch of hypocrites, pencil pushers, and kiss-ups (*mapi*): "These cadres, who lead the people on to cut trees, they should

all be put against a wall and shot! I will take care of their children and educate them as if they were my own." (FMXL: 9) Aiming at a party leader from Chong'an county, he continues: "Corruption: wasn't that supposed to be the Guomindang? With such people in power, the whole country is done for, and so is *Wuyishan*!" Xu Gang dryly comments: "His anger is directed at the right one, this party leader had succeeded his predecessor for not even a year, and already he went to Hong Kong, and when he came back, he happily played some pornographic videos he had brought with him for 13 days in a row, what did it matter to him that people were continue logging at *Wuyishan*?" (FMXL: 9)

Just as Xu Gang meets an outstanding person at *Wuyishan*, he discovers another person at *Tianmushan*: Song Yongzeng 宋永增, another devoted protectionist of the mountains and the forests. Just as Chen Jianlin, "Old Song" is a man of impeccable revolutionary credentials, as well as unwavering moral convictions: A veteran of the World War as a militia member of the famous 8th Route Army (*tu balu* 土八路), in the 1950s a cadre of significant status, he was assigned to guard the forest area at Tianmushan starting in the 1960s. Apart from protecting nature ever since then, he was also instrumental in several reforestation campaigns. Xu Gang descriptions endow him with almost saint-like features, as a Daoist hermit from the past: he has become an expert in herbalism, botanic lore and traditional healing methods while living on the mountains. Moreover, in order to protect the area, Old Song has teamed up with a group of Buddhist monks who inhabit the temple located on the mountain. The main difference to the situation at *Wuyishan*, however, is that here, the protectionist does not fight a lonely cause, but is helped by enlightened cadres who follow the guidelines set by the central government, and also are helped by Old Song's advice and guidance.

Moreover, as for his own role, Xu Gang stresses that he is not the first, but only the latest in a line of travelling Chinese scholars to describe the natural majesty of *Wuyishan*: "In 1616 [Western calendar], Xu Xiake[79] 徐霞客 entered *Min* [Fujian province; M.L.] for the first time to visit *Wuyishan*. In his "Travel Diary to Wuyishan" (*You Wuyishan Riji*), he recorded:

---

[79] Xu Xiake was a famous Ming dynasty traveller and explorer.

The setting sun forms a semicircle 落日半规

Ridges and peaks far and near 远近峰峦

Shades of green and violet abound. 青紫万状

Rocks loom majestically 岩既雄扩

Outpouring springs from high above 泉亦高散

In a thousand rills, a myriad threads 千条万缕

High from the air water is streaming 悬空倾泻

What a spectacle to behold! 亦大观也

III.4.2 Mountains as a locus of political power and remonstrance

The locality itself in which *Woodcutter* is situated is heavily endowed with sociopolitical meanings that play a crucial role in amplifying Xu Gang's framing: Since mountains play a major part in Xu Gang's narrative, let us briefly examine some connotations associated with them in the context of Chinese culture.

While within Chinese cosmology, nature's course was characterized by seasonality, nature itself was thought to be eternal. Mountains represented nature's most visible physical manifestation, their (perceived) imperishability stood in contrast to the fleetingness of the world of men: "Nations may fall, but mountains and rivers remain." (*Guo po shan he zai*. 国破山河在)[80] Hence, from early times onward, mountains where an object of worship; the *Shangshu* 尚书 (Book of Documents, compiled between the 6th and 4th centuries BC) for example records that the mythical emperor Shun 舜, after having ascended the throne, offered sacrifices to the mountains and to the rivers (Legge 1966: 33). Moreover, mountains served as an important cultic site at which rulers reaffirmed their power through enactment of dynastic rites: "Mountains, the largest physical presence within the landscape, were best suited to fulfilling the role of facilitating communication between heaven and earth, serving as boundaries between the real and the imagined, the mundane and the sublime, and providing a link between the human world and a diverse mixture of religious and cosmological systems." (Ward 2001: 187) Sima Qian's 司马迁 *Record of the Grand Historian* (109-91

---

[80] The quote is the first line from the poem *Chunwang* 春望 by Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫.

BC) states that Qin Shihuang 秦始皇, first emperor of China, ascended Mount Tai in 219 BC during an inspection tour of his newly unified empire. Upon the mountain, he not only offered up sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, but also erected stone tablets espousing the moral superiority and legitimacy of the Qin dynasty. This ritual practice followed established precedent that was adhered to by most subsequent emperors throughout the dynasties: The inscription of a mountain with imperial edicts aimed at merging nature with the realm of men, and offered the opportunity to substantiate a dynasty's claim for power through the appropriation of the permanence of the natural order. This symbolism was also often employed in traditional Chinese landscape painting and poetry, where "[M]ountains were read as enduring emblems of the state, and symbols of the hierarchy that was a defining element of life at court." (Murck 2000: 122)

Another relevant facet in this regard is the literary trope of climbing mountains to achieve foresight, both literary and metaphorically, something that in Chinese sometimes is referred to as "looking out far from above" (*zhan de gao, kan de yuan* 站得高看得远).

> Under the claim of the literati to act on behalf of society and possibly under a good emperor, poems on ascending mountains or journeys cannot just be read as expressions of a turn towards nature, since they are at the same time metaphors for human life indicating the specific personal attitudes, and thus highlighting the author's position towards office and living in reclusion as well as towards friends and the contemporary political situation. (Schmidt-Glintzer 2010: 535)

In his translation of Xu Xiake's travel writing, Ward points out that mountains in Xu's voluminous work often serve the purpose of ascending up high as to achieve a comprehensive view. This not only refers to the actually physical environment, but also more metaphorically to the achievement of an objective understanding of reality. "The theme of climbing on high in order to obtain a view over a great spatial distance is common in poems of many different eras: poets could, at the same time as doing so, look back over a great temporal distance, recalling past events associated with the particular site." (Ward 2001: 61)

All of the above themes come into play in what can be considered a climax in the narrative of *Woodcutter*:

After many fruitless efforts to bring his colleagues to commit themselves to action, Mr. Chen, the lone protectionist, by chance stumbles upon an ancient stone tablet (*shibei* 石碑) that a farmer has stowed away in his home: Upon examination, it becomes apparent that the tablet dates from the Qing Dynasty. It annunciates that in the 28th year of the *Qianlong* reign (1763 AD), Jianningfu district punished over ten local officials on charges of corruption and racketeering. They had failed to protect the temples and tea plantations of Wuyishan as mandated by law, and the tablet precisely lists their names, crimes and the sentence they received. Without hesitation, Mr. Chen purchases the stele, and re-erects it at a prominent spot in the mountains. Moreover, he composes a scathing denunciation of the present situation, using a similar style of classical Chinese as found on the tablet, and attaches it to the stone.

> 古时且尔!今者保护森林，政府有明令，凡我人民宜各有责遵守之，况性有自觉，心有自尊，肥己损公被人鄙，非君子所为，砍毁迹敛，则名山胜概益增华美，记事勒石，示告诚焉，幸勿自治伊戚。

> This has historical precedent. The government, nowadays, has issued explicit decrees to protect the woods; each citizen should responsibly obey the decree. Furthermore, one supposedly has self-awareness and self-esteem. Those who profit at the expense of the public good will be universally despised. It is not the behavior of a gentleman [*junzi*]. The mountains and the landscape will become all the more beautiful and magnificent when deforestation decreases. Therefore, this stone monument is inscribed with these statements and erected here to admonish us not to bring misery on ourselves. (FMXL: 11)

This action manages to shame some of his mid-level colleagues into giving up the logging temporarily. However, the existence of the denunciatory stele quickly comes to the attention of the higher cadres on the county level. After an outside journalist from the city arrives with the intent to investigate the situation and interview Mr. Chen, the local party bosses summon the meddlesome protectionist to the party office in town and pressure him to put down the stele. When Chen refuses to comply, the local cadres detach a gang of hired ruffians who topple and smash the stone tablet,

thus erasing the compromising and embarrassing testimony. "The stele may be destroyed", Xu Gang warns, "the evil tracks of deforestation covered up, yet the wicked conduct of the bureaucrats and their sole concern for themselves and for their superiors, but never for the people, persists! History will remember them! Their descendants will curse them!" (FMXL: 14)

Mr. Chen's action follows a well-established pattern of political dissent firmly rooted in a traditional imaginary: The erection of the stele serves not only as a tool to circumvent the dysfunctional alleys of political communication in an attempt to re-open the "avenues of speech" and appeal directly to the center. It alludes to the imaginary of the loyal official offering honest yet unwelcome remonstrance by addressing grievances previously hidden from the center's attention. Moreover, his action appropriates the very mountain, both location of the crime and its victim, thus touching upon all the connotations between good governance and nature within the Chinese social imaginary. This pattern becomes even more tangible when we consider that the actions performed by Xu Gang's heroic protectionist follows precedent both historic and contemporary, as the following two anecdotes will illustrate:

Yuan Qinglin 袁清林, in his *Zhongguo huanjing baohu shihua* (Historical discussion of the conservation of nature in China) mentions an incident[81] dating from the middle of the 19th century in which also a stele is erected at a mountain site in order to accuse illegal loggers. (Yuan Qinglin 1990: 266-267) In Tongdao 通道, Hunan Province, an autonomous district inhabited by the national *Dong* 侗 minority, the village elders in 1851 erected a stone stele on a mountain site named *Baoshanzhai* 保山寨 ("mountain protection camp") that denounced the destruction of the previously lush forests in the area through excessive logging. The inscription read in part:

> Was the vegetation of the forests of these mountains always the way it is
> today? No. It was not. A phenomenon whose age is of many centuries has
> met with a disaster.

---

[81] I am grateful to Prof. Mark Elvin for directing me towards this important source material. A longer translation of the stele's inscription alongside a brief interpretation can be found at: Elvin 1993: 28.

[…] The people of the present time are not of a quality comparable to those of more remote ages. They have acted in their personal interest in cutting down trees in an unreasonable fashion. The result has been that the beauty of the mountain trees has undergone a change, and the mountains shine as if they had been stripped naked. […]

All the trees, on all sides of the Camp, must be cared for so that they can return to a good condition, and then surpass the past, flourishing, rich, and of a great age, and such that our children and our grandchildren may pass on their abundance from one to the other without end.

We have decided that the trees around the source of the river at Camp Baoshan provide it with a comprehensive protection and that all of them must be cared for and placed under an interdict. It will not be allowed for them to be felled in an abusive fashion. Those who disobey will be punished. (Elvin 1993: 28)

As Elvin points out in his commentary on this inscription, it is likely that it was used in the context of an inter-clan or kin-group conflict over precious resources that had become scarcer by the middle of the 19ᵗʰ century (Elvin 1993: 28-29). While anecdotal, the incident demonstrates that the practice of erecting accusatory or admonishing steles at prominent mountain sites was an established practice in the context of forest protection. Yuan in his comment on this anecdote – while not providing further incidents – speculates that the practice must have been widespread and was carried on even after the liberation of 1949. (Yuan Qinglin 1990: 267)

The second anecdote dates from the 1980s, and is much more closely tied to the issue at hand: In the 1980s, and before he was eventually stripped of his post as general secretary of the Communist Party in January 1987, Hu Yaobang 胡耀邦 was one of the most prominent voices inside the CCP leadership in favor of social, not only economic, liberalization. He became an outspoken proponent of policies aimed to combat corruption within the CCP, and was also known as one of the very first high-ranking officials who addressed environmental issues, especially re-forestation, stances that let him to be dubbed China's "Mr. Clean" and "Mr. Green". These positions, together with his year-long office as chairman of the Communist Youth

League of China made him an outstandingly popular figure especially amongst China's youth.

In July 1983, Hu Yaobang conducted an inspection tour of Gansu and Qinghai province and urged local officials to "drive economic development according to local conditions". Gansu province experienced severe environmental issues resulting from soil erosion and de-forestation, the result of decades-long efforts by the provincial government to boost the province's grain output. Hu on his inspection tour urged officials to "play the lute upside down" (*fan tan pipa* 反弹琵琶) and take a more counterintuitive yet sustainable approach to agriculture: reforestation of the province would allow the province not only to address its environmental, but ultimately its economic problems. As Hu put it in the context of his inspection tour: "Plant shrubs and trees [in order to] address poverty and achieve wealth" (*Zhong cao zhong shu, zhi qiong zhi fu* 种草种树, 治穷致富) In August 1986, the Reforestation Committee of Gansu province, the provincial forestry office, and the Communist Youth League decided to commemorate Hu Yaobang's visit as well as his message with the erection of a stone stele. It was erected in the forests at the eastern slope of Mount Xujia (*Xujia shan* 徐家山, lit. "Mountain of the Xu Clan"), inside a national park area near the city of Lanzhou. Hu's eight-character phrase *zhong cao zhong shu, zhi qiong zhi fu* was prominently engraved in his own handwriting on the front of the stele, facing east, while on the back, an account was given of the "glorious achievements" in the cause of greening Gansu province through inspiring cadres and the common people alike (Zou 2006:4)[82]

It seems plausible to argue that Xu Gang intends his eco-reportage to fulfill the same role as the stone tablet erected by the moral hero of his reportage. Moreover, the author can situate his argument within precedent provided both past as well as contemporary. Perry has argued that one of the established means of challenging authority in the People's Replulic is the creative appropriation of state rituals and official rhetoric, alongside adherence to traditionally sanctioned modes of behavior

---

[82] This stele was later, in 1998, referred to in the title of an officially published book entitled "The Green Stele – A Collection of Documents and Experiences Regarding the Greening Efforts of Lanzhou City's Northern and Southern Mountains" (*Lüse fengbei – Lanzhoushi nanbei liangshan lühua kaifa wenjian ji jingyan huibian* 绿色丰碑 – 兰州市南北两山绿化开发文件及经验汇编), praising Hu Yaobang for his foresight and enlightened policies. (Zou 2006: 4)

through the use of remonstrance and presentation of petitions (Perry 2001: 312). Such contextualization lends additional forcefulness to his message, enhances the legitimacy of "loyal speech", and raises the cultural recognizeablity of the played by reportage in the context of environmental governance.

The chapter has argued that through an analysis of the framing of environmental reportage literature, we can not only come to a greater understanding of the discursive aspect of Chinese environmentalism, but also more generally of the relationship between environmentalists and the Chinese state. A consideration of the traditional Chinese social imaginary, which emphasizes the role of literature and of literati to exercise loyal remonstrance, has shed new light on the fact that Chinese environmentalists by no means are universally antagonistic towards the state as such. Far from displaying "female mildness", the framing of *Woodcutter* suggests a cooperative approach towards environmental governance which invokes selective alignments between activists and central government actors against local corruption. As such, eco-reportages like *Woodcutter* represent the discursive dimension to a greater societal strategy that lets "NGOs seek central government support against local projects which they oppose but are powerless to stop" (Lu 2007: 60), and align themselves with key ally, people in the government who are sympathetic to their cause. The reason why Chinese civil society in general has so notably coalesced around environmental issues may partly be due to the fact that the issue of environment is uniquely qualified to facilitate political discourse due to its traditional cultural connotations.

IV.   Tang Xiyang and the creation of China's green avant-garde

Within the associational landscape of Chinese environmental NGOs, student environmental organizations (SEAs) comprise a significant portion. "The many committed student leaders of SEAs who participated during the early first step and reaching out phases of SEA development in China have become a new generation of decision-makers. They are working as officials, teachers, entrepreneurs, reporters and NGOs leaders—they possess environmental literacy and passion. [...] helping to be one of the growth of "green" decision-makers is likely to be one of the most influential impacts of SEAs in China." (Lu 2003: 65)

This chapter will analyze the writings of an important Chinese environmentalist, Tang Xiyang 唐锡阳 (born 1930). He is one of China's best-known environmentalists of the first hour, and his work has had a significant impact on the Chinese environmental movement as a whole.[83] He is also one of the few among a growing number of Chinese environmentalist authors who have won international acclaim, a fact that can be attributed to no small degree also to his literary collaboration with his late wife, US national Marcia B. Marks, with whom he co-authored a number of books that were either published in the English language or translated from Chinese. He has also been actively engaged in social activism for a long time. Tang became a leading member of the educational office of the *Chinese Wildlife Conservation Association*, a GONGO (government-organized non-governmental organization) founded with the purpose to educate the Chinese public on matters of wildlife conservation by the Ministry of Forestry in 1983, as well as an active member of

---

[83] The information for his short biographical sketch I have stitched together from various sources, since it is not easy to find one comprehensive account on Mr. Tang's life. Information about his life is scattered throughout his writings. He is at the moment engaged in writing an autobiography, which so far has not been published. For some reason, he is not included in the appendix to Wu Jingming's 吴景明 dissertation (走向和谐：人与自然的双重变奏, p. 200-211) which is one of the few comprehensive monographs of Chinese eco-literature to date and features a list of biographical sketches from many Chinese ecowriters. This may indicate that Tang is perceived more in terms of an activist and educator than a writer. More on this point below. For brief accounts in English on Tang's life, his work, and his role in the Chinese environmental public sphere see: Economy 2004: 138-141, also: Wu Fengshi 2009: 2 and Yang Guobin 2005: 52-53.

Beijing-based NGO *Friends of Nature*.[84] In 1995, Tang Xiyang in collaboration with *Friends of Nature* and various SEAs initiated a campaign to save the habitat of the golden monkey in Yunnan province, an effort that received significant attention. (Lu 2003: 57) Tang's efforts have also received international recognition; he was, for example, awarded the *Ramon Magsaysay Award for Peace and International Understanding* in 2007.[85]

Tang's work is important in our context because of his role not only as a reporter, author or activist, but much more as one of China's most eminent and well-respected educators on environmental issues.[86] In this context, he and his wife are known for the organization of "Green Camps" (*lüse ying* 绿色营), extensive nature excursions that Tang and Marks undertook with Chinese students for educational purposes. Tang Xiyang carried on alone when his wife had passed away due to illness in 1996.[87] Many participants of the early Green Camps went on to become important actors in the green Chinese movement themselves, amongst them prominent personalities such as Liao Xiaoyi 廖晓义 (now leader of the influential Chinese NGO *Global Village Beijing*), Wen Bo, Co-Director of Pacific Environment's China Program and *Time Magazine*'s "Eco-Hero" of 2006, or renowned environmental journalists such as Feng Yongfeng 冯永锋, Shen Xiaohui 沈孝辉 or Wang Yongchen 汪永晨. In a book titled "Green Camps" (*Lüse ying* 绿色营) edited by Tang Xiyang and dedicated to his wife's memory, former participants, fellow activists, journalists and writers recount their experiences and address various environmental issues in China.

---

[84] For the role of GONGOs in China in general, as well as their educational functions in particular, see: Wu Fengshi (2002): 45-58.

[85] A brief laudatio can be found on the organization's website at:
http://www.rmaf.org.ph/Awardees/Citation/CitationXiyangTan.htm [2011/07/11]

[86] For Tang's importance, see e.g. Wu 2004: 2; Economy 2004: 138-141; also: Compare e.g. the title of an article in the popular Southern Weekend from Jan. 13th 2010 entitled 绿色袖 · 教育 -- 唐锡阳 [Green Leader (Education) – Tang Xiyang], accessible at http://www.infzm.com/content/40120 (2011/07/01) He is often respectfully referred to as "Teacher Tang" (*Tang Laoshi* 唐老师), or with the even more respectful term *Tang lao* 唐老 by fellow environmentalists, journalists and activists.

[87] In fact, Marcia Bliss Marks' name remains largely unknown to Western audiences, but in China her role as an environmental educator is well acknowledged, as can be concluded e.g. from the many, often very personal, posthumous dedications to her. See below.

IV.1 Beginnings: What nature? What man?

Tang Xiyang was born in 1930 in Miluo County, Hunan Province. After graduating from Beijing Normal University in the early 1950s, he worked as a newspaper editor and journalist for the *Beijing Daily* in between 1953 and 1956. However, during the One-Hundred-Flowers Campaign, he was labeled a rightist, dismissed from his job, and sent off to perform manual labor in farms and factories around the Beijing area. His first wife, *Beijing Middle School No.52* teacher Zheng Zhaonan 郑兆南, suffered repeated abuse at the hands of Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, because of her husband's political background and her refusal to denounce their marriage. She eventually died from injuries suffered during "struggle sessions", on the way to a hospital. Their two daughters experienced harassment and social discrimination for years, and were sent into the countryside.

In 1979, Tang was rehabilitated and allowed to take up a post at the Beijing Museum for Natural History, where he became editor (later editor-in-chief) of the *Great Nature* magazine (*Daziran Zazhi* 大自然杂志), one of China's earliest ecologically-themed periodicals, where he worked from 1980 to 1990. He also began extensive journalistic trips through China's remote natural reserves. Later in life, Tang stated that nature "reclaimed" him after having spent decades as a social outcast (in which, as he says, only the duty of having to care for his two daughters prevented him from committing suicide like so many of his peers), and that the immersion in nature provided a deeply personal, emotional, in a sense therapeutic experience: In an interview originally broadcast Dec. 9, 2003 on the program "Green Space" on CCTV (China Central Television), he reflected on his early nature experiences

> When I came in touch with nature, I immediately felt at home. Once, my tour guide and I set up a shack on the top of a hill where we stayed for several days. We were free from any kind of outside interference. We hung our watches on the branches of a tree, and placed our toothpaste and toothbrushes by a creek. Monkeys were our only visitors. I feel that in Mother Nature one can find the most beautiful painting, the most touching melody and the most sophisticated philosophy. That is, nature

> can give me everything. That sounds a little abstract, but I did begin to
>
> fall deeply in love with nature.[88]

Tang's biography suggests a comparison with that of other post-Mao writers whose life was shaped by the upheavals of Maoism, including contemporaries who share Tang's experience of persecution and suffering, or the younger *Zhiqing* generation who were sent into the villages and up the mountains. As we have discussed in the introduction, literary representations of nature in these accounts play an important role. They are, however, by no means homogenous, but multi-facetted, depending on the author, and almost always serve as a literary device to address social, not environmental, dimensions: Some accounts, such as *The Jungle*, depict nature as a hostile and dangerous wilderness that serves as an allegoric image for an equally harsh and brutal social environment. For others, the same wilderness serves as the battlefield whose harshness merely underlines the heroism of the human struggle against the elements. Yet others manage to reconcile several perspectives on nature altogether in one text. In the case of Lao Gui's *Blood Red Sunset*, the narrative establishes a contrasting, multi-dimensional structure in which the individual finds freedom and peace within a pastoral landscape removed from society, while the collective coercion exerted by society and the brutality of socialist re-education occurs against the backdrop of a merciless wilderness.

There are strong indications that the initial impetus for Tang Xiyang's drift towards nature did not follow any conservationist impulse, but the result of his experience of persecution and suffering: "Originally I did not hold any particular love for nature. It was society that abandoned me, and forced me to enter nature." (AGWT 299) When Japanese friend Matsuyoshi (松芳) asks about Tang's personal history during the Cultural Revolution and asks "How did you fall in love with nature?" he answered

> I repeat again what I have said at Sally's home, and naturally also mention
>
> the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the "Great Proletarian Cultural

---

[88] An English translation of the interview can be found on the Webpage of *Friends of Nature* (*Ziran zhi you* 自然之友), URL: http://www.fon.org.cn/content.php?aid=8766 (2011/07/11).

> Revolution". It has been those political movements that have expelled me
>
> from "society", and forced me to enter nature." (AGWT 299)

How did Tang Xiyang manage to evolve from what essentially has to be understood as an escape from society towards a pro-active role in shaping green civil society in China? His early writings provide significant insight in this regard. Tang's earliest article, "At Wuyishan, science is blossoming" (*Wuyishan kai kexuehua* 武夷山开科学花), was published in *Great Nature Magazine* on Sept. 8th 1981. The article consists of a report by Tang Xiyang who travels to Fujian province to report on the conditions at the "Wuyishan natural protection reservation" (*Wuyishan ziran baohuqu* 武夷山自然保护区). After a round trip, heavy rain forces Tang to seek shelter at a "Research Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Snake-Related Injuries" located in Dazhulan, a humble operation located deep in the mountains. While enjoying the hospitality of the staff (which includes Tang being treated to local specialties such as dried bamboo shoots served with fresh snake meat), he comments on the working conditions at this "peculiar" (*qite* 奇特) work unit, "which has noteworthy traits that unfortunately are in short supply in the rest of this country" (ibid: 5):

The piece itself is written in a highly conventional style, its language imbued with the political jargon demanded by the prevailing political conditions of the early 1980s. The title's reference to the "blossoming of science" is in lockstep with the ideological requirement to "seek truth from facts" (*shishi qiu shi* 实事求是), Deng Xiaoping's abandonment of the ideological furor of the Cultural Revolution in favor of scientifically based development since 1978. The text's thematic focus on a dedicated (socialist) work unit whose "hard work has carried fruit within the masses" (*qunzhong zhong kaihua jieguo le* 群众中开花结果了, ibid. 5) follows the literary conventions of Socialist Realism, especially the principles of *partiynost* ("party spirit") and *narodnost* (patriotic devotion to the common people).[89]

Tang's report paints the picture of a selfless and heroic collective who only exists to serve the people, and who dutifully implements the enlightened directives provided by the current political regime. The workers are, as Tang exalts, "red as well as

---

[89] For the legacy of Soviet-style socialist realism in general, and the role of the Russian hero in particular for modern Chinese fiction, see: Ng 1988.

professional" (*you hong you zhuan* 又红又专), meaning the display both the correct socialist revolutionary consciousness as well as a professional skill set. [90] The professional quality only briefly merits Tang's attention ("they [the staff members] are on the forefront of medical research" (*gongzuo zai yiliao keyan diyixian* 工作在医疗科研第一线), but it is especially the collective's moral code, manifested in its egalitarian and democratic working style, that catches the author's eye: Staff consists of 40 people, tasks and responsibilities rotate for everyone, so that everybody is involved in all aspects of the work, and "nobody is left behind, no worker is unwanted". The result is a superior work moral; apart from the research facility's director, all the members consist of 16-26 year old young people who have not yet started a family. The director himself is so dedicated to his work that his wife abandoned him, and so far he has not yet restarted a family household. "This objective situation has resulted in them leading a form of communal (*tuanjie* 团结), intimate (*qinmi* 亲密) and collective life (*jiti shenghuo* 集体生活)", and Tang's report goes to great lengths to praise the superior work ethics of the people involved.

What is interesting in our context is not the conventionality of the article, but rather how the naturescape in which the narration is set reinforces its argument. The main focus of the text is the world of men, not nature or any related ecological issue. Tang adopts a highly anthropocentric perspective that is primarily concerned with "good" human society. Nature relates to this question only inasmuch as that it is the immersion in nature that brings out the best in every individual, so that society's ideals can be realized to its fullest. It is noteworthy in this context that Tang does not paint a coherent naturescape in his report. Instead, concepts of nature oscillate between different perspectives on nature, depending on the larger point the author is trying to make. On the one hand, depictions of a pristine pastoral environment serve as the mirror for a human community that is not only morally superior, but whose moral outlook also conforms with the ideological requirements of the current political regime.

---

[90] It should be noted here that in the context of Chinese political discourse, the emphasis of *hong* or *zhuan* has often shifted according to the respective dominant political faction. While the political winds during the Cultural Revolution favored Redness over professionalism, Deng Xiaoping quickly changed course in the opposite direction in order to stimulate economic growth. To label a collective both red and professional as Tang does has a decidedly utopian connotation)

> From getting up in the morning, eating breakfast, to working, holding meetings, self-study, [...] they all obey the faintest of commands. In order to concentrate their energy on their work, they even have rules against playing chess or cards apart from Saturday nights and Sundays. [...] Under the leadership of the more seasoned comrades, this collective dearly loves the sick, loves science, loves work. *Just like the natural environment they live in is nearly free from contamination or pollution*, amongst them they do not tolerate anarchy, selfishness, or liberalism. (ibid: 5, my emphasis)

On the other hand, however, references to the harsh, untamed or hostile side of nature (the "wilderness" perspective) are employed to illustrate the heroic struggles of man against impossible odds, a trope that is very well established in Chinese socialist writing: Tang has a first-hand chance to witness the "collective force" (*jiti de liliang* 集体的力量, ibid. 5) when after three days of consecutive rain, "vicious" (*xiongmeng* 凶猛) mountain torrents and flooding water threatens to sweep away the confines of the institute's snake compound, used to harvest snake poison for research purposes:

> "Without anybody having to give a command, the young staff members and the old director throw away their umbrellas, take off their clothes, and jump waste-deep into the mud. While some start digging ditches, others scoop out the accumulated water. After a full half day of hard battle (*ku zhan* 苦战) they finally manage to save the snake compound they so painstakingly built."

Albeit addressing the relationship between man and nature, the text is primarily concerned with highlighting a model for a good society. There is no demarcation line between nature and society, but between mainstream Chinese society – which is presented as corrupt, unenlightened and brutish – and the new, superior human community found embedded within nature. Nature, in this perspective, serves as a temporary refuge that offers the necessary space to cultivate virtue and skills. Tang refers to the locality as a "place that brings forth human talent" (*chu rencai de difang* 出人才的地方, ibid. 6), a prominent topic in Chinese intellectual history (which will be discussed later in detail). Moreover, there is an implicit elitist understanding that the

necessary changes Tang wants to see necessitate the forming of an elite which will then implement these changes within broader society.

The article suggests itself as a starting point for an understanding for Tang Xiyang's political ideas because it comprises the nucleus of the argument that will be developed more fully in his later writings, namely, the crucial connection between nature, morality, and political legitimacy. It is this argument that Tang will develop later in his most famous work, *A Green World Tour*.

IV.2   A Green World Tour

In 1981, Tang met Marcia Bliss Marks, an American national and Harvard graduate specializing in cultural education; she had come over from New York to tour China's natural parks and to study its wildlife. The two of them met in Xishuangbanna, an autonomous prefecture in the south-west province of Yunnan (*Xishuangbana Daizu Zizhizhou* 西双版纳傣族自治州) renowned for its rich biodiversity. (Its remote location and geographical particularities have made the region the last habitat for the rare Asian elephant in China.) Tang and Marks fell in love and five years later they were married. Together they extensively toured China's nature reservations, and published their experiences in a collaborative work titled *Living Treasures. An Odyssey Through China's Extraordinary Nature Reserves*. The richly illustrated book was co-published in 1987 in New York by *Bantam Books* and the *New World Press* in Beijing.[91] The Chinese version, *Ziran baohuqu tansheng* 自然保护区探胜, won the *National Award for Outstanding Popular-Scientific* W*riting* in China the same year.

In between 1989 to 1992, Marks and Tang engaged in a series of extensive travel trips around the world. Out of the notes taken during these travels emerged a book of great importance for the Chinese environmentalist movement, entitled *A Green World Tour* (*Huanqiu Lüsexing* 环球绿色行), published in 1993. The book contains the couple's account of their experiences (often on a surprisingly emotional and personal level), interviews conducted with a great number of environmentalists, government officials,

---

[91] Marks, Marcia B. and Tang Xiyang (1987): *Living Treasures. An Odyssey Through China's Extraordinary Nature Reserves*; New York, Bantam Books.

nature enthusiasts and common citizens, along with considerations about how the learned relates to the Chinese situation.

A Green World Tour exists in several editions: Following Marks' death in 1996, the book was re-published in 1997, in a significantly re-worked version, and an English translation of the book was published 1999 in China by the *Foreign Languages Press*. The main difference between the 1993 and the 1997 version lies in the fact that, while the 1993 version contains chapters on the former Soviet Union, Germany, Switzerland, France, England, the United States, and Canada (in this order), the 1997 revised edition has been significantly expanded to include extensive chapters on China and its environmental situation (the chapter addressing the former Soviet Union having been dropped). It is the 1997 revised edition that is repeatedly cited as one of the finest and most influential examples of Chinese environmental writing, sometimes as its "green bible" (*Lüse shengjing* 绿色圣经)[92], and it played a big role in introducing global environmental ideas to a Chinese readership who before had had relatively little contact with such notions. Moreover, a selected compilation of essays, published in 2004 under the title *Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! – Tang Xiyang's green thinking and critical suggestions from one-hundred authors* (*Cuo! Cuo! Cuo! Tang Xiyang lüse chensi yu baijia pingdian* 错! 错! 错! 唐锡阳绿色沉思与百家评点 [CCC]) features several (revised) chapters from the 1997 edition. Additionally, CCC features commentaries, annotations and brief remarks by other Chinese environmentalists, printed mostly at the margins alongside the main texts provided by Tang Xiyang. This analysis will pay closer attention to those chapters (and the changes made between editions), since it can be reasonably assumed that they contain content the author deems important.

IV.2.1 Nature and Morality in "A Green World Tour"

Let us continue to follow the relationship between nature and morality initially suggested by Tang's earlier text and trace it through *A Green World Tour*. In order to avoid the following account venturing towards the descriptive or anecdotal, I will

---

[92] This assessment is not only based on numerous written sources, but was expressed repeatedly to me while interacting with Chinese environmentalists while in Beijing in 2010-2011.

focus on the chapters dealing with the United States, with material on other countries woven in when they strike a chord with the general argument.

Tang and Marks start off their tour when they are invited to give a talk at Principia College, a Christian Science Academy in Saint Louis, Missouri. *America- As if I had walked into another world.* (美国 -- 好像走进了另一个世界 (AGWT 1997 quote from 1993:193) Tang takes the opportunity to contemplate the relation between nature and morals:

> After arriving at the academy, to tell the truth, I quite envied these people not only for the beautiful [natural] environment, but also for the wonderful world of communal spirit they were living in. [This world] is composed of the rivers, the forests, the flowers, the tolling of bells, the strive for academic achievement, humanity's love, and the God that exists inside one's soul. When the [natural] environment is beautiful, then man's soul is even more beautiful. (AGWT: 193)

This passage invokes images we have encountered in the earlier article discussed above; it establishes the same reciprocal relationship between the intactness of the natural world and that of the social moral system. The border between the two realms, nature and society, vanishes in the passage quoted above, so that the natural world (flowers, rivers, forests) merges with the signs and activities of the human world to form a wonderful harmonious one. Pristine nature and good social life become inseparable, and it is hard to discern from this passage which element presupposes the other. As Tang's stay continues, the connection between the two is fleshed out even more clearly. The visitor from China marvels at the accommodations provided for him and his wife (whose interior furniture and decorating have – as he stresses – not been bought, but have been donated by alumni and donors), and notices the absence of locks, which he takes as a sign of the superior ethics of his American hosts:

> As we arrive at the office and the teaching rooms, we discover that they are just like the rooms in our hostel: At night the doors are not locked, and at day everything is wide open. It seems as if there are no thieves around here, and nobody tries to profit at another's expense. As I put it, everything is up to God. I am not a religious man, but I do like religious people - devout and honest religious people; I do not believe in God or

107

any other deity, but I believe that in their hearts there is a God. Should this be the God embraced by hundreds of millions of people, then his origin would be mankind's intuitive knowledge of morality (*laizi renlei de liangzhi* 来自人类的良知): that what calls man to perform charitable deeds, not to do evil. I am greatly distressed by some social phenomena in today's China: Confucius is gone, Lei Feng is gone, religious ethics and morals are gone; moreover the evil influence of the Cultural Revolution remains, mixed with the mold spread by the contemporary market economy, it has corroded the souls of so many people. The Chinese have an old saying: It takes 10 years for a tree to grow, but it takes a century to rear a generation of talented people (*shinian shumu, bainian shuren* 十年树木, 百年树人). To cut down a forest is a distressing loss, but to destroy an entire generation's or several generations' spirit, that is truly horrible.

The Christian religion of his hosts, for Tang, is hence merely a substitute concept for public morality in general. In his lament on the environmental as well as social situation in China, any ethical system would be better than the current state of affairs. Traditional values (Confucius), or the advocacy for selfless sacrifice in the name of Communism (Lei Feng), are all better than nothing. It is notable that Tang does not mention the negative environmental legacy of neither Christianity, or traditional China, or Maoism. Confucianism traditionally regarded untamed wilderness with suspicion and distrust, and Lei Feng as a cultural icon is maybe most associated with the ideological furor of high Maoism and its relentless assault on China's natural environment. Tang apparently does not see any contradiction between a system of ethics and environmentalism. In his account, selflessness and communal spirit are either an automatic result of mankind living amidst pristine nature, or it will lead to such a pristine nature. It is not always entirely clear in these passages whether it needs intact nature to create intact morality, or the other way around. A reading of all the texts of Tang suggests that the relationship is entirely mutual.

In a later chapter of AGWT describing the couple's trip to Canada[93], Tang Xiyang takes the opportunity to discuss the relationship between natural habitat and morals,

---

[93] In the 1993 version, this chapter is entitled "From a country with many people to one with few people ("从人多的国家到人少的国家"). In CCC it is reprinted under the title "Many people amounts to disaster and few people is bliss" ("人多成灾和人少是福") (317-321). The CCC version has been

especially overpopulation. Tang elaborates this first basic observation into an argument that illustrates the difference in population density for a society: "My first feeling: If there are fewer people, then that gives people the freedom to live up to the fullest of their abilities. Here I have become aware of how precious a human being is, and that it's unacceptable to waste a human being's potential."(306) Tang expresses pleasant surprise not only about how friendly everybody treats him and his wife, but he cannot but remark on the leisurely, relaxed atmosphere that pervades the airport. He contrasts this with his experiences from China where (as certainly anybody who has visited China in this lifetime) for example bus drivers constantly are shouting and abusing the passengers, a behavior Tang can sympathize with due to the larger pressure that must weight upon one single man forced to deal with so many passengers at the same time. "With a small population, [the individual] human being receives respect." Again, this is derived from personal observation on his treatment at the airport. He gives numerous examples how he and his wife (who lest we forget are both elderly people at the time of writing) are treated with much courtesy. Again, this positive experience is immediately foiled by a reference to the dire circumstances of public morality in China:

> "This sort of behavior might come natural to Canadians, but for a Chinese
> it is quite unusual. When I think about the situation at home, my heart
> bleeds. To be honest, I am not a man without national pride (*minzu
> zizunxin* 民族自尊心), but the real situation is quite painful: With so many
> people, there's shoving, venting anger, quarrelling. China likes to think of
> itself as a land of propriety and righteousness, but nowadays there is no
> consideration for neither of the two, but only for getting ahead through
> *guanxi* and cunning. Other than that, it's all about people bothering each
> other, making each other miserable, shoving, bullying, and cheating each
> other. How can someone give consolation so somebody if he or she

---

edited, although this is not noted, so that it is now shorter in some parts while other themes have been expanded on. Moreover, the text is now amended by short commentaries from other authors, printed at the margins of the main text. This has the effect of stressing certain themes of the text, as I will explain shortly. The text in the 2004 version reads more concisely because certain more mundane observations in the original versions have been deleted: In the 1993 original, Tang provides a lengthy account on the excellent service on the plane and the various entertainment features.

> herself is not at ease? How can someone who finds no respect anywhere
>
> respect somebody else?

At this point where the two versions deviate from each other in a rather small but rather meaningful way. In the original 1993 version, Tang in the following writes: "As the ancients say: He who respects others is constantly respected by them." (古人云: 敬人者, 人恒敬之.) To a reader with some knowledge on Chinese philosophy this quote, and especially the topic of the reciprocity of personal conduct, bears connotations with the writings of Mencius (372 – 289 BC), arguably the most famous Confucian after the master himself. Tang Xiyang here does not bother to provide the source for this quote, however. This is remedied in the 1997 (and the 2004) version where Tang re-states the argument much more forcefully supported by a more comprehensive quote. "Mencius said: 'The benevolent man loves others. The man of propriety shows respect to others. He who loves others is constantly loved by them. He who respects others is constantly respected by them.' (愛人者人恆愛之, 敬人者人恆敬之 .) [94] By quoting Mencius, the author re-claims the ideals of propriety and righteousness for China, but not for today's China, but that of antiquity. In Tang's framing, it is now *the Canadians* in whose "proper" moral conduct the teaching of the revered sage are upheld, and it is the modern Chinese who are in defiance of their own heritage. This of course is a familiar argumentative strategy to evoke not only an emotional response from the audience, but also to show a way out of the dilemma by returning to long-established social patterns which are not foreign after all, but has been part of "the self" all along, albeit forgotten or disregarded.

IV.2.2 The trope of the traveling scholar

As it might have become apparent from these first introductory quotes, Tang's *Green World Tour* is as much about China as it is about the Western countries he visits. Indeed, his writings strongly underline a theoretical argument advanced in Clifford's seminal 1986 *Writing Culture*, in which he argues that all anthropology has to be read

---

[94] The quote is fromMengzi 孟子 (離婁下 - Li Lou, Part B). The full quote in context runs: "Mencius said: That whereby the superior man is distinguished from other men is what he preserves in his heart - namely, benevolence and propriety. The benevolent man loves others. The man of propriety shows respect to others. He who loves others is constantly loved by them. He who respects others is constantly respected by them."

as a commentary not on the Other, but of the Self. The construction of The Other in anthropological writing have hence less to do with objective descriptions of other cultural systems, but rather has a sociopolitical thrust aimed at the readership at home.

Tang certainly is not the first Chinese intellectual traveling to distant lands in order to acquire knowledge, indeed one of the main modes by which foreign ideas have been introduced to China is through the means of cosmopolitan travel. Throughout the text, Tang Xiyang is quite self-conscious about the international as well as the historic context his work is set in: "If my trips abroad can be compared to *The Journey of the West* of the Tang dynasty priest Sanzang [Xuanzang, M.L.], whose mission was to bring back Buddhist sutras, then what I am after is 'the green sutra'." (AGWT 1993: 221) In the foreword of the 1993 version he writers:

> China has a long history and a distinguished ancient culture, yet for the past century and a half she has been bullied and treated highhandedly. As a result, many Chinese, including me, are oversensitive and defensive. The mere mention of "learning from other countries" invites criticism of worshipping and putting blind faith in things foreign. To berate one's own country is to run the risk of being accused of disloyalty to one's ancestors. I must run the gauntlet of these attitudes, because my task is to study other people's experiences honestly and sincerely, to see other people's strong points. If I sometimes talk about other people's shortcomings, it is to keep is from going down the same disastrous road. A Chinese moral principle is to see more good in others, more flaws in oneself. This principle can apply to countries as well. Of course, blind worship of things foreign and forgetting one's ancestors do occur, and I detest them both, but they are not the same as this principle. One purpose of this book is to view the world from the standpoint of China and to view China from the standpoint of the outside world.

Liang Congjie 梁从诫, grandson of Liang Qichao, founder of China's first and most influential environmentalist NGO (Friends of Nature) and one of China's most respected environmentalists, provides a foreword for the 1997 edition which states that

> The new edition of A Green World Tour is an extremely special and rare
> piece of environmentalist literature. One can say that it combines the
> Chinese and the Western, the ancient and the contemporary (中、外、
> 古、今) as well as the graphic and the textual, emotion and knowledge (
> 图、文、情、知) each in well-balanced measure.[95]

To fully appreciate the historic precedent in which Tang Xiyang is writing, it is helpful to look for a short moment at some of Tang's literary predecessors and see not only what their impressions were but also how they present their experiences abroad rhetorically to a Chinese audience.

We might consider Liang Qichao's 梁启超 travel account to the United States. Liang Qichao (1873-1929) visited the United States in 1903. By that time, he had already made a name for himself as one of China's most influential reform-minded intellectuals, journalists, and writers of his time. Associated with the reform movement of his mentor Kang Youwei 康有为, he had been forced to flee China and settle in Japan in 1898 after the Qing government had put a bounty on his head. He reached the United States in 1903, were he stayed for five months. He traveled the new world extensively by railroad, crossing the continent twice, and made it a point to meet as many persons as possible, among them President Theodore Roosevelt. Returning to China via Canada, he recorded what he had learned in his famous *Notes From a Journey to the New Continent* (*Xin dalu ji* 新大陆游记). His reportage provided a prime source of insight for Liang's peers back at home on the way in which a powerful nation was politically structured.

Liang's main motivation for his travel was to learn the reasons behind America's rise from a peripheral British colony to a powerful player on the world stage. Hence, his observations are mostly political in nature or at the least deal with socio-political differences between the United States and China under the Qing. Although "an undertone of marvel and awe" (Chang 1971: 245) pervades in Liang's account, he did not perceive America through rose-colored lenses and was acutely aware of what he perceived as US society's shortcomings. His writing expresses concern about the power of monetary trust funds, he remarks on the huge differences between the poor

---

[95] Quote reprinted in Liang Congjie 2002: 243.

and the rich in New York City, and he is aware of the problem of America's troubled racial relations when he gives an account of the lynching of a black man he read about in a newspaper. It speaks to Liang intelligence and analytical powers that he does not overly simplify American society or culture. In this preface, he acknowledges that the United States is "difficult to summarize" and that America was a "complex civilization". It is maybe for that reason that Liang chose to focus his account on the conduct of American citizens, and to draw contrasts between American and Chinese national character:

> "From what has been discussed above, the weaknesses of the Chinese people can be listed as follows:

> 1. Our character is that of clansmen rather than citizens. Chinese social organization is based on family and clan as the unit rather than on the individual, what is called "regulating one's family before ruling the country". [A quote from *Daxue*, M.L.] In my opinion, though the power of self-government of the Aryans of the West was developed earlier, our Chinese system of local self-government was just as good. Why is it that they could form a nation-state and we could not? The answer is that what they developed was the city system of self-government, while we developed a clan system of self-government. [...] That Chinese can be clansmen but cannot be citizens; I came to believe more strongly after traveling in North America."

> 2. We have a village mentality and not a national mentality. I heard Roosevelt's speech to the effect that the most urgent task for the American people is to get rid of the village mentality, by which he meant people's feelings of loyalty to their own town and state. From the point of view of history, however, America has been successful in exercising a republican form of government precisely because this local sentiment was there at the start, and so it cannot be completely faulted. But developed to excess it becomes an obstacle to nation-building... We Chinese have developed it too far. Who could it be just the San Francisco Chinese? It is true everywhere at home, too.

3. We can accept only despotism and cannot enjoy freedom. [...] When I look at all the societies of the world, none is so disorderly as the Chinese community in San Francisco. Why? The answer is freedom. The character of the Chinese in China is not superior to those of San Francisco, but at home they are governed by officials and restrained by fathers and elder brothers. [...]

With such countrymen, would it be possible to practice the election system? [...] To speak frankly, I have not observed the character of Chinese at home to be superior to those in San Francisco. On the contrary, I find their level of civilization far inferior to those in San Francisco. [...] Even if there are some Chinese superior to those in San Francisco, it is just a small matter of degree; their lack of qualification for enjoying freedom is just the same..." (Translation in: Arkush and Lee 1989: 92)

The passage points to a important correlation between the focus of attention that characterizes both Liang Qichao's and Tang Xiyang's writing. Both contrast the quality of national character, ethical conduct, and individual bearing of the Chinese people with that of the people they visit. While in his case, Liang is infuriated by the lack of nationalist or patriotic sentiment displayed by his compatriots – personal qualities that Liang Qichao deems important for the political task most important to him, the building of a Chinese nation state, Tang is equally concerned with the discrepancies between the environmentally conscious Westerners and the Chinese whose disregard for nature equals their disregard for each other.

Similarly, references to discrepancies in moral character permeate *A Green World Tour*. Tang and Marks head for one of the highlights of their American nature tour, the Yosemite National Park. As they engage on a bus tour through the reservation area, whose natural majesty immediately elicits a strong emotional response from Tang Xiyang, he takes the chance to strike up a conversation with bus driver who also functions as their tour guide. He is surprised to find the driver so knowledgeable about the geological and political history of Yosemite Park, and is even more surprised when he eventually learns that the man is a university professor called Richard D. Dodson who in his spare time volunteers to chauffeur visitors around the

park. "A university professor and a bus driver at the same time?" Tang wonders, "That is too big of a distance as far as Chinese is concerned."

> One is that the attitude towards our profession is different: Chinese intellectuals have a traditional notion, called "Officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars" (学而优则仕). Although I do not concur with this saying, I would have never thought that 'good scholars' could also become bus drivers; another one is that we express love for different things: we Chinese love reputation, social status, children, our families, our nation, but to love nature this is not something that comes passionately or naturally. (AGWT 1993: 237)

This theme of humble and impeccable personal conduct in the service of the environment is a red thread which the reader encounters repeatedly in Tang Xiyang's writing. In the CCC version of a chapter in which Tang details his trip to France, environmental writer Shen Xiaohui 沈孝辉 provides an anecdote attached as one of the many side captions printed alongside Tang's own writings: Next to the article by Tang, the reader encounters a photo, taken from the inside of a car, showing an elegant Western man in a pinstripe business suit on a bicycle, dashing by the lens with a friendly and relaxed expression on his face. The caption by Shen reads: "France's Minister of Environmental Protection, riding his bicycle to work." [The photo is taken in July 2002, the man on the photo is Yves Cochet, minister for the environment 2001-2002 in the administration of Lionel Jospin]. The text next to the photo reads: "Although the angle [of the photo] is not perfect, it is very precious: It actually captures an environment protection official matching his words with deeds (*yan xing yizhi* 言行一致), and practicing what he preaches (*shenti lixing* 身体力行). […] This sort of environmental consciousness and behavior has elicited a lot of respect from the people." (CCC 282)

When Tang and Marks are being picked up by members of the American "National Audubon Society"[96] to stay at their home in the state of Washington, they and their

---

[96] The *National Audubon Society* is an US-American non-profit environmental organization dedicated to nature conservation. Incorporated in 1905, Audubon is one of the oldest of such organizations in the world and uses science, education and grassroots advocacy to advance its conservation mission. It is named in honor of John James Audubon, a Franco-American ornithologist and naturalist who painted, cataloged, and described the birds of North America in his famous book Birds of America

host begin a chat on the national character and differences between the Chinese and the Americans: In a passage that in its language very much echoes what Liang Qichao had to say almost one century earlier, Tang comments favorably on the national character of his American hosts:

> I even like the American people better: I like your spirit for democracy, for freedom, independence, and self-confidence. Americans are not bureaucratic, they are not afraid of doing something unconventional, they dare to open up new paths to success, hence America's potential is inexhaustible. (AGWT 1993: 214)

The relationship between morality and nature, resp. love for nature, is maybe most poignantly expressed by Marcia Barks. Just as she and her husband are about to leave Washington State, they receive farewell gifts from their hosts, a gesture that prompts Marks to say that "everyone who loves nature is a good person." (*Re'ai daziran de ren dou shi haoren* 热爱大自然的人都是好人.) Tang's reaction follows:

> Indeed, there is a philosophy behind this remark. If everyone dearly loved nature, everyone dearly loved the mountains and rivers, the birds and beasts, the flowers and weeds; if everyone pursued nature's beauty, spiritual beauty, then everyone's vision would be as if standing on a high mountain peak --- nothing but clouds and mountains up to the horizon, and everyone's heart embracing this vast ocean – without bounds, and everyone would find his or her proper place in this grand, mysterious, beautiful natural world including all living creatures. Well then, not only would there be harmony and beauty between man and nature, but also amongst men themselves. For how could there still be indifference, selfishness, envy, discrimination, hatred, terror, or war? (CCC 153)

In the CCC reprint of this chapter, this statement is framed by two side captions echoing Marks' statement. They read as follows: '

> "Everyone who loves nature is a good person." When I read this statement by Marcia Marks, I had the feeling as if I was meeting an

---

published in sections between 1827 and 1838.

> intimate friend. I think the same way, and that is the way I make friends. Nature will never betray a friend, she [她] will only give, and never demand anything in return. Anybody who loves nature will be gentle and kindhearted [心地善良]. (Zhong Anhe 钟安河, Beijing Institute for Surveying and Mapping) (CCC 153)

> Marcia Marks' "Everyone who loves nature is a good person" is a statement from experience, the language of a philosopher, the plain and simple truth, and it applies for China as well as the West, for the past as well as for today. Chen Taoming and Li Bai loved nature, they were good men. Cai Jing 蔡京 and Yan Song 严嵩 only lusted for power and money, they were bad men. (Yi Xian伊贤, former editor-in-chief of Gansu Poetry and Lyrics, Lanzhou) (CCC 153)

To address the background of this statement: Cai Jing (1047–1126), was a government official who lived during the Northern Song Dynasty. He also features prominently as an antagonist and villain in one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, the *Water Margin*. In it, Cai Jing is depicted as a corrupt, treacherous and politically ambitious government official who oppresses the people and opposes the upright outlaws of Liangshan fighting the good cause. Yan Song (1480–1567) was a corrupt Ming Chinese Chief Grand Secretary. He served as the prime minister under Jiajing Emperor, a monarch who shirked his responsibilities as emperor and devoted much of his time to sensual pleasures and Taoist practices. Under Yan Song, the nation fell into an era of moral decadence and corruption, where righteous officers were sidelined and the Ming national strength fell rapidly. The fact that there exists a Chinese opera called "Beating Yan Song" (*Da Yan Song* 打嚴嵩) speaks to the level of his notoriety within Chinese history. The invocation of such historic examples points to the fact that within the Chinese social imaginary, morality hence is not just a matter of personal ethics; it is a crucial factor for achieving a functioning society and a government responsive to the demands of the people.

This theme of responsiveness of government officials to citizen input is another important element. At Yosemite Park, Tang and Marks set up a meeting with a Mr. Dell, representative of the US Congress House of Representatives' Subcommittee on National Parks and Environmental Protection [now the Subcommittee on National

Parks, Forests and Public Lands]. Tang asks him "The United States have so many grassroots organizations (*minzhong zuzhi*), criticizing the government for this, or for that, does this not bother you? He [the government official] cheerfully responds: 'I like that actually! […] Precisely because I can listen to different voices I am able to avoid mistakes. They do not bother me, they are helping me.' Tang: 'Please describe the use of grassroots organizations from the government's perspective.' Without hesitation he responds: 'Ah, their usefulness is really great, the government's capabilities can by no means replace them.'" This reaction prompts Tang to reflect on his experience with Chinese officials:

> I have worked as a journalist for many years, and in China I have met many government officials, and among them were some hard working and plain living good officials, those who were unselfish, in touch with the realities of life, and who worked resolutely to get things done. But those magnanimous people who listen to both sides of an argument are hard to find. On the other hand, most officials still like to arrogate all power to themselves while shedding off all responsibility, engage in secretiveness, and are only interested in the prestige of public office. I have even encountered those sycophantic meetings were one person thought himself to be the most important person in the world, and – as they say – you cannot touch a tiger's behind. [Chinese proverb: authority cannot be questioned]. Unfortunately, when I compare this situation in China with the demeanor of this US official, then the difference is all-too obvious. (CCC 301)

We are now at the heart of the argument: Tang's writing establishes a connection between nature and morality, a morality which in turn again is the basis for political legitimacy. Nature plays a key role in this regard, not just as the object of political advocacy, but much more, it is also through the subjective, individual experience of nature in which a new avant-garde is to be developed. As Tang himself puts it in the introduction to CCC: "Be nature's slave, be society's ruler (*dang ziran de nuli, dang shehui de zhuren* 当自然的奴隶, 当社会的主人). (CCC: 004)

There is a strong utilitarian current in Tang's writing, one that views nature as a realm that enables to learn about oneself, as an individual's opportunity to train one's

abilities, both in terms of physical fitness, but even more in terms of character; willpower, compassion, understanding, and respect. Indeed, reading *A Green World Tour*, one is struck how little it offers the reader in terms of concrete ecological, environmental, or technical expertise, and how strongly it focuses on human ethics.

This call for a new morality receives its socio-political relevance from the fact that it is firmly based on long-established cultural patterns. Within the Chinese social imaginary, morality has never been just an end to itself, but has always been a key factor for the legitimacy to political rule of an elite in possession of this morality. So it is said in the *Book of Rites*, one of the five Confucian classics:

> Duke Ai asked about government. The Master said: 'The government of Wan and Wu is exhibited in the Records, the tablets of wood and bamboo. Let there be the men, and their government would again flourish; but without the men, their government must cease. With the right men the growth of government is rapid, Oust as in the earth the growth of vegetation is rapid. Government is like an easily-growing rush. Therefore the exercise of government depends on getting the proper men. Such men are to be got by the ruler's own character. That character is to be cultivated by his pursuing the right course. That course is to be cultivated by benevolence. Benevolence is the chief element in humanity, and the greatest exercise of it is in the love of relatives. Righteousness is the accordance of actions with what is right, and the greatest exercise of it is in the honour paid to the worthy. The decreasing measures in the love of relatives, and the steps in the honour paid to the worthy, are produced by the principle of propriety. When those in inferior situations do not obtain the confidence of their superiors, the people cannot be governed successfully. Therefore the wise ruler should not neglect the cultivation of his character. (*Liji* [The book of rites]: Book XXVIII, *Gongyong* Section II, in the 1885 Legge translation: 312-313)

Within the Chinese *imaginaire*, the possession of moral authority is one of the key factors for the legitimacy of and access to political rule. Holcombe in "The Exemplar State" stresses the importance of moral authority as the base for political legitimacy for Imperial China. Ever since Confucianism had begun its rise as the prevalent

school of political philosophy in China, it had been the possession of the knowledge of the *li* 礼, the rites – and the moral authority that came with that knowledge – that endowed the literari class (*shi* 士) with legitimacy as the natural ruling class. Only this moral capital enabled the literati to hold higher status than any other group, despite their material and military weakness when compared to the generals and nobility: "The reason émigré aristocrats from the north were able to make the Eastern Chin Dynasty prosper in spite of their lack of means of material coercion is intimately connected to their fluency in the language of the *li*."(Holcombe 1989: 106)

At the dawn of China's entry into modernity, it was again the national character of the Chinese people that drew the ire of Chinese patriots lamenting the demise of their country in the face of Western aggression. Hence, when Marxism and Leninism were introduced to China, its ideology could count on a firmly established social imaginary to advocate for the creation of The New Man (Cheng 2009). Now self-cultivation was advocated on behalf of the New Man to overcome the old order. Scholars (see e.g. Svensson 2002: 138) writing on the origins of modern China have pointed out that there is a certain irony in the fact that the emphasis for the cultivation of the New Socialist Man resembles so closely the Confucian concern for self-cultivation (*zixiu* 自修) of the *junzi* 君子, the Confucian gentleman or superior man, but also note that it is precisely the Confucian heritage that enabled the Chinese communists to express their ideas in a familiar language and appeal to an long-established social imaginary.[97] "The Confucian belief in the 'superior man' dovetailed neatly with the Leninist concept of the 'vanguard party' and the Stalinist example of the 'great leader'." (Gittings 2005: 48)

In the context of Chinese modernization discourse, the quality of a nation's people became known as *suzhi* 素质 ("human quality"), the possession or lack of which would determine a people's readiness to achieve its status as a "modern" society

---

[97] This is not only true for the sinicized version of Communism known as Maoism. The idealistic youth movement who demanded to "Smash the black shop of Confucius" on May 4th 1919 dovetailed into various political movements, among which the nationalist Guomindang party employed the same strategy: In 1934, Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), advocated the "New Life Movement" which was to rally the Chinese people against the Communists and build up morale in a nation that was besieged with corruption, factionalism, and opium addiction. While he re-affirmed Confucian values through an emphasis on the Confucian notion of self-cultivation and correct living, both great political movements of China im- or explicitly employed the idea of creating a new Chinese citizen for their own political agenda.

based on Western models. Nyiri notes that the idea of "population quality" would include a wide range of attributes, including "manners, hygiene, discipline, education and competitive open-minded thinking, but which – depending on the context – can also include upright morality, a correct political stand and correct lifestyle and consumption choices."[98]

Chen Duxiu 陈独秀, one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party, in a "Warning to the Youth" (*Jinggao Qingnian* 敬告青年) published in *New Youth* on Sept. 15th 1915 called upon the Chinese Youth to "Be independent, not servile!" (自主的而非奴隶的). He stressed the need for China to emulate Europe's "History of Emancipation": "Emancipation means freeing oneself from the bondage of slavery and achieving a completely independent and free personality [my emphasis]." He contrasted this free personality with the "slavish morality" of the Chinese ancien régime, and called upon his peers to be "aggressive, not complacent."

The reference to the "vanguard" is significant in this respect since it points to the essentially elitist attitude of the New Man movement. Just as Confucianism strove to create a stratum of superior men for whom the cultivation of virtue formed the legitimacy base to be ruling class of Imperial China, the New Man was meant to be the spearhead of a new elite that found its organizational form in the Chinese Communist Party. Literature played an important example in the advocacy of the New Man. Among the many texts in this regard, hardly any one exceeds the importance of Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered* (published in the Soviet Union in 1934).[99] Its protagonist is the young Ukrainian worker Pavel Korchagin who, bed-ridden and diagnosed with tuberculosis, tells his life's story, and the arduous struggle of how he became a devoted Bolshevik. The book "serves as an important link in a socio-cultural project, binding the making of the socialist new person to the symbolic building of a new socialist state." (He 2010: 394) The book was translated into Chinese under the title *Gangtie shi zenyang liancheng de* 钢铁是怎样炼成的. The character *lian* 炼 originally means "to temper" metal, but in the course of the development of

---

[98] See: Nyiri 2006: 88. On the concept of *suzhi,* see also: Anagnost 2004.

[99] For a detailed reception history of this important book in China, see: HE Donghui 2010.

the modern Chinese vernacular took on a metaphoric sense as "to practice", or "to train", in no small measure due to the introduction of Soviet writing in China.

In this context, Liu Shaoqi's 刘少奇 "How to be a good Communist", first delivered in 1939 as a series of lecture at the Institute for Marxism and Leninism in Yan'an, is maybe the best-known example for this form of "neo-Confucian" (de Bary/Lufrano 1999: 427) socialist writing. Its original title translates as *The Cultivation of Party Members*, employing the same phrase (*zixiu*) as the Confucian tradition. The praxis of constant improvement through self-criticism within the CCP to no small degree developed under the influence of this idea.[100]

For both the traditional Chinese as well as the Communist notion of self-cultivation, nature plays a key role, albeit with radical different perspective on the role of nature itself. Zhuge Liang 诸葛亮 is arguably one of the most famous examples of the genius developing his skills while hiding away from society within nature. He spent years in seclusion in a remote mountain site, developing his skills (*cai* 才) in statecraft and military strategy and cultivating his virtue (*de* 德). However, when the time arrives, he is ready to leave nature and re-enter the world of men: Being sought out by the rightful heir to the Han throne, Liu Bei 刘备, he lends his skill to the righteous cause, leading the armies of *Shu* to battle against the treacherous Cao Cao 曹操.[101] The superiority of his character not only served Zhuge Liang well in war, but also as the prime minister after the establishment of the independent kingdom of *Shu*:

> He held absolute command but did not neglect the *li*, and conducted the affairs of the ruler without suspicion from the citizens. In this way I believe the lord, his ministers, and the people's hearts happily upheld him. He pursued the law with severity, but the people submitted with pleasure; and in his use of the people he exhausted their strength, yet there was no resentment below. (quote found in Holcombe 1989: 105)

---

[100] Liu Shaoqi is said to have had a sign in his office quoting the Confucian saying *Master yourself, reinstate the rites*. (*keji fuli* 克己复礼), another often-quoted example of the continuity between Confucianism and Chinese Socialism.

[101] On Zhuge Liang as the recluse archetype of the "moral hero" who awaits the fortuitous time to claim high office, see: Berkowitz 2000: 22-35.

Communism, on the other hand, developed its notion of self-strengthening on the basis of an adversarial relationship between man and nature. In his youth, Mao Zedong himself used to wander into the mountains surrounding Changsha along with like-minded friends as a physical exercise, swim in icy rivers and ponds, abstain from eating, or sleep in the courtyard rather than a bed to toughen his body and strengthen his willpower: The biography on the *Childhood and youth of comrade Mao Zedong* by Emi Xiao (or Xiao San 肖三, 1896-1983), a childhood friend of Mao who later would go on to become an important member of China's young Communist party, contains an entire chapter entitled "How he [Mao] diligently practiced self-cultivation" (*Ta shi zenzang keku zixiude* 他是怎样刻苦自修的). In Emi Xiao's memoirs, nature provides the main antagonist for physical challenges for him and his young friends, but also the main opportunity for youthful self-discovery and adventure: On their excursion into the mountains around Changsha, Mao and his co-students would expose their naked bodies to the elements, something that Mao used to call "sun baths", "wind baths", and "rain baths". To train their voices, they would shout at trees, or climb onto mountain tops and scream Tang poems into the wind at the top of their lungs. (Xiao 1951: 62) One of Mao's diary entries famously reflects his understanding of nature: *To struggle against Heaven, what delight. To struggle against earth, what delight. To struggle against Man, what boundless delight.* (*Yu tian dou, yu di dou, yu ren dou − le wu qiong* 与天斗,与地斗,与人斗, 乐无穷) (ibid): The battle against nature (Heaven and Earth) equals, indeed is the necessary prerequisite, for the fight against man, the class struggle. In fact, Mao Zedong's first published article was an essay entitled "A Study of Physical Culture" which ran in 1927 in New Youth (*Xin Qingnian*). The first sentence read "Our nation is lacking strength", and the article developed the argument that national strength followed from the individual strength of its citizens, and hence it was every Chinese patriot's duty to exercise. The goal was not so much as to be able to fight physically, but because physical exercise steeled the mind, willpower was the necessary requirement to develop a revolutionary fighting spirit.

Tang Xiyang's outlook on his relationship to nature bears a striking resemblance in this regard:

Adverse circumstances can temper (*duanlian* 锻炼) plants, animals, and also humans. My past life imprinted in me the lesson that adversity is a furnace, it is nourishment, it is a catalyst. [...] How I eventually fell in love with nature, a son of nature captivated by ecology, that was very long, tortuous, blood-drenched, soul-tempering process of cognition, as well as it was a process of maturation in which I sifted through humanity's literary achievements and inhaled the essence of nature. The suffering in life is like a stairway, it can help you enter a higher plane of life. In the course of this process, I paid a heavy price; I lost my human dignity, my feelings, my work, my wife, and the most precious twenty years of my life. But I also gained a great many things, an important one being the ability to endure suffering, and amidst this suffering to learn some sense, to understand man, to understand society, to understand nature, to understand history. [CCC 144]

Just as the New Socialist Man was meant to be a vanguard for the then Socialist age, the creation of Tang's new green consciousness displays an equally elitist attitude:

Adversity can temper humans, but it cannot temper every one, just as it cannot temper every animal. Only those plants and animals who defy hardship, dare to endure suffering, and dare to confront all sorts of challenges will stand out of extreme environments and evolve into forms with a unique style, will bring fourth astonishing blossoms or fruits and produce strong descendants. The French giant of literature, Honoré de Balzac, once famously said that "Adversity is the stepping stone for the genius, for the able man it is a blessing, for the weak one it is a bottomless abyss." In China, Mencius once said that "Thus, when Heaven is about to confer a great office on any man, it first exercises his mind with suffering, and his sinews and bones with toil. It exposes his body to hunger, and subjects him to extreme poverty. It confounds his undertakings. By all these methods is stimulates his mind, hardens his nature, and supplies his incompetencies." (CCC: 145. The Mencius quote in Legge's translation see Legge: 447)

We re-encounter in this quote a long-standing trope within the Chinese social imaginary concerning the purpose of seclusion and the cultivation of moral quality.

Nature is not seen as a permanent seclusion from the world, but offers the necessary space for a temporal withdrawal that allows the build-up of spiritual strength and moral courage. Somewhat paradoxically, seclusion in this sense has to be understood as a pro-active step towards latter reengagement with the world. As Ban Gu 班固 writes in his biography of Liu Xiang 刘向, a famous Confucian scholar during the Han dynasty: "Even though the loyal official is in the wilderness, in his devoted duty he still does not forget his sovereign."[102]

Coming back full circle to the initial question of what Tang Xiyang's retreat into nature means to accomplish, we now have a clear idea that within the Chinese social imaginary this act does not necessitate a permanent seclusion. Instead, it is a temporary retreat, in order to reemerge even stronger. Hence, from the initial subjective experience of nature, it was only a short step for Tang to take a more pro-active approach, and voice his opinions about the state of China's ecosystems to a Chinese audience:

> The problem is, the longer I am in a natural environment, the more of nature's pain I can feel. When I am wronged, I can at least complain to my boss. But what can nature do? When it has had enough, it can only wreak revenge on the human race by means of natural calamities. So as time went on, I stopped complaining about my past sufferings. Instead, I began to complain on behalf of nature. (ibid)

IV.2.3 Nature as a book for learning: Muir and Roosevelt

Important clues that illustrate Tang's understanding of nature as a learning-device are found in a chapter of *A Green World Tour* entitled "John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt".[103] The chapter constitutes the conclusion of the American travel account, and can be seen as the author's final word on Yosemite National Park. It represents an intellectual portrait of John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt, in Tang Xiyang's words two of America's "avant-garde of natural protection" (*ziran baohu de xianqu* 自然保护的先驱). Tang first addresses John Muir (1838 – 1914), the American naturalist,

---

[102] Ban Gu, biography of Liu Xiang, *Han shu*, juan 36, p.1932 *Han shu* [History of the Han dynasty], Ban Gu 12 vols., Beijing: Zhonghua, 1970. Translation, see: Murck 2000: 116.

[103] The chapter is reprinted in CCC, all subsequent quotes see: CCC 309-316.

author, and early advocate of wilderness preservation in the United States. His letters, essays, and books telling of his adventures in nature, especially in the Sierra Nevada of California, have enjoyed a readership counted in the millions, while it was partly his relentless efforts that helped create nature reservations such as Yosemite Valley, Sequoia National Park and others. The Sierra Club, which he founded, is now one of the most important conservation organizations in the United States. One of the most well-known hiking trails in the U.S., the 211-mile (340 km) John Muir Trail, was named in his honor.[104]

> His [Muir's] excursions prove an old Chinese proverb: "One learns as much on a journey of ten-thousand *li* as from reading ten-thousand books." (行万里路，读万卷书) Nature is the greatest book of them all. It contains everything we and the world will ever need. Only after we have extensively experienced hardships and dangers, have had firsthand experience, diligently spent time in contemplation, given it all our love, will we be able to understand this book. John Muir was such a person, and this is way he advanced many new thoughts that natural scientists, artists and philosophers had not advanced before. (CCC 309)

This rather telling understanding of "nature as a book", an idea that the author expresses repeatedly throughout the course of his text, provides insight into Tang's understanding of nature, and of the understanding of nature and of its relationship to man. During his excursion of Yosemite National Park, for example, he writes that "Nature is a mighty book, a deep book, a book that one can never finish reading." (*The world's greatest trees* 世界最大的树, AGWT 1993: 244)

It has to be noted that the idea of "nature as a book" originates in Judaeo-Christian theology. Although Christianity draws a sharp distinction between earthly, sinful nature and divine eternal nature (paradise), it was still assumed that God's power manifested itself in His creation. Glacken argues that this understanding was expressed most vigorously in the teachings of Augustinus (354-430) who said: "Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Note it; read it. God,

---

[104] On John Muir's life, his writing, and his activism, see: Oelschlaeger 1991: 172-204; Gifford 2006; Worster 2008.

whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink; instead He set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that? Why, heaven and earth shout to you: 'God made me!' (Glacken 1976: 204) Glacken concludes that "The book of nature becomes a commentary [to the book of revelation, the Bible], further substantiation of the truth of the revealed word." (ibid: 203) With the rise of modernity, the modernist mindset, and the pivotal breakthroughs in astrophysics, biology and geology, the idea of nature as a book was increasingly replaced by the idea of nature as a machine whose inner workings could be measured, predicted and even changed.105 By the 20th century, the link between nature and metaphysics had been completely severed, so that for example David Bloor in *Knowledge and Social Imaginary* developed an understanding of science that regarded nature as morally empty and neutral, while Richard Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* understands nature as inherently meaningless in itself and morally neutral. Already in 1981, Hans Blumenberg in his *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* wrote that the notion of nature as a book was an idea now so alien to us, the contemporary reader, that only with great difficulty we could put ourselves in a meaningful context of understanding to such an idea. [106]

Hence, the notion of "nature as a book" was very much outdated by the time Tang wrote the first edition of his *Green World Tour* in 1993. What is important is that his view of nature as a book conceptualizes nature as an opportunity for learning. Nature is seen as something with a *purpose*, as opposed to something that just is. In this understanding, nature serves both as the stage as well as the mentor for a quest towards understanding and wisdom, a quest whose goal can be achieved through personal practice and subjective experience.

It becomes clear then that the reason why Tang holds Muir in such high esteem is not just because he loved nature, but because through his immersion within nature and through his love for nature, Muir developed the necessary moral character to affect positive societal change, in his case the establishment of the US National Park

---

105 On the development of this thought, see for example: Taliaferro & Evans 2011: 4ff for Charles Darwin, generally. Pepper, David 1996: 135-148).

[106] For further information of the notion of "nature as a book", see: Glacken 1976: 203 ff., Mortensen 1998: 24ff. and Bulhof 1992: 170ff.

system. It has been mentioned that John Muir founded the Sierra Club, one of the most important conservation organizations in the United States. However, Tang's chapter fails to address the very real conflict that arouse between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, the first head of the United States Forest Service and a leading spokesman for the sustainable use of natural resources for economic purposes. His position eventually clashed with Muir's, highlighting two diverging views of the use of the country's natural resources. Pinchot saw conservation as a means of managing the nation's natural resources for long-term sustainable commercial use. (The "conservationist" position) Muir on the other hand valued nature for its spiritual and transcendental qualities. In one essay about the National Parks, he referred to them as "places for rest, inspiration, and prayers." Muir often encouraged city dwellers to experience nature for its spiritual nourishment. (The "preservationist" position) In Tang's account, the conflict exists only between preserving natural parks as a place to "love nature", in his words, as an educational place, and as the object of greed to extract natural resources. In other words, the chapter juxtaposes Muir's wisdom with the profane and base desires of mainstream American society. (CCC 311)

The chapter places great emphasis on the interplay between John Muir and President Theodore Roosevelt, and re-tells the famous story of the meeting between John Muir Theodore Roosevelt. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt accompanied Muir on a visit to Yosemite. While traveling to the park, Muir informed the president about the state's mismanagement of the valley and the rampant exploitation of the valley's resources. Even before they entered the park, he was able to convince Roosevelt that the best way to protect the valley was through federal control and management. After entering the park and being overwhelmed by its natural beauty, the president asked Muir to show him the real Yosemite. Muir and Roosevelt set off largely by themselves on horseback, and camped in the wild country. The duo talked late into the night, slept in the brisk open air of Glacier Point, and were dusted by a fresh snowfall in the morning.[107] Tang's version of the historic event emphasizes the contrast between the sage-like yet slightly awkward Muir and the adventurous *Rough Rider* Roosevelt, a man of the world.

---

[107] Nash 2001: 122-181 provides a vivid and detailed description of the relationship and interaction of Roosevelt and Muir.

> Muir was an unrefined man of the wilds (*cunyeren* 村野人), not accustomed to live alongside such a great and famous statesman. Yet he knew that Roosevelt was a man of many talents, strong and courageous while at the same time amiable and approachable. (CCC 313)

During their meeting, the US President grows so impressed with the sage-like Muir, his calm yet resolved personality and his deep understanding of the wilds, that by the end of their wanderings, he returns to Washington a convinced protectionist, ready to throw his political weight behind Muir's cause, or in Tang's words "to wrestle the mountain and valleys from the axes of the woodcutters, to save it from being trampled on by flocks of sheep." (CCC 313) What is noticeable is the reversal of authority that Tang aims for in his representation of this historic encounter. Roosevelt, the powerful ruler of a nation, is willing to let himself being guided by the man with superior character. It stands to reason that Tang Xiyang views himself, or at least his students – the future generation of leaders – as fulfilling the same role as Muir, as wise scholars who are able to lend loyal enlightened advice to the country's rulers. This is indicated in a paragraph that can be read as a programmatic statement that points to Tang's intentions to follow in Muir's footsteps:

> Young friends may envy me, saying, "You have been to so many places, seen so many things and formed many ideas." Actually, I am far from being satisfied; I have seen only a small part of the natural world. There are so many things I have not seen. Though I am very eager to see them with my own eyes and understand them, I am getting old. I have to leave this task to my young friends to finish. This book can guide only a short way; the rest of the journey you must take by yourselves. I believe that among you great travelers, adventures, scientists and pioneers in protecting nature, as well as Chinese John Muirs, Theodore Roosevelts and Peter Scotts, will appear.
>
> The world belongs to you. All that is rare and beautiful belongs to you. (ibid)

IV.3 Back in China: *Green Camp,* and China's new green elite

Back in China, Tang Xiyang proceeds to put his experience into practice, by educating a group of select university students about green issues and forming them into China's new green elite.[108] The important role of Tang's *Green Camp* movement in grooming a new generation of young Chinese environmentalists new has been mentioned in several Western accounts on Chinese environmentalism, yet mostly only in brief passing. (see e.g.: Economy 2004: 138-141; Wu 2009: 6) According to Wu Fengshi, the Green Camp movement "has been the incubator of the younger generation of environmental activists and college student environmental groups in China." (Wu 2009: 6) The means by which Tang aims to accomplish this goal (apart from publishing his books and writings) is the organization of *Green Camps* (*lüse ying* 绿色营), educational field trips into China's natural habitats. Just as nature has served Tang to educate and re-invent himself, he will now use nature as a class room to educate his students.(His experiences in this regard are put in writing in a book with the same name, Green Camp [GC], published in 2007).

穿行其间，好像是地毯上的一线蚂蚁。大自然是多么广阔，人类是多么渺小，但渺小的人类竟可以吞噬广阔的自然，把大自然搞得面目全非。如果这里不是保护区，恐怕早已变成大豆和玉米地了。再往前走，感觉到脚底的湿润，就出现了苔草－小叶樟植物群落，还可以看到草原的各种野花；继续往前走，就好像踩在弹簧垫上，颤颤悠悠，忽高忽低，鞋袜也湿了，眼前出现了一个巨大的湖泡，湖面上是各种挺水植物和浮水植物，有甜茅、菰、睡莲、菱角等等。

大自然是课堂

学生们第一次看到这种景色，沿着湖边奔跑、欢呼、拍照。我也很激动。湿地的美集中在一个"绿"字，浓绿、淡绿、深绿、浅绿、旧绿、新绿，还有绿中红，绿镶黄、绿如蓝……这种绿色的旋律，绿色的海洋，绿色的世界，想象不出来，画布

Example of the visual accentuation of the naturescape employed in Tang Xiyang's writing: Tang Xiyang (center) educating his students during an excursion. The caption reads: "Nature is a class room" (*daziran shi ketang* 大自然是课堂)

---

[108] Tang uses the word *xianfeng* 先锋, avant garde or elite, repeatedly in his writings when referring to Western environmentalists or his students.

According to Tang's account, the idea to the Green Camp movement comes to him in November 1995 after he receives a letter from a environmental journalist in Kunming (Sichuan province) named Xiong Jianhua 熊建华 who after reading Tang's *A Green World Tour* asks if he could send him more books so he can distribute them. (CCC: 324 ff.) Moreover, Xiong informs Tang about the decision of the local government in Dexian County to allow logging in the primeval forests of the Baima Xueshan Nature Reserve in order to raise funds. This would not only threaten the areas protected forests, but also the habitat of the extremely rare Sub-Nosed Golden Monkey of whom only ca. 200 specimen remain. The news greatly distresses Tang, and he starts looking into ways to address the situation and stop the local government of going through with its plan. Since he has no resources at his disposal to intervene directly with the local or provincial government, he writes a letter to a high-ranking official, Song Jian 宋健, a member of the State Council and head of the Committee for Environmental Protection under the State Council. Song has read Tang Xiyang's *A Green World Tour* and ever since has maintained a friendly exchange of letters with its author. Tang informs Song Jian of the situation, expressing his hopes that the central government might look into the situation. Song's office responds quickly, and promises to right the situation. Tang, however, is not satisfied with this answer. He prints Song's sympathetic letter, and distributes it among the members of Beijing's NGO "Friends of Nature". By doing so, Tang creates a stir amongst the NGO's young membership, and in a series of meetings they devise a plan to form an inspection committee that will travel to Yunnan province in order to investigate the situation of the primeval forests and the status of its monkey population.

Tang faces the task to organize this "Green Camp". In his account, he explains how he draws on the various connections he has already established with Chinese university student groups where he is often invited to speak on environmental issues. In order to reach a broader audience and coordinate, he establishes contacts with inter-university friendship associations (*lianyi zuzhi* 联谊组织), the university students green forums (*daxue xuesheng lüse luntan* 大学学生绿色论坛). While Tang invites members of these green forums to join Green Camp, participation is limited, and students interested in the experience have to submit an application form. The criteria based on which Tang fills the vacancies are quite strict, Tang himself describes the selection process as "not relaxed" (CCC 333), while students are not chosen based

on any particular expertise but on their determination to master the hardships of the road. This might be a slight overstatement on Tang's side, as the group travels in busses, and stays in hotels that provide accommodation and regular meals. The list of selection criteria, however, drives home the point that Green Camp participants are a sworn brotherhood who shares a commitment to the higher cause. Students have to 1) "dearly love nature and protect it", 2) "they must have read *A Green World Tour*", and 3) "they must be willing to develop their personal strength during *Green Camp*". (CCC 333) Again, it becomes clear that technical expertise of his students is less important to Tang than their personal steadfastness and display impeccable moral character. When one student leader actually withholds the applications filled out by his group in order to get the coveted seat at Green Camp for himself, he is dismissed from the group after his scheme is revealed. Despite tearful pleads and a lengthy letter of self-criticism, Tang remains adamant and rejects the young man due to his dishonest character. (CCC 333) For him, only a new green elite of impeccable *suzhi* will eventually be able to take the lead in guiding the masses towards environmentalism: "What we need to train is the future green talent (*lüse rencai* 绿色人才), and if they do not possess this kind of *suzhi*, it will be impossible for them to incite enthusiasm in millions for the cause of environmentalism." (GC 29)

IV.3.1 Martyrdom

Just as official CCP historiography possesses revolutionary martyrs whose example the party urges young people to emulate[109], the Green Camp movement possesses a martyr of its own in the person of Marcia B. Marks who passes away at the very eve of the departure of Tang Xiyang's first Green Camp. The first chapter of the revised 1997 edition of *A Green World Tour* dealing with Green Camp China, as well as the reprinted Green Camp chapters in CCC, is entitled "Ma Xia [Marks' Chinese name] is walking beside us" (*Ma Xia yu women tongxing* 马霞与我们同行). In all three of Tang's major writings (AGWT, CCC, GC), Marks is repeatedly eulogized and praised for her tireless commitment to the cause of Chinese environmentalism. The fact that she passes away from illness literally on the eve of the first Green Camp excursion in

---

[109] The vow to sacrifice one's life for his beliefs (and thus achieving martyrdom) is a practice that belongs into the "mixed cultural action repertoire" of the Chinese public sphere. It was especially prevalent during the Tiananmen Protests. See: Perry 2001: 316.

1996 endows the movement with a certain spiritual significance that underlines the themes discussed so far.

Tang and Marks are busy organizing their first Green Camp when she begins to experience health issues, especially an increasing pain in her throat. A believer in Christian Science, Marks refuses to seek medical attention, and only after the repeated urging of her husband and his daughter, Hong Mei, eventually agrees to go to a hospital where she is diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Due to its late discovery, the tumor has already metastasized and the medical prognosis is dire. Yet, in Tang Xiyang's account, the couple remains resolved to proceed with their cause, indeed it is Mark's illness that serves as a catalyst for the couple's desire to start as soon as possible with organizing the Green Camps. "Today, the entire planet is suffering from a cancer, and this cancer is originating from humankind, a fact that many people to this day have not yet realized. It is these two cancers that have stirred us to embark on this noble quest without turning back" (CCC 332).

Soon, support comes pouring in, in form of donations, but also voices of encouragement. Well-wishers, amongst them officials and intellectuals, express hope not only for the health of Mr. Tang's wife, but also for the success of the higher cause the two are fighting for. Tang's account of his wife's last weeks before she is eventually admitted to the hospital paint her as a tireless "model worker" who remains a modest and resolved posture, works with the team at all occasions, understands China way better than so-called China hands, and provides her husband with a loving and caring home. Although not shared by her husband, her Christian faith provides her with strength and moral conviction that help her manage a murderous workload.

The chapter that describes Mark's eventual death is entitled "Seeing us off on our journey with her own life" (*yi shengming songxing* 以生命送行 CCC 339), its narrative strikes a very personal indeed intimate note, creating a considerable emotional impact on the reader. As the date for their departure comes closer, Marks' physical health deteriorates. Despite being terminally ill and against her husband's objections, she insists that he lead the first Green Camp into Yunnan. (327-328)

Ma Xia's spirit has moved me, and our actions have moved society. (*Ma Xia de jingshen gandongle wo, women de xingdong gandongle shehui.* 马霞的精神感动了我, 我们的行动感动了社会). (CCC 335)

Marcia B. Marks passes away at the Beijing Friendship Hospital in 1996, merely hours before the scheduled departure of Green Camp. The husband's last words to his dying wife are "Now you can come with us to Yunnan", indicating that her spirit will accompany the group on their journey. Some of the team members are admitted into the hospital room, carrying flowers with which they surround the dead woman's body. Guo Yushi 郭玉石, a doctoral student from Beijing's Forestry Academy, has prepared a speech: "For the sake of China's natural protection, you have given all your energy and even your life. Thank you, Ma Xia! You will always be with us, we will always remember you!" (CCC 340)

The departure Green Camp goes not unnoticed by the national media. While some reporters and supporters have brought flowers to send them off, Tang remarks: With her own life, my wife is seeing of the creation of China's green movement, our initial spark, the Green Camp". (339-340) The emotional high point of the journey occurs once the expedition arrives at its destination in Dexian county, Qinghai province. In a chapter entitled "Memorial Ceremony in the Mountains (*gaoshan jidian* 高山祭奠), Green Camp conducts a memorial ceremony for Marks high in the Himalayan. Tang calls for a minute of silence to commemorate his wife, and eventually starts collecting Marks' favorite flowers, ("I have never before plucked flowers in my life. This flower I will take back to Beijing, and place it inside my wife's urn." CCC 345) Moved, students begin to wander off to collect flowers by themselves and – creating an impromptu funeral service – incinerate them on a stone pyre.

"Memorial ceremony on the mountain" (*gaoshan jidian* 高山祭奠) Memorial for Marcia Marks during the first Green Camp 1996. Tang Xiyang, next to the funeral pyre, in the foreground. (CCC 345)

I do not know who eventually says "Let us observe a minute of silence for aunty Ma Xia!" Earth falls even more silent than usual. Heaven does not speak. Earth does not speak. The birds, the insects do not speak. And of course we do not, either. We are all commemorating that woman from the other side of the world, that ordinary yet great woman. She gave her own life to sow green seeds in the hearts of these young people. (CCC: 345)

It is important to note that these descriptions are not mere indulgences in sentimentality, but rather serve as rhetorical devices to underline the sincerity and commitment of *Green Camp*: Once Tang and his team have concluded their investigation and have returned to Beijing, Tang writes a long letter to his protector Song Jian to report on their findings (Tang stresses that he takes half a year in order to produce an adequate report). The language he uses often follows the precedent of moral character and *suzhi* establisher earlier.[110] "The youths of *Green Camp* indeed have displayed a spirit of not fearing hardships and enduring suffering (*bupa kunnan*、*bupa chiku de jingshen* 不怕困难、不怕吃苦的精神). On the truck they carried tools and dynamite, and wherever they encountered obstacles on the road they repaired it. We faced huge landslides on our way home, and had to travel more than 200 kilometers before returning to Kunming." The phrase "not fearing hardship and enduring suffering" (which lit. translates into "eating bitterness") is often employed in Chinese socialist rhetoric as an expression of Maoist asceticism that was held up as a model in order to build Socialism. During the time Tang Xiyang is writing, slogans like "the spirit of fighting hardships" (*jianku douzheng jingshen* 艰苦奋斗精神) are very much in

---

[110] The entire report can be found in *Green Camp*, pages 9-15.

circulation and employed in speeches by prominent leaders, even Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin himself.

> Our biggest shortcomings are in education where ideological and political work has weakened, and the development in education has not been sufficient. [...] The most important point is that nobody has bothered to tell the people – and this includes the cadres – that despite the satisfying development of the economy and the improvement of people's living standards we need to maintain the tradition of struggling against adversity (*jianku douzheng jingshen* 艰苦奋斗精神). Only if we maintain this tradition will we be able to combat the phenomenon of corruption. – Deng Xiaoping [111]

> To emancipate the mind, seeking truth from facts, to actively explore, be creative, work hard, struggle against adveristy (*jianku douzheng*艰苦奋斗), learning from foreign countries, to practice self-improvement without rest, to be modest and prudent, to guard against arrogance and impetuosity, being honest and clean, exercising good governance, and show selfless devotion; this spirit should vigorously be promoted amongst the majority of party members, cadres, and the masses, to make it become the normal way of doing things. – Jiang Zemin: "On the construction of socialist spiritual civilization")

Given such precedent, Tang's formulation can be considered a creative appropriation of official rhetoric that ensures its speaker is firmly on legitimate grounds. Tang Xiyang's framing of his issue is even more convincing since he can situate his writing within a naturescape that reinforces his assurance of the moral qualities of his students. Just like in his early writings on the selfless collective in the snake center in Fujian, the naturescape that is painted in his travel accounts oscillates between different colors, depending on what is demanded in the situation. Accounts of pristine natural beauty alternate with descriptions of harsh wilderness, the overcoming of which makes the eventual learning experience ever more rewarding, and the successes ever more hard-won:

---

[111] *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan* [Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping], Volume 3: 290.

Examples of these varying naturescapes are found in the descriptions of all Green Camp excursions. After the eventual success in protection Yunnan's Sub-Nosed Golden Monkey, Tang organizes regular Green Camps which he leads into ever new territories. In August 1998, Green Camp heads into a protected wetlands area located in Dongbei Province (The associated chapter is entitled "Call of the marshlands" *shidi de zhaohuan* 湿地的召唤, CCC 365-383). The students are taken to look for lotus flowers in the wilds by the reservation's department leader. After a difficult march through the inaccessible swamp, relentlessly attacked by mosquitoes and losing their boots in the thick mud, the team of students led by Tang happens upon a pond on whose still water surface lotus flowers bloom abundantly.

> One after another, the team members catch up. Who can claim to have seen such a place? Whoever has experienced such enchantment? In small groups, and 'risking life and limb' (*fen bu gu shen* 奋不顾身) the students climb down into the pool. When some of the girls see the boys climb down, they form a human chain and make their way down holding each other's hands. Lotus leaves and water chestnuts floating on the water surface, their feet tread on tubers and mud with all sort of water weeds in between, all whilst the water reaching up to our chests. Before our eyes: lotus blossoms, hardship, beauty, happiness, we can't see enough, photograph enough, enjoy enough. Many students tell me 'Shame that we ran out of film to photograph'. Female student Zheng Peina proudly tells me 'I didn't climb in to watch the flowers or make pictures, I climbed in there to experience myself. How often in life does one get this kind of experience?' (GC: 23)

步行的营员可能抄了近道，陆陆续续也到了。谁见过这种场面？谁经得住这种诱惑？男生们三三两两奋不顾身地下了水。几个女生也手拉手地往下走。水上面是荷叶和菱角，中间是各种水草，脚底是块茎和烂泥，水齐胸前，花在眼前，艰苦、美丽、幸运，百感交集，更是看不够，照不够。好几个同学后来告诉我，"可惜照相机里的胶卷没有了。"女生郑佩娜得意地说："我下水不是为了拍照，也不是为了看花，

野荷的魅力
378

The Call of the Marshlands: An illustration of the chapter found in CCC.
Notice that the activities of the students are at the center of the photo's

绿色营对我而言，就正像唐老师说的——改变了我的价值观和人生观，使我在对学生的教育中融入绿色营的精神，注重培养学生对自然的热爱和吃苦精神。我给学生讲跨越海拔5231米唐古拉山口的骄傲与眼泪，讲在扎龙只有手掌大的地方能被蚊子咬十四五个包的经历，讲在三江平原自然保护区看到野生荷花的激动……我也给他们讲马霞赠与我们的，让我铭记终生的两句话："你们首先要学会用欣赏的眼光去认识别人，然后才能正确地认识自己。""你们付出的越多，得到的也越多。"这与其说教育学生，还不如说是我们在共同提高。
为什么每当忙碌时想起绿色营我会眼含泪水，因为我爱得深沉！

扫一扫
383

Another photo illustrating the same chapter. Two female students are helping a fellow Green Camp member through the marshes. Notice the positioning of the helping gesture at the center of the photo, and the presence of the natural environment as a mere framing device around the ensemble of three persons.

Later, in a speech commemorating 10 years of Green Camp, Tang Xiyang refers back to this excursion, evoking an experience growth through shared hardships, learning, camaraderie, and debate.

> I remember every generation of GC participants, especially from the first
>
> few generations: We climbed mountains together, we slept in tents
>
> together, we jumped into 150-mu big pools of lotus flowers, we were

pestered by mosquitoes in reef marshes, we crossed the 5300 meter altitude of the Tanguala mountains, we discussed and quarreled until our faces turned red. In the many years of its course, Green Camp has helped us to distil the human qualitys to deeply love nature, to endure hardships, and of democracy. (GC: 55)

Such shared experiences, in Tang's eyes, serve as the crucial incubator for what he calls "practicing democracy": His students will learn to develop not only personal maturity and fortitude of character, but also be introduced to critical social skills such as respectful discussions, accepting constructive criticism, and organizing social events within a group dynamic.

I mostly acquired my ideas about democracy from my wife and from the West. This issue is very important to me, it is the key location to develop personal quality (*suzhi*), and also for maintaining the destiny of the nation, the country, humanity, and nature. (*ta jishi geren suzhi suyang, ye shi weixi minzu*、*guojia*、*renlei*、*ziran minyun de guanjian suozai* 它既是个人素质素

养, 也是维系民族、国家、人类、自然命运的关键所在). Because China had a tradition of several thousand years of autocracy, many people to this day do not understand, do not know how to practice, and are not accustomed to, democracy. This includes university students who one should assume have a higher cultural level, a keen thinking, and are ahead of trends, but yet they still are stuck in an inflexible rigid mentality: not able to go beyond a certain model, a certain thinking, because they are not aware of themselves, they do not respect others, they do not respect the

Practicing communal spirit in nature: *Green Camp* members joining hands around a giant cedar tree. Illustration of a chapter entitled "Young people are maturing". CCC 364

collective, they lack team spirit (*quefa tuandui jingshen* 缺乏团队精神). Hence, I emphasize that the Green Camp must develop a democratic spirit. Because what we want to nurture here are the future green persons of talent (*peiyang weilai de lüse rencai* 培养未来的绿色人才), if they do not possess this kind of *suzhi*, they will not be able to evoke enthusiasm for environmental protection amongst millions of other people. (GC: 29)

The vehicles via which Tang Xiyang promotes these ideas bare visible resemblance to already well-established precedents of educational policies. There is, for example, the public discussion of diary entries amongst the members of Tang's team: *Green Camp* features the reproduction of a diary entry by a Hongkongese participant named Zou Songhua 邹颂华. Far from being a mere tourist interested in a comfortable nature excursion, Zou sees her expedition with Green Camp as a chance for personal development, and is not satisfied because the experience is not demanding enough:

> August 2nd, 1999. Morning overcast, clear in the afternoon.
>
> Departing from Urumqi, it feels as if we are headed for exile on a hard road, yet this exile is not at all bitter, but we are all brothers-in-arms in luxury. We live in good-quality hotels, and have fish and meat for every meal. In the morning a car picks us up and in the evening brings us back [to the hotel], that's how we have spent one month. My god! Whoever said that we young people must endure hardships? Around here, we are not missing one single meal! (GC: 30)

These are not the grievances of a tourist who is out to have a good time, but those of a young idealist who is eager to get involved in the action, and does not want to waste time with the amenities of modern city life. Later in her account, she expresses satisfaction once the journey proves more of a physical challenge, and the team eventually embarks on a day trip into difficult marsh terrain. She is pleased that she gets an opportunity to exchange views with Tang Xiyang who she admires for his willpower (*yizhi* 意志) and his child-like sense of appreciation for nature.

The publication of diary entries of Green Camp participants has its precedent in the publications of the diaries of New Youth participants, as well as of Communist youths. It aims to show progress in personal development and serve as a model to be emulated by later followers. As was mentioned earlier, the production of diaries for the sake of self-reflection and self-improvement for the higher cause has various precedents in socialist China. Ostrovsky's hero Pavel Korchagin in *How the Steel was Tempered* relays his life's story in form of a diary, presenting in meticulous detail his struggle to live up to the high revolutionary standards he demands of himself. In Communist China, arguably the most famous diary of this sort was that of Lei Feng 雷锋, model worker *extraordinaire*, who during the Cultural Revolution became the model for an entire generation. (Bakken 2000) In their educational practice, the CCP even earlier had developed a regiment of painstaking self-examination, often produced in the form of diaries, whose purpose from the outset was not to remain private or personal, but to bare the self in front of the collective, through public discussion and critique sessions. Diaries of model workers, cadres, soldiers, and other exemplary members of China's New Society were often published and distributed widely for propaganda purposes, which further underlines the fact that diaries in Communist China were a decisively public matter. This is also true for the diaries of members of the educated youths, *zhiqing*, who have been mentioned earlier, and whose diaries received considerable attention in the 1990s in China.[112]

IV.3.2. Elitism

There is a visible thread of elitism woven throughout the narrative of Tang Xiyang's writings, an educational elitism that manifests itself as the author's own understanding as being in possession of, or at least in pursuit of, a new superior form of knowledge that puts him at the very forefront of social development. Postures of

---

[112] For samples and collections of Chinese *zhiqing* diaries, see for example: SHI Weimin 史卫民, ed. (1996). *Zhiqing riji xuanbian* [A selection of zhiqing diaries]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe; id., ed. (1996). *Zhiqing shuxin xuanbian* [A selection of *zhiqing* correspondence]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe; DENG Xian 邓贤 (1993). *Zhongguo zhiqing meng* [Dreams of the Chinese *zhiqing*]. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe; For a general survey, see: YANG Jian 杨健 (2002). *Zhongguo zhiqing wenxue shi* [History of *zhiqing* literature]. Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe. Also: See Bakken 2000: 205 n60 for a selection of related publications.

superiority by China's educated elite towards the unwashed masses have a long history in China's drive towards modernity. Togersen remarks that "notions of superiority based on education have strong links to the traditional Chinese civil service examination system, but in their present form, they are linked particularly to post-May 4th ideas of peasant backwardness. (id. 2003: 215) Cohen mentions how in the early decades of the 20th century "the notion of the peasantry as a culturally distinct and alien 'other' […] desperately in need of education and cultural reform, and […] totally dependent on the leadership and efforts of rational and informed outsiders, became fixed in the outlook of China's modern intellectual and political elites." (Cohen 1994: 151–70) The result is a highly ambivalent relationship towards the common people on whose behalf China's intellectuals claim to engage in their activism for. How long such attitudes have been prevalent among Chinese intellectuals can be glimpsed from another of Liang Qichao's cultural observations that aim to demonstrate the general cultural inferiority of the Chinese population he encounters in the United States, an experience from which he draws broader cultural conclusions:

> There are many other ways in which the Chinese character is inferior to that of Westerners; some happened to impress me so I recorded them, but others I have forgotten. Let me now list several that I noted down, in no particular order:
>
> […]
>
> When more than a hundred Chinese are gathered in one place, even if they are solemn and quite, there are bound to be four kinds of noise: the most frequent is coughing, next come yawning, sneezing, and blowing the nose. During speeches I have tried to listen unobtrusively, and these four noises are constant and ceaseless. I have also listened in Western lecture halls and theaters; although thousands of people were there, I heard no sound.
>
> On the sidewalks on both sides of the streets in San Francisco, spitting and littering are not allowed, and violators are fined five dollars. On New York trolleys, spitting is prohibited and violators are fined five hundred dollars. They value cleanliness so much as to interfere and restrict

freedom. Since Chinese are such messy and filthy citizens, no wonder they are despised.

When Westerners walk, their bodies are erect and their heads up. We Chinese bow at one command, stoop at a second, and prostrate ourselves at a third. The comparison should make us ashamed. [...]

When Westerners converse, if A has not finished, B does not interrupt. With a group of Chinese, on the other hand, the voices are all disorderly; some famous scholars in Peking consider interrupting to be a sign of masterfulness - this is disorderliness in the extreme. Confucius said, "Without having studied the Book of Poetry one cannot speak; without having studied the rites, one cannot behave." My friend Xu Jianmian also said, "Chinese have not learned to walk and have not learned to speak." This is no exaggeration. Though these are small matters, they reflect bigger things. (93-95)

What seems indicative of Liang Qichao's mindset here is his indignation about the lack of refinement and polish of ordinary Chinese when it comes to high culture. His account on not being able to enjoy a concert is the lament of a man of refined tastes who displays a certain *habitus* towards a social stratum that may not share his own cultural predispositions.

Like Liang Qichao, who expresses dismay and embarrassment over the – in his eyes – not sufficiently sophisticated fellow countrymen, Tang Xiyang does not hide its frustration over the fact that an environmental consciousness in China has yet to manifest itself. In this regard, there is a significant amount of contempt for the Chinese "common man" and his or her disregard for the new morality and knowledge Tang tries to convey. The lament of a lack of "civilization" (*wenming* 文明) responsible for Chinese backwardness in terms of environmentalism compared to its Western counterparts is a another very prominent trope within Chinese environmental nonfiction which will be addressed in the next chapter.

V.   Back to the future? *Ecological Civilization,* and the search for Chinese modernity

The previous chapter considered the topos of seclusion within nature and the idea of self-cultivation. It demonstrated how allusions to cultural connotations concerning nature and character quality (*suzhi*) enables Chinese environmental activists to claim a status of a new elite. While *suzhi* usually refers to the micro-level of individual's character, this chapter now turns the perspective onto the macro-level, and the notion of "civilization" (*wenming* 文明), a concept that usually refers to the sociocultural macro-structure. "Although differing in many ways from the English 'civilization' and 'civility', *wenming* has similar definitional aspects. It is used to denote a civilization in the human grouping sense, such as in 'Chinese civilization'; civilization as an historical process; and a kind of civility in terms of social etiquette and relations." (Dynon 2008: 83 (fn1))

This chapter explores the use of *wenming* in environmental nonfiction, more specifically the concept of *shengtai wenming* ["ecological civilization", an officially propagated concept that will be discussed en detail below. Gu in his 1999 study on Chinese "Cultural Intellectuals" in the 1980s argued that "different intellectuals […] strategically occupied different positions in the intellectual field" in order to carve out a niche in the emerging public sphere[113] of China at the time, while closely interacting within complex institutional and clientelistic networks in order to secure their positions and achieve certain outcomes: "The difference in the positions that different segments of the intelligentsia occupied in the intellectual field was also significant for shaping the outcomes of the interaction. Thus, many economic policy intellectuals achieved their desire to play the traditional mandarin role in the policy-making process, and some prominent cultural intellectuals opened up certain autonomous public spaces in society to produce public discourses." (Gu 1999: 427) Following this line of argument, the chapter explores the strategic occupying of domains of competence as a major factor in how environmental nonfiction authors position

---

[113] Gu cautions against using the concept of "public sphere" uncritically in that context.

themselves in the context of "Ecological Civilization". Since the Chinese *wenming* discourse is "a potent signifier that has enable[s] both critical reflection on the national past and an imaginary projection into the future" (Anagnost 1997: 75), a strategic positioning within that discourse allows its participants to establish their relevancy within public political life. This lends legitimacy and credibility to their cause and their position within China's institutional framework. *Wenming* is a key concept in this regard, since the claim to its possession has been a key asset for the claim to political power in order to lead China into modernity. This is not only true for China every since it embarked onto its long and often painful journey to become part of the world in the 19th century, but for colonial claims to power and the right to hold dominion over other people. And with the claim to be China's primary civilizing agent comes a claim to power, i.e. legitimacy.

Anagnost (1997) argues that the concept of *wenming* has taken the place of class as "the central organizing figure of a post-Mao national imaginary." (ibid: 75), and has become crucial as a legitimizing device for continued CCP rule. Tørgersen in his study of sources of cadre legitimacy in Xuanwei municipality (Yunnan Province) points out that the CCP's power base at the local level is increasingly plagued by corruption, nepotism, and growing dissent, and suggests "that the Party at the ideological level responds to the crisis of legitimacy by presenting itself and its cadres as civilising [sic] agents bringing prosperity, science, morality, and social organization to the villages." (id. 2003: 202) By presenting themselves as "civilising agents", party cadres can rely on an "image of educational and cultural superiority" to claim a leadership position amongst the commoners: "They base their claim to legitimacy on the perception that they, because of their personal competencies and links to the party-state, represent a higher level of learning, information, and civilisation than the population in the rural communities they rule. They also believe that the Party they embody stands for modernity and progress and has the historical mission of leading the peasants to higher levels of economic development and social organisation, even when this means acting against the peasants' perceptions of their own interests." (ibid: 222)

Within Chinese public life, *wenming* is a concept often propagated in official announcements, campaigns, and propaganda slogans, often prominently displayed

on signs, billboards, flags, official buildings, and other public spaces: Prior to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, the *People's Daily* (2007/08/20) called the populace to "Let the Olympic Games become a new departure point of civilization!", while one of the officially embraced mottos during the games itself was "Welcome the Olympics, pay special attention to be civilized, establish a new style!" (*Ying aoyun，jiang wenming，shu xinfeng* 迎奥运, 讲文明, 树新风). More importantly, the language of *wenming* is also often used in environmental issues: In 2011, before the start of the 12th Five-Year-Plan, the city government of Beijing organized a number of public events under the title "Be a civilized and polite Beijinger – China's green take-off and civilized traffic starts with me!" Such public displays are all part of a new ideological as well as programmatic direction that has been propagated by the Chinese government in the last five years under the title "Ecological Civilization" (*shengtai wenming* 生态文明).

In terms of its source material, this chapter relies on a broader range of texts. Most of them have been produced by Chinese NGOs and their leaders: As its core, the chapter will consider three books penned and/or edited by Liang Congjie 梁从诫 (1932-2010), founder and leader of "Friends of Nature". Their titles are: *Marching Towards a Green Civilization* (Liang/Kang 2005), *Speaking on Behalf of Nature* (Liang/Liang 2000), two books that are part of the "Friends of Nature Book Series" (*Ziran zhi you shuxi* 自然之友书系), as well as *The Imperfect Circle* (Liang 2002), a collection of Mr. Liang's essays and articles. For comparison and reference purposes, it also includes the work of Liao Xiaoyi, founder and leader of the environmental NGO *Global Village Beijing*, and it will also referencing Tang Xiyang, Xu Gang, and other authors discussed earlier.

V.1   What is "Ecological Civilization"?

At the fifth plenary session of the 16th Party Congress, in 2005, premier Wen Jiabao put forward his vision of a "two-oriented" society – one that conserves resources and is environmentally friendly, pointing the direction for local development. The central government also provided support for trial reforms towards that goal. In 2007, at the 17th Party Congress, Hu Jintao 胡锦涛 proposed his own ideological contribution to socialism with Chinese characteristics; the establishment of a "moderately well-off

society" (*xiaokang shehui* 小康社会). While this program entailed four basic goals (Chinese-style socialist economic development, political development, cultural development and social development), attached to the four goals were five comments – one for each goal, plus the proposal to "build an ecological civilization." (*jianshe shengtai wenming* 建设生态文明). At the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, Hu Jintao's talk of building an ecological civilization put environmental issues higher up the agenda than ever before. Early this year, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) and the Ministry for Environmental Protection (MEP) investigated progress on the ecological civilization in more than 10 provinces. By August, there were 53 trial projects under way. But what drew most attention were Hu's words: "Resource consumption, environmental damage and ecological efficiency shall be included in systems for evaluating economic and social development, in order to establish a system of targets, evaluation and rewards and punishments that reflects the requirements of an ecological civilization." With the ecological civilization shaking up the existing mechanisms for evaluating official performance, the 18th Party Congress has shown the determination of China's high-level leaders.

A lengthy editorial briefly after the 18th Party Congress, published December 24th 2007 in *People's Daily* and penned by the head of Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), Zhou Shengxian 周生贤, laid out the meaning of the new concept. What is most noticeable is the fact that Zhou's defining statements establish "Ecological Civilization" within the wider context of the modernization narrative of the CCP, as indeed Dynon remarks that "[w]ithin propaganda, the meaning of *wenming* is linked intrinsically with the CCP's modernization narrative." (Dynon 2008: 83 (fn1))

> Ecological Civilization is a form (*xingtai* 形态) of human civilization. It is based on the premise to respect and protect nature; its purpose is so that people, people and nature, people and society can live together harmoniously. It contains the establishment of a sustainable mode of production and consumption, and to guide people towards a sustainable and harmonious path of development. [...] One could say that Ecological Civilization is the result of humankind's in-depth reflection on the

traditional forms of civilization, especially industrial civilization, and it constitutes a significant progress of the developmental stage of human civilization in terms of philosophy, path, and model. [my emphasis]

The last sentence especially has a strong teleological (one could say Marxist-historicist) implication that characterizes Marxist-Leninist understandings of social development. The concept juxtaposes a new, "green", "harmonious" and progressive future with the old, "black", "destructive" societies of the industrial and post-industrial age. It is alleged that the construction of Ecological Civilization will allow China to jump ahead of the West in terms of economic progress. Thus, the concept allows for the combining of developmentalism, environmentalism, and (cultural) nationalism, making it highly appealing to a broader Chinese audience.

In this framework, the creation of Ecological Civilization is merely the next step in the long process of Chinese modernization. This reading become even stronger when further on, the editorial describes the historical relationship between mankind and nature through the lens of historic materialism, which is perfectly in line with standard interpretations of historic development in the People's Republic:

> In primitive society, due to the very low level of productivity of human society, man lived in harmony with nature, but this harmony was merely characterized by fearful reverence (*jingwei* 敬畏) and passive obedience, the dominating factor in this harmonious relationship was nature. Once there was agricultural civilization, while the relationship between man and nature remained largely harmonious, there were periodic and regional instances of discord. With the increase in population and gradual increase in productivity levels, humankind began to feel uneasy under nature's shelter and reign, and while it used nature for its own benefit also tried to change and shape nature, and these changes were often accompanied by blindness, recklessness and destruction. The emergence of industrial civilization constituted a qualitative leap in the productive forces of society, and humankind's ability to use nature to its own advantage increased dramatically. In this period, the attitude of humankind towards nature also underwent a fundamental change, from "use" to "subdue", and [slogans such as] "man is nature's master"

> became the dominant line of thought. Under the domination of this
> ideology, the conquest and domination of nature manifested itself in
> exploitation and destruction, uncontrolled mass consumption of natural
> resources led to large-scale pollution, eventually leading to rapid
> depletion of natural resources, environmental destruction, [...] and other
> catastrophic consequences. [ibid]

The protection of nature hence is merely a prerequisite for the continued survival and prospering of the human race:

> The developmental practice of human societies has proven that if the
> ecosystem cannot continue to provide resources and energy, clean air,
> water, and other elements, the continued development of material
> civilization will lose its carrier and foundation, and then the whole of
> human civilization will be threatened. Therefore, the construction of
> Ecological Civilization is an inherent need to achieve the goal of building
> a moderately prosperous society, it is important to thoroughly implement
> the scientific concept of development. [ibid]

Such re-assessments of its developmental path, indeed of its own political and ideological history, are not uncommon in the history of the CCP. Major course-corrections have indeed occurred several times within the CCP's history, often after internal struggles and major calamities, and the outcome is then ideologically codified in shared writings.[114] Pan Yue 潘岳, outspoken vice-minister of the Ministry

---

[114] Examples for such codified re-assessments include: The 1981 "Resolution Concerning Several Issues Regarding the History of the Party Since the founding of the PRC" (*Guanyu jianguo yilai dang de ruogan lishi wenti de jueyi* 关于建国以来党的若干历史问题的决议), which judged the Cultural Revolution to have been an "ultra-leftist" deviation, thus paving the way for the Dengist reform era. Another: In his political report to the Thirteenth National Party Congress on October 5th 1987, Zhao Ziyang 赵紫阳, then general secretary of the CCP, proposed a theory "Concerning the primary stage of socialism" (*shehui zhuyi chuji jieduan lun* 社会主义初级阶段论), essentially arguing that Maoist utopianism had misread the historic stage China found itself in by assuming China would soon enter the golden age of Communism. Instead, Zhao argued, China had barely started its Socialist stage, and hence required a vigorous development of its productive forces which were the prerequisite to further stages in socialist development. Also, excessive class struggle would hem such development and hence was to be avoided. This theory offered important ideological support to the economic reforms initiated by Deng since it justified the increased reliance on market mechanisms and rising inequality in the PRC's economic trajectory. (see also: Zhao 2004: 225f.)

of Environmental Protection has indeed argued that China's environmental calamities are in part to be blamed of a certain interpretation of Marxism itself.

> China's environmental problems, complex as the causes may be, can ultimately be attributed to our understanding of Marxism. For most of our recent history, we saw in Marxism only a philosophy of class struggle. We believed that economic development would solve all our problems. In the reform period, this misreading of Marx morphed into an unrestrained pursuit of material gain devoid of morality. Traditional Chinese culture, with its emphasis on harmony between human beings and nature, was thrown aside. [...]

> Making matters worse, while we discarded the finer elements of our traditional culture, we failed to absorb the better aspects of modern civilization. The concept of a "social contract" based on rights and obligations – the essential values that constitute the most important precondition for effective environmental protection – goes largely ignored. As a result, environmental protection projects often fail to be included in calculating production costs. Scarcely anyone bothers to consider the environmental costs to – or rights of – the country's poor and powerless. (Pan Yue: 2006)

Pan Yue's diagnosis offers a two-pronged critique: China's environmental problems can be understood as a consequence of firstly a "misreading" of Marxism's modernizing strategy, which refers both to the "philosophy of class struggle", the Maoist era, as well as the Reform period under Deng, both of which witnessed great environmental destruction. Secondly, the "discarding" of China's traditional culture. In terms of remedy, this reading of China's environmental situation implies that both a correct application of scientific principles combined with a return to culture are the way for Chinese society to go forward. "*Wenming* discourse is a discourse of lack", Anagnost reminds us, "referring to the failure of the Chinese people to embody international standards of modernity, civility, and discipline. All these translate into a construction of the Chinese people as being of 'low quality' (*suzhi cha*), which has perhaps become the reigning explanation for all manner of contradictions encountered in the flow of everyday life." (Anagnost 1997: 76)

It is noteworthy that there is a considerable overlap between the position held by certain officials such as Pan Yue and environmental activists such as Tang Xiyang who also often blame China's dire environmental situation on a disregard of China's traditional culture.

> Chinese culture nowadays is confronted by serious challenges: Either to perish amidst today's world's currents (or maybe one should say to equally decline and fade into the realm of archeology); or it will continue with China's splendid cultural traditions and incorporate the best achievements from Western cultures, making it even the more alive and vigorous. I do not think that I am overly dramatic in this assessment: Today, Chinese culture is under attack from within, as well as from outside: From within, it has been under attack from the revolutions of the last years, especially the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution". We revolutionized this, we revolutionized that, we did away with Zhuangzi, Laozi, Confucius, Qu Yuan, Sima Qian, Yue Fei, Tan Sitong, Sun Yat-sen, and others. As for the threat from outside: Following the economic reforms, commercial culture has swept into China like a force of nature, and whatever still existed in terms of humanity, idealism, professionalism and integrity, it all was transformed into a big "money" sign in the eyes of too many people. Chinese culture will be hard-pressed to fend off the combined attack from these two directions. (CCC: 100)

At first glance, this diagnosis seems entirely plausible, as especially the era of Maoism has often been identified as a period of excessive environmental destruction, fueled by ideologically induced mass hysteria. Shapiro (2008) sees "Mao's war against nature" as being fundamentally built against the same notion: "Maoism rejected both Chinese tradition and Western science. The effort to conquer nature was highly concentrated and oppositional, motivated by utopianism [...]. The articulation of Mao's war against nature is striking for its overtly adversarial expression and disregard of objective scientific principles, while its implementation stands out for focused destructiveness and mass coordination." (Shapiro 2001: 8)

Yet at the same time, any position that invokes "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Culture" as the remedy of China's environment will have to confront several serious caveats: It

is undeniable that while the environmental excesses under Chinese socialism relied not on scientific but ideological justification, Socialism itself based its legitimacy on its scientific "correctness", and many of the mass campaigns that proved to be disastrous for China's environment explicitly pitted scientific progress against backward superstition and tradition.

At the same time, several strains of China's cultural tradition itself offered ample foundation for Maoism to built upon when it came to its antagonistic stance against nature: As Shapiro (2008) acknowledges herself briefly later in the same paragraph quoted above, Maoism showed significant overlap with Confucianism when it came to its critical, even hostile attitude against the natural world: "Maoism strengthened problematic aspects of Chinese tradition, such as the tendency to see nature through a purely utilitarian lens. At the same time, through suppression of local knowledge, it undermined aspects of traditional practice that fostered sustainable relations with nature." (Shapiro 2001: 8)

V.2   Mr. Science or Mr. Culture to the rescue?

The visions found in Chinese environmental nonfiction of what *shengtai wenming* ought to be thus dovetails into what can be called a culturalist and a scientistic approach, which are not always compatible with each other, or even internally coherent. In this regard, the development of environmental nonfiction in China since the 1980s follows the intellectual, literary, and academic trends and discourses of that decade. Some scholars have categorized the main intellectual tendencies of these years as a conflict between two trends, "scientism" and "culturalism" (Chen Kuide 1991; Chen Lai 1989). The split between 'material civilization' and 'spiritual civilization', as Anagnost calls it, "returned with a vengeance in the 1980s, and much scholarly energy has been devoted to tracing its history as an indigenous theoretical resource for talking about modernization." (Anagnost 1997: 82)

A first example that in fact employs both the culturalist as well as the scientistic argument is provided by an essay titled "Friends with nature. The green idea" (*Yu ziran weiyou. Lüse linian* 与自然为友. 绿色理念) penned by Liang Congjie detailing his meetings with likeminded friends that eventually lead to the founding of *Friends of*

Nature. [115] These informal gatherings were given the name "Linglong Garden Meetings" (*linglongyuan juhui* 玲珑园聚会). While short, the article manages to establish claims to both a cultural as well as a scientific legitimacy for the work that he and his fellow colleagues are about to set out.

> On June 5th 1993, on "World Environment Day", under an ancient abandoned pagoda at the outskirts of Beijing, a group of intellectuals with a profound sense of social responsibility are sitting on the grass, engaging in as spontaneous informal debate. They were addressing China's environmental situation and what responsibility the common people should shoulder for the environment. (WWDZ: 1)

This very first paragraph, albeit short, deserves closer attention due to the imaginary it invokes. Firstly, the depiction of the locality itself is rather significant. The protagonists in the establishing of China's first NGO gather at "the outskirts of Beijing", geographically and also metaphorically located at the margins of, yet not outside, the center of political power in China. They gather in an informal setting, sitting on the green grass under an "ancient" (*gu* 古) and "neglected" or "abandoned" (*huangfei* 荒废) pagoda, a symbol of traditional Chinese culture and religious practice which has been disregarded and abandoned over the last decades. It is no coincidence that laments about the sad state of traditional Chinese culture in post-Mao China were ubiquitous in China in the early 1990s in intellectual circles. For example, Yu Qiuyu's 余秋雨 "A Bitter Journey through Culture" (*Wenhua kulü* 文化苦旅), in which the author takes an increasingly infuriating journey to places of traditional Chinese culture had been published in 1992 and had become a huge success in the PRC (see below). The appropriation of traditional culture, and the subsequent equation of culture *with* nature, is a powerful trope in Chinese environmental non-fiction writing. This framing often is accompanied by a certain patronizing and contemptuous hand-wringing attitude by Chinese intellectuals over the inadequacies of government officials and the stupidity of the common people, to which I will return to this point later in this chapter. The scenery depicted by Liang Congjie also evokes literary

---

[115] The essay is found in "Speaking on behalf of nature" (*Wei wugao de daziran* 为无告的大自然), a collection of essays published by *Friends of Nature*. It features contributions from a wide number of authors, among that Liang Congjie 梁从诫, Wang Lixiong 王力雄, Wang Dongping 王东平, and many others.

echoes of similar gatherings of like-minded and righteous people pledging to stand together to fight the good fight (often, abandoned temples or gardens provide the setting for such gatherings). For example, the setting is reminiscent of a famous scene from Luo Guanzhong's 14th century novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*San guo yan yi* 三国演义), the "Oath in the Peach Garden", in which the righteous heir to the Han throne, Liu Bei 刘备, takes an oath of fraternity with the knight Guan Yu 关羽 and the giant Zhang Fei 张飞.

While Liang's account more heavily turns towards invocations of what could be called cultural legitimacy, it also advances a scientistic claim. Referring to the "erroneous concepts and slogans of the last few decades" he criticizes Marxist dogma that let people to believe that by reliance on "so-called modern science and technology, mankind could endlessly extract and exploit nature:"

> In the 1950s, China took kindly to a slogan we had picked up from some scholar at the Academy of Social Sciences of the U.S.S.R. that said "We must not wait for earth to bestow her gifts unto us; we must extract from nature what we need!" Later, we listened to [slogans such as] "man will certainly conquer nature" [*ren ding sheng tian* 人定胜天, a Maoist slogan popular especially during the Great Leap Forward], "We can create any miracle as long as there are men!", or even "The more audacious we are, the higher will be earth's yield!" (WWDZ: 4)

Liang Congjie and his followers have nothing but contempt for such "ignorant ravings" (*wuzhi kuangyan* 无知狂言). The role of the actors themselves is comparable to what this study has discussed in detail in previous chapters: all are intellectuals who, as Mr Liang points out, have no qualification in terms of environmental expertise, but merely share "a profound sense of social responsibility", invoking the well-established role of the socially responsible literati.

A third dimension in this account concerns the connection between China, its cultural tradition, and its place in the world. Liang's account from the very start puts his and his colleagues' efforts in an international context, by pointing out that their meeting takes place on "World Environment Day", under the auguries of the United

Nations, and links their struggle to the growing international environmentalist movement:

> In today's world, the environment has become one of the issues hundreds of millions of people care most about. It transcends the borders of nation states, races, social systems, ideologies, and ages, and it touches upon the present and future well-being of every single individual on this planet. (WWDZ 1-2)

Liang then engages the previously mentioned "discourse of lack", lamenting how the West is already more advanced, and how China is again lagging behind:

> However, in the last couple of decades, Chinese people's understanding of environmental issues has been quite superficial, even erroneous. In the 1960s and 1970s, when the broad populace in Western industrialized nations was becoming aware of the severe harm that environmental destruction posed to public health, to the global ecosystem and societal development, at the moment when mass-style popular environmental movements were about to unfold [there], most people in China still attributed environmental problems to social maladies that could only occur under capitalism, and saw environmental pollution as an illustration of the greed of bourgeois money-grabbers, piling on criticism and ridicule! (2)

The experience of the Western countries, according to Liang, had shown that public participation was crucial for establishing environmental protection regimes and policies: "International experience has proven: with governmental management alone, and without supervision by and participation of the masses, a country, a city, a region will not be able to do a good job at environmental protection." (ibid. 3) The government, Liang explains, should take on the role of parents who rely on the cooperation of the entire family to run the household. It is this insight that has led himself and his fellow intellectuals to establish *Friends of Nature*

The following pages detail the invocation of "Mr. Science" and "Mr.Culture" in greater detail. The demarcation line between the two argumentative strains is not always clearly drawn, yet at the same time there exist considerable tension between

155

the two. This shows that discourse in environmental eco-literature in China is not monolithic, but multi-facetted and writers often appropriate different strains of officially advanced discourse to lend credibility to their own arguments. In fact, the vagueness of the term "civilization" facilitates the various uses, since it allows for appropriation of the term by various actors for various agendas: "The sacred language of *wenming* both gave rise to and benefited from a mutually reinforcing promotional mechanism, as officials and work units pushed to peddle otherwise disparate ideas and activities as examples of spiritual civilization and the media scrambled to ensure their content bristled with reportage of them." (Dynon 2008: 98-99)

V.2.1 Mr. Science

Modernity discourse and the language of scientism in 1980s China

Already in 1977 after Deng's reinstatement, the party had launched a "movement to liberate thinking" (*jiefang sixiang yundong*), which started a process that Xu (2004: 184) calls the evolution from Maoism to "secular socialism" (*shisuhua shehuizhuyi* 世俗化社会主义). This represented a party-intern educational effort to get cadres to let go of rigid Maoist dogmas and accept the new paradigm of pragmatism; "practice is the sole criterion for truth" in order to move China into the future. Because Maoist dogma was to be replaced with scientific "truth", the officially encouraged discourse on how post-Mao China's future was to look like had a strong element of scientism (*kexue zhuyi* 科学主义), which "claimed that the sole criterion for measuring social development is the strength of productive forces and that science and technology are the pre-eminent productive forces in modern society" (Xu 2004: 185)[116] The new

---

[116] The CCP's unabashed embrace of Modernity received a great deal of supporting fire from important scholars within Chinese academia: Among its main representatives was the so-called "Towards The Future" (*zou xiang weilai* 走向未来) group (after a book series published under this name) that loosely centered around acclaimed scholar Jin Guantao 金观涛, then an editor of the *Journal of Dialectics of Nature*, a reputable periodical published by the *Chinese Academy of Sciences* (CAS) which had introduced the Chinese audience to many Western thinkers such as Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn (Gu 1999: 396). Jin's writing channeled Hegel's historical and Max Weber's cultural determinism (Chen 1991: 46 f.): He agreed with Weber's argument that the path to Modernity inevitably led through a process of increasing rationalization. The rationality of modernity in this context meant a commitment to system and structure, and it was neither to be found in Hegelian-Marxist dialectics, nor in culturally specific forms of rationality. Instead, Jin advocated "scientific rationality" (*kexue lixing*): sciences and ethics should engage in a constant dialogue to bridge the gap between instrumental and moral rationality. In 1982, the *Journal of Dialectics of Nature* organized an

scientistic approach to China's development under Deng and its concentration on "scientific truth" opened up deliberative spaces for individual intellectuals and officials who could use this new language to not criticize the "unscientific" excesses of Maoism, but also develop visions for China's path into the future. This also implied a new, more important role for China's intellectuals since they were the preeminent custodians and creators of scientific truth. An early example for this stance in the context of environmentalism was Qu Geping 曲格平. In 1972, the Chinese Communist leadership for the first time had come into contact with international environmental protection ideas, when a group of Chinese delegates, reporting to Premier Zhou Enlai 周恩来 himself, attended the UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm: "This conference planted the seeds of environmental change in China […]" (Economy 2004: 93). Upon return, the report of the delegation, of which Qu Geping was a member, let Zhou to organize China's "First Conference on Environmental Protection" in 1973. Qu would go on to become one of China's most vocal and respected environmental protectionists. His talks and essays are collected in a work called "We need a transformation" (*Women xuyao yichang biange* 我们需要一场变革), another part of the "Green Classics Library". (Qu 1997). The language of these texts to a large extent operates in the context of China's Dengist modernization narrative; environmental protection in this regard belongs to the "correct" policies that are indispensable for China to make strides in its economic and social development. In an article entitled "To protect the environment is a basic national strategy for China" (*Baohu huanjing shi woguo de yixiang jiben guoce* 保护环境是我国的基本国策) from 1984, Qu argued: "To make environmental protection a national strategy is determined by our national situation, it is completey correct, and indispensable. If we do not pay attention now, and firmly grasp the task of protecting the environment, then by the end of this century the degree of environmental pollution and ecological destruction might resemble our population problem, and become an issue that will be only very hard to address." (Qu 1997: 66)

---

important (and later much referred-to) conference which identified traditional Chinese culture as the main culprit for modern China's backwardness in science and technology. The conference volume, published in 1983, was entitled *Kexue Chuantong yu Wenhua* [Scientific Tradition and Culture]; Xi'an: Shaanxi Science and Technology Press.

The issue of China's population crisis is arguably the most prominent argument advanced within scientistic conceptualizations of China's environmental issues: The explosion of the Chinese population – in this line of reasoning – is attributable to Mao Zedong's disdain for scientific insight and Maoism's persecution of China's intellectuals. Ma Yinchu 马寅初 is arguably the champion of propents of the scientistic approach to the pursuit of Ecological Civilization. Born 1882, he received a Ph.D. in economics and philosophy from Columbia University in 1914 and in 1920 helped to found the Shanghai College of Commerce. During the 1930s, Ma began to criticize the Guomindang government, and was subsequently incarcerated in the *Xifeng* concentration camp in Guizhou in 1940. In 1949, at the request of Zhou Enlai, he served as a nonpartisan delegate to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. From 1950 to 1951, he served as the president of Zhejiang University, and then as the president of Peking University from 1951 to 1960, a respected and beloved figure.[117]

In June 1957, at the height of his professional career, Ma presented what was meant to be his academic masterwork, the *New Population Theory* at the fourth session of the First National People's Congress. Having examined trends of the early 1950s, he concluded that further population growth at the current rates would be detrimental to China's development. Therefore, he advocated for the strong implementation of birth control by the government, as well as education campaigns on family planning. During the following three years, Ma and his theory were repeatedly attacked as having created a "political conspiracy" and he was banned from public life. The charges of the government were that the theory followed Malthusianism, attempted to discredit the superiority of socialism, and represented bourgeois elitism.

Ma and his *New Population Theory* did not receive mention until 1979 when he was rehabilitated. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China formally apologized to him, stating his theory had been validated by reality. All charges against him were retracted, and he was made honorary president of Peking University. Ma Yinchu died a few years later on May 10, 1982 at the age of 100.

---

[117] For an extensive discussion of Ma's life and work, see Shapiro 2001: 36-48.

Even before Ma's death, scholars were realizing the enormity of the government's error in censoring his views for two decades. Ma's theory also became enshrined in public policy; China's One Child Policy draws heavily on Ma's reasoning that "the State should have the power to intervene in reproduction and to control population", and follows his advice in heavily utilizing propaganda on the dangers of population growth. In Ma's hometown, a middle school has been named in his honor, his birth home is being renovated as a museum. Nationally, the scholar is featured prominently in primary and middle school textbooks as "Uncle Ma", where he is praised for his contributions to population control and environmental protection. In 1997, a nine-part series about his life was aired in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the publication of his population theory. His work, *A New Population Theory* was republished in full by Jilin People's Publishing House as part of the "Green Classics" collection, together with an extensive foreword by Zhang Chunyuan 张纯元 in which he cast Ma Yinchu as a model for objectivity and "correct" scientific attitude whose work was disregarded by "dogmatists":

> Ma Yinchu was a patriot of absolute sincerity, he loved the party and he loved socialism. Regardless of the constraints put onto him by dogmatism, he put aside any concern for his personal safety and boldly addressed the problem of overpopulation in China, based on empiricism and with Marxism-Leninism as his guideline. Mr. Ma [orig. "Ma Lao 马老", a term of special reverence] was of the opinion that China 's population was too much, its growth rate too high, if such unchecked development was allowed to continue, it certainly would become an obstacle for China's productive force [...]. This was no baseless speculation, but was unshakably grounded on the practical situation of China's population. (Ma 1997: 68)

> Comrade Mao Zedong says: "There is only one kind of true theory in this world, theory that is drawn from objective reality and then verified by objective reality." Ma Yinchu's theory was exactly that. As a result, he was a real Marxist, and not a Malthusian. Ma Yinchu's theory on the existing population problem in China was neither respected nor adopted at the time; to the contrary, he was subjected to merciless criticism, indeed those delusional dogmatists who preached "the bigger the population

> the better" had the upper hand. Under such erroneous theories, China's population continued to blindly grow unchecked. (ibid: 69)

> The dialectics of history turn mercilessly; they finally announced that Ma Yinchu's argument on the existing population problem in socialist societies was correct, and that those dogmatists who said "If the Soviet Union does not address it, we do not need to, either" were wrong. (ibid: 70)

Given the role Mao personally played in the destruction of Ma Yinchu and his work, there is a certain irony in the fact that this foreword features the quote of the Chairman to support the argument for the primacy of scientific fact over dogmatism. However, what seems clear is the argumentative thrust, and also the strong identification of Ma Yinchu as a role model not only for fellow scientists, but as an admonishion to government officials to respect their work.

"Ecological Civilization" and "The Fourth Wave"

In the wake of China's economic opening, the influx of foreign capital, technology and know-how into China was accompanied an equally enormous flow of ideas, theories, and concepts from abroad.[118] The fact that modernization theory in general, and Toffler's work *The Third Wave* (1980) in particular, were amongst the spearhead of Western-imported economic theory during the 1980s is quite telling about the unbroken faith in modernism the Chinese Communist Party's held during that time. The Chinese translation of the book under the title *disanci langchao* 第三次浪潮 was published in 1983. Toffler's optimistic forecast of the possibilities of economic development towards a "post-industrial society" (the third wave, the second being industrial society) through a technological revolution hit a nerve with Chinese officials and intellectuals alike, who took his thesis as a wake-up call for intensified efforts to march towards an utopian future via means of modernization. (Wang 1996: 41) What especially thrilled the Chinese side was Toffler's argument against the pessimism that had permeated The Limits of Growth, a study commissioned by the Club of Rome in 1972, which had analyzed the consequences of interactions between

---

[118] Han Shi (1992) 13-14. Jiang Zemin 江泽民 is said to have been particularly fond of this Toffler's work.

the Earth's ecosystems and human societies. This study had come to the conclusion that while the world's population was growing exponentially, the ability of new technologies to increase the availability of (limited) natural resources only grew linearly. Under these conditions, the capacity for economic growth, especially for countries with massive overpopulation such as China, was inherently limited, and the study had predicted a collapse of the world's economic and social systems as well as a massive failing of whole ecosystems for the 21st century. Given this background, one could argue that the attraction of the Third Wave argument – potential for unlimited economic growth through a transition towards a knowledge and technology based economy – for the Chinese readership essentially was the same as what Marxism had promised over half a decade earlier: here was an economic theory from the West – thus invested with all the intellectual authority of the much-envied West –, yet it promised to not only catch up but also to overtake the West's economic development by a program of audacious policies that would lead China into an utopia. Thus, Western thought appropriated by China's leaders initially displayed a bias towards a technology and knowledge-based modernization approach, which in the 1980s in China led to a discourse on modernization that had significant utopian character, but was based on (economic, not political) liberalism and scientism.

The scientistic version of *Ecological Civilization* in a very similar manner is firmly situated the framework of officially propagated modernization discourse in China. In this context, the "establishment of an ecological civilization" (*jianshe shengtai wenming* 建设生态文明), as it is referred to, is merely the next step in China's long run to catch up with the West, its "Fourth Wave" (*di sici langchao* 第四次浪潮). This is also the title of an official propaganda book[119] that was published in 2011 to much fanfare*: The Fourth Wave: Ecological Civilization. A propaganda book for the age of green civilization*. The book puts itself in a direct lineage with Toffler's work and presents a blueprint how China has to move "from the Third to the Fourth Wave." After outlining Toffler's argument, the authors ask rhetorically: "Alas, who will bring black civilization to its conclusion? Who [sic] will be the Fourth Wave following the Third Wave? (ibid: 9).

---

[119] LU Junqing 卢俊卿, QIU Fangying 仇方迎, et al. (2011): *Di sici langchao: Lüse wenming. Yibu lüse wenming shidai de xuanchuanshu* [The Fourth Wave: Ecological Civilization. A propaganda book for the age of green civilization]. Beijing: Zhongxin chubanshe.

Such a perspective is indicative of Chinese modernization discourse in general which is concerned with jumping ahead of the West in terms of economic development. The following graph illustrates this understanding very succinctly. It is taken from a study conducted by Zhang and Mol (2007) on the *Chinese Modernization Report 2007* produced by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), more specifically its inherent conceptualization of "ecological modernization", a key concept within the context of *shengtai wenming.* According to the report, depending on the modernisation stage a country is in, the pathways towards ecological modernisation can be different.
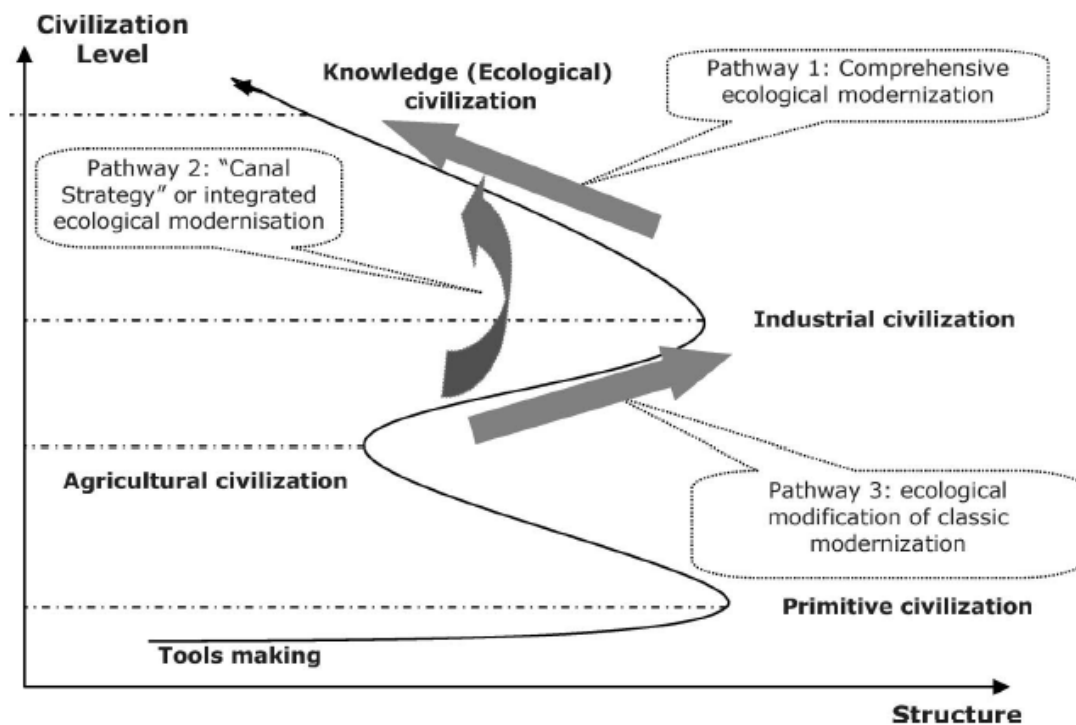
Source: Zhang and Mol 2007: 663.

"Pathway 2 (labeled integrated ecological modernisation) applies to developmental countries that take a short cut (the Canal strategy) towards an eco-modernised society by focusing on accelerated greening industrialisation and ecologising economy towards a knowledge society." (Zhang/Mol 2007: 663) Echoing the argument of *The Third Wave*, pathway 2 (preferred by the CAS study) presents ecological modernization as the latest shortcut that will enable China to jump ahead of Western nations in terms of its level of modernization. *Ecological Modernization* hence presents a "upgrade through transformation" (*zhuanxing shengji* 转型升级). (Shen/Ma 2010) Implicit in this context is a political dimension: the establishment of *shengtai wenming*

will allow the CCP maintain the helm of China's modernization project, a function that forms one of the party's most fundamental claims to political legitimacy.

The Fourth Wave similarly represents a comprehensive guide towards the establishment of *Ecological Civilization* that goes beyond a mere economic blueprint, but offers guidance for a reform of state-society interactions and good governance, all in the interest of establishing a "harmonious coexistence between man, society, and nature." "The Fourth Wave" of China's Ecological Civilization is not only advocating an overhaul of government agencies towards more transparency and accountability, but is also directed at the general public. In a chapter "The green citizen" (*lüse gongming* 绿色公民), "The Fourth Wave" presents a blueprint for how the Chinese population should behave to correspond to the new developmental direction. The addressee in this regard is less the broad populace, but rather China's new middle class that is called to make the transformation from "white collar" to "green collar" work- and lifestyles: "Green collars: the trailblazers of the green civilization." (*lüling – lüse wenming de nongchao'er* 绿领绿色文明的弄潮儿, Lu/Qiu/al 2011: 49).

> In the last years, following China's swift and violent economic development, a new trend has been blossoming everywhere, to again go into the countryside, return to nature, enjoy environmental protection and romantic fields and gardens. Some people who had gotten rich first in the cities are buying residences in the coutryside, they plant vegetables, enjoy a pastoral lifestyle, but at the same time also do business or found businessesm far fromv the travails and environmental protection of the cities. The denomination they give themselves is "new shangshan xiaxiang" movement. (ibid: 52)

Not only individuals citizens, but NGOs in China as well also assigned a special role in this regard: "When it comes to advancing green civilization, [the two sides] civic and official, those within the system and those outside, are not mutually exclusive paths, but they are just like the two wheels on a chart, the two wings of a bird, only when both wheels spin or the two wings flap, only then can society develop harmoniously. Under the conditions of the Opening and Reform Policies, and within the framework of the law, we should appeal loudly and clearly to the

nongovernmental green protection organizations to break down the restrictions of system insiders and outsiders, allow them greater living space […], an even more respectable social status, this way our march towards green civilization will be faster and steadier." (Liu/Qiu/al 2011: 205)

V.2.2 Mr. Culture

Ecological Civilization's second argumentative strain is composed by appeals to use China's culture and traditions for the sake of environmental protection. These appeals are often characterized by a highly essentialist manner that do not take into consideration the nuanced perspectives traditional Chinese culture had developed when it came to man's relationship with nature. For example, "The Fourth Wave" calls its readers to "derive strength from the wisdom of the East" (ibid: 312)

The cultural argument is made probably most succinctly by a participant of the early Linglong Garden Meetings, well-known literary critic and Beida professor Ji Xianlin 季羡林 in March 1994, shortly before the founding of Friends of nature.

> Eastern culture already contains the basic notion of environmental protection. The core of Eastern culture - Chinese traditional culture - especially emphasizes "tian ren he yi", and the pursuit of a harmonious coexistence between mankind and nature. Western culture by contrast overly emphasizes an antagonistic relationship between mankind and the natural world, and such an antagonistic stance will eventually result in a backlash from nature. Hence, if today we want to develop the business of environmental protection, we must inherit and carry forward the quintessential thoughts in our nation's traditional culture that will be of use for the cause of environmental protection.[120]

From this recognition, there are various ways in which environmental writers draw on Chinese cultural traditions in order to pursue the culturalist argument for environmental protection. Such appeals to the return to ancestoral values is often accompanied by "discourses of lack", laments on the mistreatment of Chinese culture

---

[120] Wang Jun 王军: "Minjian baohu yishi de jueqi [The rise of civic environmental awareness]." In: WWDZ: 60.

by those too ignorant to know any better. In an article entitled "China's traditional green culture" (*Zhongguo de chuantong lüse wenhua* 中国传统的绿色文化), written in form of a response letter to a friend dating from 1989, Tang Xiyang writes:

> Dear friend,
>
> [...] as you can see, it is a common phenomenon in China that nature is not loved or protected. This can even be felt by Chinese living in China, but it's not as blatantly obvious to them as it is to those Chinese who have lived abroad or to Westerners who have lived some time in China. There are intricate reasons for this discrepancy; they are political, economic, cultural, population-driven, etc. You raised another important aspect of this problem:
>
> You wrote: 'There is a question I have been struggling hard to find an explanation for, and that is how can a nation not have a tradition of cherishing nature, The Earth, and all life; abuse its natural resources for hundreds and thousands of years; and violate most parts of China to a degree that it likely will never recover? I also do not think that there is such a situation, a whole people's cultural tradition allows for nature to be destroyed?'
>
> After reading these lines, I constantly thought about this question: Could it be that China's cultural traditions do not entail elements that love nature, protect nature? [...] History and reality are inseparable; when we examine the present, we can see history more clearly. We review history, and can learn about the present. Amidst a feudal rule of long-lasting isolation and dictatorship, one that did not practice democracy domestically nor had much exchanges with the outside world, China's culture always has been staggering along an extremely narrow path, one that made it just as difficult to develop modern scientific techniques as it hampered the development of a tradition that emphasized the love for nature or cared about its protection. (CCC: 105)

Chinese environmental writers have taken great efforts to equate Chinese culture with Chinese nature. For this task, they can refer to long-established practices in Chinese cultural history that treat nature as one of the central sources of inspiration

for the production of cultural objects, be it poetry, painting, or philosophy. The equation of culture and nature can even be traced back to linguistic tropes which often employ loci classici of the traditional Chinese literary canon when writing about natural phenomena today. The argument of modern-day environmentalist writers that whoever respects and preserves Chinese culture must equally care about the preservation of its ecosystems has to be understood as a strategy to appeal to an audience in which nationalist and culturalist sentiments are much more prevalent than environmentalist ones.

The equation of nature with culture

In this manifestation of the culturalist argument, Chinese nature is being framed as *embodying* Chinese culture.

Sometimes, the equation of nature and culture does not require a reference to famous scenic spots but more to cultural objects of national importance, as in this episode reported by Xu Gang 徐刚:

> In 1979, fifty-eight specimen of *yinshan* 银杉 (*Cathaya argyrophylla*, a rare species of pine tree that occurs only in China) were discovered in Hunan Province in the area around Chengbu County They are the rarest of tree species in China, "living fossils" of the plant kingdom that have existed for over 100 million years. Some call them "The Great Pandas of plant life". The world regards them with awe and reverence. However, just as was to be feared, many ambitious people saw on the TV that somewhere a new scenic spot had been discovered, and thus this discovery heralded its defilement and destruction. And who would have thought this destruction would occur so swiftly, and that the means of its destruction were so manifold! As soon as the 58 trees had been discovered, everybody scrambled for bringing this national treasure (*guobao* 国宝) under their administrative control in order to get rich. Xinding county and Chengbu Muzu autonomous county squabbled over these property rights in court for over 6 years, until finally in 1986, Shaoyang prefecture decided that the trees and the 8200 Mu of land on which they stood were to be managed by Chengbu Muzu autonomous county.

Some people's tenet in life is: "If I can't live, I won't let you live either. What I can't have, I won't let you have either." Since that day, a bunch of people from Xinding County saw the fifty-eight Cathayas as their enemy target, and so, in an orgy of reckless destruction, their axes cut, and their spades dug. On one occasion, no less than 130 people set out and laid waste to the administrative office Chengbu County had established for the reservation area. Not able to put their hatred aside, around the same time they stripped the bark from nine of the trees or dug their roots out. One Chinese hemlock (Tsuga chinensis) that similarly had been under state protection was set ablaze and crashed onto one of the Cathayas, burying the tree beneath it. [...]

Has it ever occurred to these people that this is the nation of China's wealth, as well as a treasure of humanity?

Let's assume that the mountain folk do not understand such reasoning, but what about the party secretaries and officials in Xinding County? They have all these red-inked official documents from their superiors, and proclaim all day how they want to "Serve the People"; shouldn't they know the law, study the law, defend the law? What are they doing?

To fully demonstrate their barbarism (*yeman* 野蛮) and ugliness (*choulou* 丑陋), these people not only destroyed the Cathayas, but since July of the same year they have excorticated 150 Cassia trees within the reservation area, dug up and upset 120 mulberries, cut down five camphor trees and wrecked eight wooden bridges in the same area. The reader can imagine how much of the nation's Cathaya habitat remains today.

What this author cannot understand is: To steal the heads of Terracotta soldiers, and to excorticate Cathaya trees, which also are a national treasure, where is the difference in terms of the quality [of these crimes]? What weights heavier? Does one have to murder somebody before one is considered a villain? (Xu Gang 57-58)

The Cathayas are readily recognizable as something that is not only very precious or rare, but also something that is genuinely Chinese, since this particular species of tree only grows in a certain part of this particular country. Moreover, the fact that they

are repeatedly referred to as "national treasure" (*guobao* 国宝) establishes an ontological connection between a natural object, the tree, and a cultural object, a symbol of the Chinese nation. The term *guobao* is no innocent term is this regard, but a highly charged concept that carries heavy connotations of cultural achievement, identity, and historic continuities, something that carries intrinsic value.[121] In the context of the text, the trees *are* Chinese culture. The congruence between nature and culture is further enforced by comparing transgressions against the rare trees with the theft (and thus ultimately the defilement) of Terracotta soldiers found in the necropolis of China's first emperor, Qin Shihuang, near Xi'an in 1974, an archaeological find of mountainous importance that ever since has been employed by the Chinese government to propagate the great achievements of Chinese culture to the rest of the world. Thus, the thrust of the anecdote is that whoever destroys the "treasures" of China's nature is equally guilty of transgressions against Chinese culture. This assertion is further emphasized by characterizing the actions of the people of Xinding country as "barbaric" (*yeman*). Traditionally, this expression in the context of Chinese language identifies those outside Chinese civilization (*wenming*) who are hence on an inferior level of cultural sophistication.

The author's (somewhat exaggerated) statement that "the world looks at [these trees] with awe and reverence", alongside calling them "a treasure of humanity", argumentatively links the reputation of the Cathayas to the international attention towards the Terracotta army introduced a few paragraphs later. By establishing an international dimension to the argument, the author is able to appeal to a Chinese readership's national pride and sensibility, by insinuating that to protect China's flora is equal to protect China's face against the judgment of the world community.

In FON's *Towards Green Civilization*, a similar framing device is employed: A perfectly factual article by Gao Wu 高武 from 2002 tracing the correlation between the tree and the avian population in Beijing, and the diminishing avian biodiversity in the

---

[121] For the most part, the term *guobao* refers to man-made inanimate items of crafts and art, but occasionally certain personalities of extraordinary merit are referred to as "national treasures" as well (*Zhongguo guobao renwu* 中国国宝人物)..

city due to habitat destruction, is entitled "Parasol Tree and Golden Phoenix" (*Wutongshu yu jin fenghuang* 梧桐树与金凤凰). It opens saying:

> "One cannot beckon the Golden Phoenix without a parasol tree." This is a very philosophical old saying. Although the phoenix does not actually exist in this world, it is the symbol of one-hundred birds, it represents birds in general. The Chinese Parasol Tree (*Firmiana simplex*) is said to be the favorite living environment of the phoenix. Every species has a habitat it is best fit to live in, and can also survive in a not-ideal environment whose impositions it can tolerate, but once those become too severe, that species will die, and become extinct. (ZXLW: 136)

This argument follows along the same lines as Xu Gang's text analyzed above: Both the *wutong* tree and the phoenix are symbols of genuine "Chineseness". As an entry into a generic research article on bird population, they move said article into a larger, cultural context, in which the preservation of avian biodiversity becomes akin to preserving a paragon of Chinese culture.

Inscribing nature

In other accounts, nature is literary inscripted with signs and symbols of Chinese civilization in order to merge culture with nature. Moran (2002: 211) in this context reminds us that the "return to 'inscribed landscapes' in search of cultural memories" was a very prominent cultural and literary current. In Chinese environmental nonfiction, we can find similar accounts: Liang Congjie, for example relates in an essay his role in an excursion with the "Three-Gorges Cultural Relics Investigation Group" that travels the Yangtze River in late 1993 to the three gorges.[122] The author informs the reader that the area is home to the "Peking Man's ancestor", referring to archaeological finds in the area around Wushan District 巫山县 that in 1985 discovered the fossilized remains of hominids (possibly of 2 million years of age). This, according to Liang, seemed to confirm predictions made by Prof. Fei Wenzhong 斐文中 who predicted that the biological ancestor of the Peking Man,

---

[122] Liang Congjie; Remarks on searching for archaeological relics in the Three Gorges Area 三峡访古杂谈 [In: 不重合的圈 (190-200)]

discovered about half a century earlier, were to be located in the Three-Gorges area. Introduced to the reader in this way, the very soil is endowed with cultural significance (through the human or pre-human bones and their cultural artifacts being buried inside it). This connection is further emphasized by photographs of rocky cliffs inscribed with Chinese characters that accompany the article: the soil is "stamped" with culture. Later, Yang argues that not only the high plains of the Yellow River, but also of the Yangtze should be considered "the cradle of Chinese civilization":

> "to consider the Huanghe region as the sole cradle for the ancient civilization of the Chinese nation, to view solely the earliest inhabitants there as the founders of ancient Chinese civilization does not fit the historic facts. The more knowledge we have about pre-historic civilizations outside the Huanghe River basin, the more we can proof that the ancient Chinese civilization is the result of the merging of the aboriginal, diverse peoples that inhabit the territory of China today; and that moreover, the so-called Han Chinese were also formed in this merging process. [...] The deeper importance to discover and study (with a conservatory intent) the ruins of prehistoric cultures lies just in this.
> (BZQ: 197)

The article then goes on to introduce to the reader "ancient structures and historical sites of lesser renown", accompanied by a series of photos of steles, structures, and temples.

> Traditional Chinese culture is the psychological gene (*xinli jiyin* 心理基因) that provides the cohesive force for the Chinese nation. The national identity for Chinese people in China and abroad is first and foremost derived from the love for and practice of Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, to save and to protect the Three Gorges and its cultural artifacts is a concrete activity to protect the cohesion of the Chinese nation. We still have ca. 10 more years before the projected completion of the Three-Gorges Dam. To rescue the cultural artifacts of the Three Gorges in an organized fashion in such a short amount of time will provide an extraordinarily difficult duty for cultural workers and archaeologists.

Certainly, it is a challenge that must be shared by all Chinese people collectively, at home and abroad. (BZQ: 200)

Similarly to Liang, Xu Gang employs this framing device to great effect when he addresses the issue of soil erosion and soil pollution in one of his reportages Xu Gang 沉沦的国土. In this instance, the author combines accounts of annual soil loss with reports of wide-spread grave robbery during the 1980s, and draws parallels between the loss of soil and the loss of cultural artifacts. Framed in this way, the very soil in endowed with cultural properties, the physical representation of this culture – not only Chinese antiques, but also the bones of ancestors – being buried within them

As the Chinese are building new graves, they are also excavating the old ones, or one should rather say: they are robbing graves. Even if only the ancestral graves of our richer forebears contained bits of gold and silver, none of them escaped the fate of being dug up and plundered. Throughout the dynasties, people would use spades and explosives to turn ancient relics into piles of rubble, cultural artifacts would find their way to Hong Kong, Europe, and China's national treasures would be sold off at a bargain price!

Ah, China you have lost your way!

The German weekly newspaper "Die Zeit" ran an article that exposed that "in China, the graves are opening up as well", while the "London Times" reported that "China is experiencing a wave a grave robberies, the smuggle of antiques is booming, markets in Hong KOng and London are flooded with cultural relics from China." (FMXL: 164)

Our soil once was fertile and beautiful, our shining old civilization and culture endowed our soil and our nation with unsophisticated splendor and mystery, brimming with the charm, grace, and allure of the East. It is not the soil that made us ignorant, but our ignorance turned the soil into an open wound as far as the eye can see. (FMXL: 166)

While our nation's soil is bleeding, while the millenia-old culture of the Chinese nation is being shipped off, plundered, sold off by evil and ignorant gangsters, while this is a historically unprecedented grave-

robbery fever, it is not an isolated phenomenon, but it reflects yet
another destructive excavation activity: The Chinese gold rush, the insane
gold fever in China. (FMXL: 168)

Culturalist discourse in the 1980s in China

As might be expected, such appeals also feature no small amount of cultural self-
essentialization, as they conjure up an imagined past in which man and nature in
China lived in harmony together guided by the wisdom of the ancients. Roetz' earlier
critique of essentialist notions on Chinese concepts of nature hence not only pertains
to Western perspectives, but is also in part being reciprocated within Chinese
environmental nonfiction. The historical patterns of such romanticism become even
stronger when we consider even older trends in Chinese literary history, namely the
phenomenon of "native-soil literature" (*xiangtu wenxue* 乡土文学) or "native-soil
fiction" (*xiangtu xiaoshuo* 乡土小说) in China during the 1920s to the 1940s. The
historic sociopolitical circumstances between this era and China during the 1980s
bear some similarities: Chinese intellectuals were confronted with socio-cultural
changes that had transformed China, not to speak of their intellectual world, in
profound ways. Writers of native soil literature dealt with these changes by
constructing an idealized native home country, a place of solace, harmony and
simplicity that stood in sharp contrast to the onslaught of Western-induced
modernity upon everything they had once held dear. Their literary response was
pastoral, as they conjured up lost landscapes and yearned for were an important
literary trope that was actually addressing memories of *cultural* traditions which were
fading away so rapidly.

It was once more Lu Xun who played an important role in initiating this particular
literary form. Several of his short stories are set in his native town of Shaoxing (e.g.
"My Home Town"). Lu Xun certainly was no writer that idealized traditional
Chinese society, but what these stories address is a bitter-sweet memory of things past,
and the eventual collapse of a rural idyll by the intrusion of modernity, war,
industrialization and urbanization. Lu Xun also tried to establish a conceptual

framework for native-soil literature. In these remarks from 1935, the congruence of pastoral-cultural becomes even clearer:

> Those in Beijing writing about their feelings (towards their native place), no matter if they consider themselves subjective or objective, actually are writers of native-soil literature. They are Diaspora writers (*qiaoyu de zuozhe* 侨寓的作者) even if they are expressing themselves while living in Beijing. But this is not the "Emigrant Literature" (*qiaomin wenxue* 侨民文学) George Brandes is talking about.[123] It is only the author himself who dwells in a distant place, but not his writing. Hence, [in the texts] emerges an intermittently visible nostalgia [about the author's native place], rather than the exoticism of distant lands, which might open the reader's eyes or illuminate the world the author finds himself in.
>
> Before an authors such as Xu Qinwen 许软文 [...] even begins to write native soil literature, he has already experienced exile, being forced to live in a remote and strange place. Such authors cannot but return to "the gardens of their fathers", gardens that in reality no longer exist. Because it is more comfortable and more consoling to recall things long gone which once existed in one's home place, than thinking about those things that actually still exist but are beyond one's reach.[124]

What is of importance here is the re-constructed, re-imagined quality of the pastoral native soil literature authors are writing. "The gardens of their fathers", as Lu Xun puts it, have never existed in the way they appear through the brush of the writers. They are an idealized, essentialized construct of reality that has to be understood as way to cope with the experience of confusion about the Self and the Other. Wang Der-wei speaks in this context of "Imaginary Nostalgia" in his study of Shen

---

[123] Lu Xun is most likely referring here to Brandes' *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* published in 1906, more specifically the chapter "The Emigrant Literature" in Vol. 1. The work is accessible here: http://www.archive.org/stream/maincurrentsinn07brangoog#page/n10/mode/2up [2011/06/09]

[124] My own translation. For the original Chinese quote, see Lu Xun's preface to: Lu Xun: *Zhongguo xín wenxue daxi: Xiaoshuo erji* [Anthology of the New Literature of China: *Xiaoshuo*, Second Volume, in: ZHAO Jiabi 赵家璧, ed. (1935-1936). *Zhongguo xiandai wenxue daxi* [Compendium of Modern Chinese Literature]. Shanghai, Liangyou tushu gongsi. I am not in the possession of this volume, Lu Xun's preface is reproduced digitally here: http://wentong.org/luxun/works/qjzr/6.htm [2011/06/05]

Congwen 沈从文, one of the most famous writers of native soil literature. "At a time when most Chinese writers write about war, famine, and social injustice, Shen Congwen proceeds to create an idyllic country of his own [...]. But Shen's textual utopia reveals its imaginary quality, because it is encased in a menacing reality that is anything but utopian, and because, after all, it is only a reinscription of the ancient desire for Home and Origin. […] If there is an ideal West Hunan that has fallen into the present and the real, reconstituting it yields to an aesthetic and residuality and incompleteness: his homeland tour, actual or textual, must betray its imaginary roots. Nostalgia refers not so much to a representational effort to enliven the irretrievable past as to a *creation of an imaginary past on behalf of the present.*" (Wang 1992: 248, my emphasis)

Similarly to *xiangtu wenxue*, various schools or positions arose in antagonism to what they perceived as an overly uncritical stance towards Modernity, scientism and universalism.[125] Moreover, they shared the commitment to a critique of a-historic rationality, and a conviction that modernity for China could not only mean a modernization of the economic sector via scientific means. Arguably the most influential of these schools concerned with culture was a group of scholars that should become known as the New Enlightenment (*Xin qimeng*) movement, as represented e.g. by the scholar Gan Yang 甘阳. In his 1988 book "The Contemporary Chinese Cultural Consciousness" (*Zhongguo dangdai wenhua yishi* 中国当代文化意识)[126], he attacked the largely uncritical acceptance of the prospect of modernity by the Chinese academic mainstream. In *Wenhua: Zhongguo yu Shijie* ["Culture: China and the World"], an important publication of the New Enlightenment group, he made what can be read as a programmatic statement, that the question of modernity in China required a profound reevaluation of which role Chinese culture itself had to play in China's modernization project: "As China moves towards becoming part of the world it is only understandable that Chinese culture will also have to become internationalized. As China works to achieve modernization, it is a corollary that 'cultural modernization' will also be on the agenda. This is the shared belief of all

---

[125] For an introduction to three groups of culturalist-oriented scholars, see: Chen and Jin 1997: 1-11.

[126] The title of later editions was changed to *Bashi Niandai wenhua yishi*.

people of conscience of the 1980s. This is an inevitable and logical part of China's historic take-off." (cited in: Xu 2004: 188)

In a similar vein, there was a smaller but also important group of "New Confucianist" scholars that argued for a greater consideration for traditional Chinese thought in modernity, which found considerable support from the Chinese overseas community, such as mainland scholar Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 from the Academy of Chinese Culture (*Zhongguo shuyuan*), Tu Wei-ming from Harvard University or Hong Kong university professor Liu Shu-hsien. Amongst the mainlanders, Li Zehou 李泽厚 proposed that Chinese modernity should consist of an "Amalgam between East and West" (*Xi ti Zhong yong*), an expression that echoed what Zhang Zhidong 張之洞, one of the last great officials of the late Qing empire, had argued for when he addressed the adoption of Western science and technology into Chinese society almost 100 years earlier: *Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong* 中学为体, 西学为用 - "Chinese learning as the core, Western learning for practical use."

The issue *Xungen* writers were struggling with during the 1980s was nothing less than China's cultural identity in the face of Modernity, and the West. Wang Jing (1996: 213 f.) has quite illustratively mapped out these difficult relationships on a binary coordinate system: One axis is constituted by the temporal paradigm, the relationship between the "old" or "ancient" (*gu* 古) and the "new" or "contemporary" (*jin* 今) "or, put in the vocabulary of the *Xungen* movement, the cultural unconscious versus modern consciousness." (ibid.) The other axis represents the spatial paradigm of the relationship between "China" and "The West": "Chinese writers have to establish World Literature as their destination. The recent craze about 'root-searching is intimately connected with this objective. We search for our roots so that we can have a dialogue with the West." (Cao Wenxuan 1988: 240) *Xungen* writers thus found themselves in a difficult double-bind, inasmuch they are forced to both engage in a dual criticism of both tradition and modernity, China and the West, constantly forced to re-negotiate their individual as well as their collective cultural identity. To this end, the *Xungen* School called for a re-discovery of Chinese culture in the realm of literary production, a re-incorporation of China's rich traditions into literature after the onslaught of Maoist literary orthodoxy.

Most *Xungen* writers maintained that no one engaged in cultural production could free him- or herself from one's cultural predispositions ('roots'), and hence these predispositions needed to be re-discovered, consciously addressed, and then put to fruitful use. The poet Yang Lian 杨炼, in an essay entitled "Tradition and us" [*Chuantong yu women*] wrote in 1983:

> This is tradition, the tradition that none of us can cast off. We are rooted in a common culture, in the unique linguistic form of a psychological structure. It is a form, in that it never determines the modernity of the subject-matter, but instead dictates certain peculiar modes of feeling, thinking and expression. It commands our obedience in each act of artistic creation. I believe that no individual artist in hi creative work can betray his tradition. Either consciously or unconsciously, every artist's work, his "individual entity", to a greater or lesser degree permeated with the "intrinsic elements" of his tradition. (Yang Lian 1983)

Ah Cheng 阿城, one of the most important representatives of the *Xungen* movement, echoed a similar sentiment in an important theoretical essay called *Wenhua zhiyuezhe renlei* 文化制约着人类 ["Culture constrains humankind"] in which he argued that all artists were bound by "cultural constraints" (*wenhua zhiyu*e) to their own particular artistic and aesthetic heritage: "Humankind created culture, and culture in return constrains humankind." (Ah Cheng 1985) Han Shaogong 韩少功, whose 1985 essay *Wenxue de 'gen'* 文学的'根'["The 'roots' of literature"] can be read as a manifesto that lent its title to the movement as a whole[127], called for the re-discovery of aesthetic, political, and cultural roots that were intrinsic to "the subject of the nation" and the "archetypical subconsciousness immanent in the strengthened subjective spirit of the Chinese race." (Han Shaogong 1985: 5)

It is important to stress at this point that the "searching-for-roots" representatives did not understand themselves as a reactionary or conservative force, but saw China's

---

[127] Next to the essays of Ah Cheng and Han Shaogong I discuss here, other important programmatic texts of the movement include Zheng Wanglong's 郑万隆 *Wo de gen*["My roots"], *Shanghai Wenxue* 1985 (5); Li Hangyu's 李杭育 *Li yi li women de 'gen'* 理一理我们的根 ["Let's put our 'roots' in order] *Zuojia* 1985 (6); and "Stride across the fault zone of literature!" (*Kuayue wenhua duanliedai* 跨越文化断裂带) by Zheng Yi 郑义, *Wenyibao* 1985/07/13.

only way forward in returning to China's past in order to critically come to terms with modernity. This progressive programmatic is maybe best captured by a statement by Xu Zidong 许子东: "Planting our 'roots' deeply into the yellow soil (*huang tudi* 黄土地) is the broadest possible path in China for Modernism." (id. 1989: 33)

But in order to do so, *Xungen* writers had to first re-construct a cultural past that for large parts had been lying dormant for a long time, forgotten, or indeed destroyed. Moreover, what they were interested in was not so much the heterogeneous, often contradictory, and multi-facetted tangible cultural history of China, but rather a re-invented, homogenized or essentialized past that could serve as a strategic tool for China's way to the future: "Why do we want to search for our own roots? – Because we want to march towards the world!", Li Tuo 李陀 wrote (quoted in Lin Weiping 1986: 96) C.T. Hsia has famously written about Chinese intellectuals' "Obsession with China" in the appendix to the second edition of his standard work *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, published in 1971. He alleged that virtually all Chinese writers in the years between 1917 and 1949 were haunted by the question of "What is wrong with China?", and what can be done to remedy China's weakness and humiliation. As Perry Link comments, Hsia's observation is quite accurate, albeit the time frame he chooses might be to narrow: The "obsession" he diagnoses also holds true for much of the time before 1917, and "'obsession with China' resurfaced in the 1980s, and, as Hsia claims for the 1917-1949 period, was virtually universal among literary intellectuals-including even those who consciously sought to escape it." (Link 1993: 11)

One might describe the perspective of *Xungen* writers as being characterized by a deep-seated schizophrenia in which the West is simultaneously rejected and coveted, the object of resentful envy. But to Chinese intellectuals, this schizophrenia does not only apply to the West but also to China itself, since the question "What is wrong with China" implies both massive frustration with one self but while at the same time feeling the need to constantly espouse what is right with China. As so many things, this paradoxical relationship also has its precedents in the history of China's encounter with the West. Huters has referred to this state of mind as "a double bind – in which recourse to the West was at the same time mandatory and highly

distasteful." (id. 2005: 14) Nowhere is this double bind more visible than in the following quote from Han Shaogong:

> After the May 4th movement, Chinese literature turned to the outside world to learn from the West, from Japan, Russia, and the Soviet Union. Yet at the same time, China in self-deluded arrogance closed its doors to "Western imports" which it shunned or burned. [These two extreme positions] caused the destruction of our ethnic culture, and the decline of our national self-esteem. The same can be seen today, when everything from foreign currency exchange to imported perfume has become so fashionable amongst certain people. Yet maybe in this process of making *tabula rasa* and leveling harsh criticism [against one's own culture], of withering and destruction, Chinese culture might just about to experience its rebirth.

> The great Western historian Arnold J. Toynbee places high hopes on Eastern Civilization (*dongfang wenming* 东方文明). He says that the Western Christian civilization is in decline, while the ancient Eastern civilization, sound asleep, might rise again due to the 'challenge' posed by the Western civilization, and shine its light on the whole world. We need not concern ourselves presently with the question whether Toynbee is correct or whether he is jumping to conclusions, what matters is that many Western scholars hold similar views on this matter. Natural scientists such as Descartes, Leibniz, Einstein, and Heisenberg; or *hommes des lettres* such as Tolstoy, Sartre or Jorge Luis Borges, they all share a very keen interest on Eastern culture, especially on Daoism [lit. Laozi and Zhuangzi], they look up to China and fully respect the Chinese people. [...]

> A grand and spectacular reform of our economic system is occurring here presently, an economic and cultural reconstruction, we pick and chose whatever science and technology from the West is useful [to this end], a lifestyle of marching towards modernization. But [the cosmic principles of] Yin and Yang give rise to one another, there are both gains and losses, the new and the old mutually influence each other, a myriad of profound changes; China is still China, especially in the field of literature and arts,

our deep ethnic essence (*shenhou minzu jingshen* 深厚民族精神) and cultural substance (*wenhua wuzhi* 文化物质) we have an ethnic sense of self. Our responsibility is to release the thermal energy of modern ideas, to recast and give a bright plating to the sense of self. This is our consolation, and our hope. (Wang Shaogong: 5)

The author seems to be oblivious to the irony in his own writing: It becomes clear that he harbors no small amount of resentment towards the incursions of Western culture into Chinese culture, yet at the same time there seems to be an almost desperate need for recognition, not from one's own peers mind you. Instead, the validation for one's own cultural accomplishments is sought from the very same side one is so resentful towards.

This double bind Huters speaks of is very visible in a 2010 book by Liao Xiaoyi, leader of the NGO *Global Village Beijing*. In "Environmental Remedies: Sheri Liao's Talks with Eastern and Western Thinkers", Liao interviews a series of Western scholars, thinkers, and politicians, on the topic of the value of "Eastern philosophy" for environmental protection. Every interviewee is introduced with a short paragraph that also features his Chinese zodiac, while traditional Chinese artwork is displayed throughout the book. The contributers address questions such "Return to ancient Chinese cosmology", or "Rejuvenate traditional Chinese medicine". In her introduction to the volume, Liao advocates on behalf of an „environmentalism with Chinese characteristics" (Zhongguoshi huanbao 中国式环保) .

To adjust to nature (shunyin daziran 顺应大自然) and unity between man and nature (tianren heyi 天人合一), those are the natural models for environmentalism with Chinese characteristics." This model […] was not without flaws, however as the essential aspect of Chinese thinking and Chinese spirit, environmentalism with Chinese characteristics still left us with a perfect intellectual goldmine. Before the Western cannons invaded us alongside modes of thinking such as production lines and consumer models, our ancestors had left us with surging rivers, vast grasslands, rich soils not yet polluted by industrial fertilizers, and forests not yet cut down by electric saws. When homogenized and

> formalistic notions of Western "democracy" destroyed the cultural
> diversity of the West itself and that of its colonies, China – which they had
> labeled "autocratic" – still had the exquisite agronomy of at least
> 56 ethnicities, consummate medical systems, delicate handicrafts, and
> other material and nonmaterial cultural heritages. This included the
> richest biodiversity in the world that had been preserved through
> these forms of cultural diversity, because China had been practicing
> environmental protection for 5000 years!" (Liao 2010: V)

This quote exemplifies the at times paradox situation proponents of the culturalist argument for "Chinese" environmentalism have to face. While Chinese legacies of environmental destruction are ignored in favor of essentialized notions of "unity between man and heaven", the West is being blamed for the introduction of the pernicious ideologies and technologies that caused China's ecological crisis. However, Marxism itself is a Western ideology, and earlier generations in China precisely adopted it to cure "the sick man of the East". Now again, the West has jumped ahead in its development of green environmental modes of thinking and technologies, and China again is faced with having to cope with a perceived status of being the perpetual laggart. The invocations of traditional Chinese culture can be seen as a way to cope with these perceived deficiencies. However, there is something paradox in the endeavor of Liao's book: the urge to seek validation from Western thinkers on behalf of traditional Chinese culture invoked in order to overcome Western developmentalism. One might speak in this regard of yet another manifestation of a long-established inferiority complex within the Chinese intellectual establishment, or even indeed the entire Chinese population vis-a-vis the West. Wang Nuo in his 2007 volume addresses exactly this situation when argues that Chinese Ecocriticism and the study of foreign literature should make greater strides towards overcoming "national inferiority complexes":

> I think that in the current context, teaching and research of foreign
> literature in China should undergo large-scale reforms as far as the
> content of teaching and and the object of research is concerned. It
> should do in order to impel the Chinese nation to overcome its
> national inferiority complex, to dispel its increasingly extremist
> nationalist sentiment, and contribute to the change, rejuvenation and

strengthening of the sense of self of a Chinese nation in the midst of ongoing cultural globalization. (Wang Nuo 2007: 216)

The essence of [our] national inferiority complex consists of a lack of self-confidence, of weakness, a feeling of insignificance, but in its outward manifestation it resolutely refuses to acknowledge this and is more afraid that the nation might become aware of these weaknesses, which creates a strong desire for self-protection. The nation constructs a defensive net between itself and other nations as tightly as possible in order to dismiss all information that might touch its inferiority complex or threaten to dissolve its own erroneous informations [about itself] growing accustomed to view the outside world with suspicion, hostility, and combativeness. When this self-protection goes to extremes, it becomes a self-isolationist closed-door policy. (ibid)

VI. The allure of the periphery: Cultural counter-narratives and social nonconformism

The preceding chapters have dealt with conciliatory modes of framing that involve rhetoric devices such as accommodation, cooperation, or remonstrance. While these are and will remain important discursive modes of Chinese environmentalism, we must not forget that activism around environmental issues often challenges established understandings of progress and development and hence contain a potential for social conflict.

The development of the environmental movement in the West occurred in the context of a blooming of alternative lifestyles and subcultures during the 1960s. Jenei und Kuti (2008) in this context describe the rise of "movements and intentional communities" in the European countries and the United States during the 1960s and 1970s that created a new wave of associational involvement and participatory behavior of the citizenry. These movements and intentional communities coalesced around a wide variety of issues that initially were not necessarily political in nature but often enough represented social or purely hedonistic issues: the rejection of the Vietnam War, the protest against racial discrimination, the fight for alternative sexual mores, etc. gave rise to new forms of social organizing around new lifestyles that often provided an initial framework onto which more politically aggregated activism would later be built. "Religious and pseudo-religious groups", for example "represent special types of societies for alternatives. They provide a framework for the emergence of alternative lifestyles all around the world in form of ashrams, kibbutzim, Buddhist monasteries, […]." (Jenei/Kuti 2008: 11) This is also true for the environmental movement. "All the above listed forms of alternative societies and societies of alternatives have one thing in common: they provide special solutions for the political empowerment of civil society. In this form of empowerment, citizens look for tools and methods of taking control of their own lifes, turning against the political power of the state and the public sector and against the economic power, the market-type mechanism dominating the private sector." (ibid: 11)

Such mechanisms can also be observed in countries in which political power has been monopolized by one party. In such a tightly controlled political environment, the creation of artistic and cultural spaces that do not conform to officially propagated aesthetic norms can be viewed as inherently political since they challenge the all-encompassing claims of state power: Commenting on the relationship between subcultures and the development of civil society organizations in Eastern Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, Olivo observes that "[...] cultural and artistic subcultures played a significant role in the development of a parallel *polis*. These subcultures reflected attempts to create an understanding of art separate from that of the state or to develop alternative lifestyles. Even though most of these activities were not undertaken with political intent, they were subversive." (Olivo 2001: 86)

To explore the representation of alternative lifestyles in Chinese environmental nonfiction, we turn to nature writing set in China's periphery, with a special emphasis on Tibet. The term "periphery" in this context not only connotes a spatial dimension – the border regions of the People's Republic of China – but also an ethnic and cultural dimension, since these regions are inhabited by what is commonly referred to as China's "ethnic minorities". With regards to Chinese nonfiction environmental literature, some of the most popular or widely-read texts are set in or deal with the experience of nature at China's border regions: This chapter focuses on the works of two popular writers; Yang Xin's 杨欣 "Soul of the Yangtze" (Changjiang hun 长江魂), an account of his attempt to raft the Yangtze in the 1980s, and "Ten years in Kekexili" [*Qinli Kekexili shinian* 亲历可可西里十年], an account of the establishment of China's first environmental monitoring station in Qinghai Province. The other one is "Heavenly Beads" (*Tianzhu* 天珠) by Liu Jianqiang 刘鉴强 (2009). In addition to these core texts, the chapter also draws from several other environmental nonfiction texts dealing with Tibet in the context of Chinese environmentalism. Most notably, these texts are "Green Camp in Tibet"[128], by Tang Xiyang and "Chasing Dreams at Snow Mountain" (*Xueshan qiumeng* 雪山寻梦, published in 1998), a separate account of

---

[128] The chapter appears in both the 1997 version of *A Green World Tour*, as well as in CCC. The chapter has also been published separately as an article in its own right in various Chinese journals since 1998, including in *Ecological Economy* [*Shengtai Jingji*] (1998/01), *Chinese Wildlife* [*Yeshang Dongwu*] (1999/02), and *Environmental Education* [*Huanjing Jiaoyu*] (2002/05).

Green Camp's journey to China's Himalayas region by Shen Xiaohui 沈孝辉, a student of Mr. Tang and well-known Chinese environmental advocate and reporter.

VI.1 The rugged individual in the wilderness: Yang Xin

The sociocultural landscape of the 1980s in China was in many ways concerned with rediscoveries, and amongst the many things waiting to be re-discovered was the individual self: Decades of incessant campaigning had hammered into the Chinese populace the idea of the supremacy of the collective over the individual, that personal happiness had to be sacrificed for the greater common good, that socially non-conformist behavior would be severely punished. Maoism had done away with individual privacy and established pervasive rituals of self-examination that required ever-new pronouncements of loyalty and exaltation to the cause of Socialism, while every individual was constantly expected to bare their most private feelings to the group, through "confessions", "self-criticism", and "struggle sessions". After the revolutionary furor had resided, the heavy toll of totalitarian collectivism became visible. A generation left uneducated, brutalized, and disillusioned, the nation's economy in shambles, the early idealism for the Chinese socialist project squandered.

The youth culture of the 1980s in China, culminating in the student movement and the massacre on Tiananmen Square in 1989, can also be understood as a reaction to the anti-individualism of the Cultural Revolution. Cui Jian 崔建, "China's Bob Dylan", was the representative voice of this movement. In 1989, Wu'erkaixi 吾尔开希, one of the student leaders on Tiananmen Square (and himself member of the Uighur ethnic minority), stressed the role of rock singers such as Cui Jian as being the voice of their generation:

> Chinese college students have been stressing the individual, the self, and rebelling against all sorts of authority […] but this idealism and the sense of the individual is contrary to the reality of present society. […] The people who are most influential among young people are not [the dissident intellectuals] Fang Lizhi and Wei Jingsheng, but singers such as Cui Jian. (cited in: Jones 1992: 123)

In his song "Fake Itinerant Monk", Cui Jian strikes the posture of a lone adventurer making his way into the unknown, far away from the restraints and demands of society:

Cui Jian – Fake Itinerant Monk (*Jia xingseng* 假行僧):

I want to wander from south to north.
I want to wander from day into the night.
I want everybody to see me,
But not know who I am.

Should you see me looking a little tired,
Then please pour me a bowl of water.
Should you've fallen in love with me,
Then please kiss my mouth.

I have these feet, I have these legs.
I have so many mountains and rivers.
I want all of this everything - but not hate or regret.
If you want to love me, don't worry about regret,
Because eventually I always leave everything behind.
I never stay in one place,
And never want anyone to follow me,

I want to wander from south to north.
I want to wander from day into the night.
I want everybody to see me,
But not know who I am.
I only want to see you grow beautiful,
But don't want to know about your suffering.
I wish to attain the waters of heaven,
But not your tears.

I have no wish to believe in demons,
And no wish to oppose anybody.
Don't try to figure out who I really am,
And don't try to see through my facade.

Such lyrics hit the mood of an entire generation of young Chinese who above all wanted to be left alone by state propaganda and demanded their own space for self-discovery and "the pursuit of happiness". Cui's song is not just about *Wanderlust* and youthful reveries about adventure and romance: The wanderer, the lone individual, refuses to be co-opted by the constraints of society, be it love or conflict. His wish to "be seen by everybody, without knowing who I am" can be seen as more than adolescent posturing, the construction of an aloof, debonair, and macho persona, but as a rejection of the rituals of self-baring the individual was subjected to during the Cultural Revolution. The mention of "mountains and rivers" (*shanshui* 山水) provides an initial clue concerning the connection between the wilderness imaginary and social escapism: Even though Cui Jian can be counted among the ecological movement in China, his lyrics evoke a romantic ideal of breaking free and finding freedom outside society in the wilderness. They also echo with a beloved literary classic, *The Outlaws of the Marches* (also known as *All Men Are Brothers* and *The Water Margin*), the epic tale of 108 somewhat rowdy yet chivalrous warriors who gather in the wilds to wage guerilla warfare against a corrupt imperial government (the Chinese

title of the novel, *Shuihu zhuan* 水浒传, lit. "Tales from the Water Margins", refers to the outlaw's mountain stronghold amidst inaccessible marchlands).

The naturescape invoked does not only promise freedom in a political sense, but more generally can also be read as the longing for a place where the rigid norms of Chinese socialist society do not apply, which includes its sexual mores. This connection between wild untamed nature, raw masculinity, and sexuality is gained significant prominence in the Chinese cultural landscape of the 1980s, probably most prominently expressed in Mo Yan's bestselling novel "Red Sorghum": Mo Yan became famous in the late 1980s when filmmaker Zhang Yimou 张艺谋 made his novel, a saga of life in rural Shandong during the Japanese invasion in the 1930s and 1940s, into a prize-winning film. Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波 later wrote that one reason for the film's tremendous success was that

> [it] drew freely upon the themes of raw sexuality and adultery. Its theme song, "Sister, be gutsy, go forward," was an unbridled endorsement of the primitive vitality of lust. Against the backdrop of fire-red sorghum in desolate northwestern China, under the broad blue sky and in full view of the bright sun, bandits violently abduct village women, wild adultery happens in the sorghum fields, bandits murder one another in competition for women, male laborers magically produce the widely renowned liquor "Six-Mile Red" by urinating into the heroine's brewing wine, and so on. All of this […] not only sets the scene for marvelous consummations of male and female sexual desire; it creates a broader dream vision that carries magical vitality. That Red Sorghum could win prizes symbolizes a change in national attitudes towards sex: "erotic display" had come to be seen as "exuberant vitality."[129]

Ma Jian's 马建 "Red Dust" (*Hongchen* 红尘) struck a very similar note during the 1980s. The book is the travelogue of a rebellious young man, the author himself, a struggling

---

[129] The quote can be found in an essay published in 2004, "Qingse kuanghuan – Zhongguo Shangye wenhua piping zhi yi 情色狂欢. 中国商业文化批判之一"
[http://blog.boxun.com/hero/liuxb/174_1.shtml, accessed 2012-11-12] at the web site of *The Independent Chinese Pen Centre*. The translation, "The Erotic Carnival in Recent Chinese History" is found in: Liu Xiaobo and Perry Link (2012): *No Enemies, No Hatred*, Harvard University Press: 150-174. I am grateful to Prof. Perry Link for directing me towards this quote.

photographer and journalist in Beijing in the year 1983. Being constantly harassed by the authorities for his rebellious behavior, he flees Beijing under cover of night and sets out on an unscripted three-year journey that leads him into remote areas far from China's political or cultural centers (and includes numerous, also sexual, adventures). The title of the book refers to the Buddhist expression for the ordinary material world, the vale of tears, and can be seen as an indicator for the spiritual dimension of the journey. Ma Jian's work does not only address the fatigue of his generation with Chinese Socialism, but intersects with another prominent literary trope of the time, that of the drop-out, the social undesirable, or ruffian: For some, the end of the era of revolutionary idealism meant the rise of an increasing cynicism, and they focused their attention away from politics towards hedonism and material well-being. The *liumang* or *pizi*, the hooligan or ruffian, can be seen as representative of a 1980's Chinese counter-culture that contemptuously rejects societal conformity. [130] This literary archetype is probably best represented in Chinese literature in the "hooligan stories" and novels of Wang Shuo 王朔. The characters that inhabit Wang's stories are gamblers, ne'er-do-wells, adventurers, and rogues in pursuit of money, sex, and the cheap thrill. However, the celebration of eccentric and/or hedonistic individualism does not necessarily mean a celebration of stagnancy or passiveness. To the contrary, as Wang Shuo himself remarked at one point, non-conformist individualism can be seen as a means of progress, by introducing previously alien concepts into mainstream society, something that could also be said for the role of eccentrics in Western environmental activism[131]:

---

[130] For an extensive account of the historic genesis of the terms as well as its literary use, see: Tanner 2000. Another manifestation of the trope of the independent tough-guy during the 1980s was the celebration of *gemen'r* 哥们儿 ["buddies" or "sworn brothers"], groups of men who banded together against outside adversity, which was an indirect result of the overall disenchantment with the Chinese socialist state. "As the party and state were increasingly perceived as being morally bankrupt and the workplace as merely a microcosm of the state, it was often felt that only strong gemen'r relationships could inspire people to acts of heroism or even basic decency, thereby helping the individual maintain workable social relationships." (Barmé 1999:87-88)

[131] This is not the place to discuss the very rich topic of the role of individual eccentricity in social movements. A strong argument can be made that social changes have often coalesced around certain prominent individuals, often initially dismissed as eccentrics or troublemakers, that went on to become spokesperson for their cause. (We might think of German author Hermann Hesse and his role in propagating issues such as veganism or nudism during the 1920s, issues that were highly controversial at the time.) In the case of international environmentalism, we might point to individuals such as Edward Abbey, life-long American protectionist and author of the widely known *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, a classic among the more militant part of the ecological movement in the West. An anarchist, environmental activist, author, and eccentric by any stretch of the imagination, Abbey was famous

> All the driving force behind reform and opening has come from *pizi*. It is *pizi* who go into business, it is *pizi* who start up factories, open stores, it is their craziness [*fengkuang* 疯狂] that pushes society ahead. Because China's economic system is not yet perfected and its legal system is not completely set up, you can see that the people who have really been successful, the ones who have already gotten rich, they're all *pizi*. (cited in Liu Weimin 1995: 2)

Yang Xin

Environmentalist Yang Xin 杨欣 certainly fits the description of a individualistic non-conformist who does not let social conventions get into the way of pursuing his passions. Yang Xin is the founder and director of "Green River" (*Lüse jianghe* 绿色江河, founded in 1995), an internationally renowned environmental NGO.[132] Yang Xin is best known for the establishment of China's first non-governmental Nature Conservation Station in 1997, located at an altitude of 4,500 meters on inhospitable high plateau in the Himalayans, the no-man's land of Kekexili (or Hoh Xil), between Tibet and Qinghai. Named "Sonam Dargye" in memory of a Tibetan ranger who was murdered in 1994 by a gang of poachers, the conservation station monitors and protects the population of the Tibetan antelope which by the 1990s had been almost

---

and infamous for his bearded outlaw persona, the unconventional directions he provided for his own funeral, and for social graces illustrated by statements such as: "Your criticism is greatly appreciated, but fuck you all the same." In a talk addressed to a group of students he stated:

> "It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it's still here. So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with your friends, ramble out yonder and explore the forests, climb the mountains, bag the peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness, the lovely, mysterious, and awesome space. Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much; I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those desk-bound men and women with their hearts in a safe deposit box, and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators. I promise you this; you will outlive the bastards." From a speech to environmentalists in Missoula, Montana, and in Colorado, which was published in *High Country News,* (24 September 1976), under the title "Joy, Shipmates, Joy!", as quoted in *Saving Nature's Legacy : Protecting and Restoring Biodiversity* (1994) by Reed F. Noss, Allen Y. Cooperrider, and Rodger Schlickeisen: 338)

[132] It has received the "SEE&TNC Eco Award" in 2007, and the "Earth Award" in 2000 and 2001. The SEE&TNC Eco Award (SEE&TNC 生态奖) is a prize jointly awarded by the SEE Foundation (SEE 基金会) and The Nature Conservancy (大自然保护协会). The "Earth Award" (*Diqiu Jiang* 地球奖) is an annual recognition jointly awarded by the China Association of Environmental Journalists and the Hong Kong Friends of the Earth.

hunted to extinction. (The story of Sonam Dargye's death is an essential part of the mythology of China's environmental movement, it will be addressed in detail below.)

Yang Xin in Kekexili, the "Sonam Dargye Natural Conservation Station" in the background. The same photograph appears on the cover of Qinli

Sporting his trademark full beard and long hair, Yang retains the public persona of an unrefined man of action who prefers the rough climate and adventure of the high mountains to a cushy office job in the city. As such, his biography resonates with the popular youth culture of the Chinese 1980s when – just like the protagonist of Cui Jian's song or Ma Jian's novel – he broke with social expectations and wandered into the unknown: Born in 1963 in Chengdu, he graduated from Chongqing Technical University only to forfeit a regular career in favor of a more adventurous lifestyle: When the possession of a camera was still limited to a few individuals, Yang sold his ancestral home in Sichuan province and spent some of the money to buy a *Great Wall sz-1* camera. After starting to take pictures for his family and friends, Yang began month-long photographic excursions, and made a name for himself as a photographer: He visited and photographed natural landmarks such as Lugu Lake, Lijiang River, and the Leaping Tiger Gorge, (whose natural beauty has made them into popular tourist destinations nowadays, but which were not widely known at the time).

When Yang was 23 years old, in 1986, he participated in an expedition that planned to raft the upper reaches of the Yangtze River from its glacier source in Tibet and Qinghai into Sichuan province. Yang was the designated photographer on this journey. The impetus for joining the expedition came when the Chengdu Branch of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was looking for young explorers who would be willing to raft the upper courses of the Yangtze River from Tibet, Qinghai, down to Sichuan province. The expedition was organized in honor
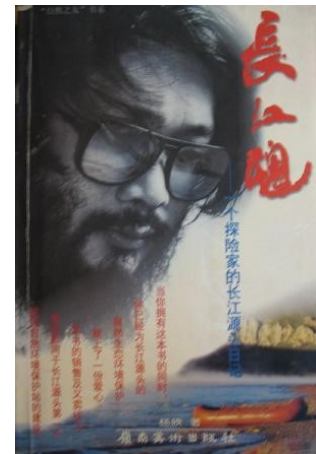
of a young Chinese student, Yao Maoshu 尧茂书, who had died in a similar rafting attempt just one year earlier in 1985. Yao in turn had been motivated to undertake his eventual fatal adventure after an American outdoors man, Ken Warren, in 1983 had applied with the Chinese authorities to organize a similar rafting expedition, but had been forced to abort the mission after encountering too many bureaucratic hurdles during the application process.[133] Warren's application was seen by many in China as a foreign incursion into what was essentially a genuinely Chinese affair: "The Yangtze is the mother river of the Chinese nation; it should be left to the Chinese to accomplish the task of first rafting it." (CJH: 3) Such patriotic sentiment ran high especially in Chinese student circles, and eventually spurned Yao Maoshu to engage in a one-man rafting expedition all by himself, the costs for which he covered at his own expense. In June 1985, he set out in a small rubber boat whose name "Descendant of the dragon" (*long de chuanren* 龙的传人) left little doubt about the patriotic dedication of its owner. Several weeks into the journey, on July 24th 1986, Yao Maoshu's boat capsized in the shoals of Jiansha River and he drowned. He was 32 years old and became a "martyr" to the cause of early Chinese environmentalism (CJH: 3-4). The expedition Yang Xin participated in was similarly ill-fated, as ten of Yang Xin's fellow travelers lost their lifes. Yang Xin later published the diaries he kept during this expedition as a book entitled "Soul of the Yangtze" (*Changjiang hun* 长江魂; CJH) in which he details his and his team's adventures.

> 1986 was the year we rafted the Yangtze River. Apart from our team there were two others. Our three teams paid a severe prize for rafting the Yangtze, all together 10 of our team members died. I saw with my own eyes how my comrades beside me were swallowed by the raging waters of the river, I myself narrowly escaped death on several occasions. These deaths and near-death experiences have provided me with a rich

---

[133] Warren attempted to raft the Yangtze on two separate occasions. In 1983, the outdoor guide and adventurer Ken Warren organized an expedition to raft a 1,970-mile section of the Yangtze River. The expedition was canceled, however, after Mr. Warren's group traveled to China and faced difficulties in negotiating with the Chinese authorities who wouldn't issue the necessary permits. In 1986, Warren and his team started a second attempt. That trip was thwarted, however, after the team's photographer, David Shippee, developed altitude sickness at 14,500 feet and died during the trip. Some expedition members abandoned the effort at that point, and Mr. Warren was forced to cancel when the time allotted for the trip by the Chinese government ran out. He had completed more than 1,000 miles. (A report on this second expedition's tragic events and its aftermath can be found in: McGovan 1987: 21-22.

experience for wild adventures and explorations for the future, and at the same time have formed an unshakable basis for future expeditions to seek the Yangtze's sources. (CJH: 87)

This book was crucial not only in helping to establish Yang's reputation as a dedicated environmentalist. Yang wrote this book specifically with the intention to use the money he would earn from its sale in order to fund his next adventure, the establishment of the environmental monitoring station in Kekexili in 1997. The station is still in operation, financed by donations and the work of up to 300 volunteers (many of them ethnic Tibetans). In 2007, Yang wrote another book, this time on his conservationist work in Kekexili, entitled "Ten years in Kekexili" [*Qinli Kekexili shinian* 亲历可可西里十年] in which he and his volunteers recount their adventures.

Yang's writings provide examples for yet another pattern in which the sociopolitical message of Chinese environmental non-fiction is amplified with the naturescape it is set in. In this case, the narrative, revolving around issues such as individual engagement, overcoming obstacles, and heroism, is set against the background of

untamed wilderness found at China's periphery. There, nature is wild, harsh, and picturesque; the elements are merciless yet awe-inspiring. But such romanticism also pertains to the people inhabiting this wilderness: Men are real men who brave danger, ride horses, and carry weapons, while the women are proud, exotic, and beautiful (or, in other accounts, more welcoming to erotic advances than their Han Chinese counterparts). Such accounts combine the nature- as well as the ethnoscape of China's periphery to provide an imaginary that strongly resonates with, indeed amplifies, themes popular with their readership, often young Han Chinese urbanites with little knowledge about environmental issues but fascinated by accounts of adventures in the wilderness and encounters with exotic people. The appeal of such wilderness adventures in the name of environmentalism can be glimpsed from the following description of Yang's "Ten years in Kekexili"; the official promotional blurb that can be found on the book (inside its original cover and also on various websites selling the book) reads as such:

191

Kekexili and the Tibetan antelope have already received widespread attention. The protection of the Tibetan antelope has become a rallying point for China's wildlife protection efforts. Ten years ago, the environmental NGO "Green River" entered Kekexili and started their calling to protect the Tibetan antelope.

Eight years ago, after the charity sale of "Soul of the Yangtze", *Green River* established China's first Ecological Conservation Station; that *Green River* has come so far after ten years is due to the dedication of *Green River's* volunteers in Kekexili. This book is about the personal experiences of these volunteers, their true feelings, their actual emotions, cast into writing. Their descriptions let the reader get into touch with the reality on the ground in Kekexili, the reader will be deeply moved by the tenaciousness and toughness of these full-blooded Khampa men[134] and their no-nonsense attitude (lit.: "actual guns and real bullets, *zhenqiang shidan* 真枪实弹); at the same time, the selfless dedication of the over 300 volunteers on the ground in Kekexili will let urban readers find a green spiritual grounding (*jingshen shang de lüse zhidian* 精神上的绿色支点).

The mentioning of the ethnicity of Yang Ying's volunteers is to be considered a deliberate marketing strategy that tries to touch on established Han-Chinese preconceptions of the masculinity, exoticism, and courage of Tibetans (see below). Of special interest is the explicit mentioning of "urban readers", indicating that awareness for environmental issues – much like correlating social developments that had occurred earlier in Western industrialized nations – often develops among educated members of the middle-class with "post-material" values.

However, aside from such cultural existentialism, the fusion of the wilderness imaginary with ethno-cultural observations can also serve as a crucial tool in opening up new deliberative spaces. Since Chinese environmental nonfiction set at China's periphery is overwhelmingly produced by Han-Chinese authors (often environmental

---

[134] The Khampa are an ethnic group that traditionally inhabits Kham, an area covering parts of Sichuan, Qinghai, and Tibet autonomous province. Over the course of their history, they have garnered a reputation as warriors. Tellingly, the entry for "Khampa men" (康巴汉子 in Chinese) in the popular Chinese *Baike Baidu* encyclopedia starts with the following description: 豪爽粗犷的康巴汉子, 某种程度上已经成为藏族男人的标志. [http://baike.baidu.com/view/1204292.htm]

activists and journalists like Yang Xin) who both literally and literarily enter an alien landscape at the margins of China's national territory, inhabited by non-Han ethnic groups, this configuration necessarily affects the way in which these writers address their subject matter: taking the perspective of the outsider, their writing often dwells on matters of ethno-cultural difference, the deliberation of which opens up argumentative spaces that allow the author to challenge established truth and renegotiate old perceptions. These perspectives, however, are neither homogenous nor unproblematic, since ethnic relations within the Chinese social imaginary are highly complex and at times even contradictory.

VI.2   Counter-narratives and ethnicity discourse in 1980s China

Just as Western environmentalism represents a critique of the modernist mindset, "modernity" and "progress" experienced a profound sense of crisis in China after the catastrophes wrought by Maoism. The "aesthetics of primitivism", as Wang Rujie (2008) calls it, were a possible way for Chinese intellectuals in the cultural sector to reject the prescriptions of Socialist Realism and develop a new language in which to express their doubt concerning Chinese modernism, while "uses of the primitive that we discern in many literary and visual works of art are not just ways of developing the discourse of modernity but also a means of organizing the emotional life flowing out of China's experience of modernization." (Wang Rujie 2008: 17)

> The "progress" from the May Fourth intellectual enlightenment to the subsequent social reforms and projects of modernization parallels the process of literary changes in China from realism to modernism. As the heirs of the May Fourth movement, some of the realist writers had unknowingly developed their art into a form of mass deception resulting in their own ineptitude as intellectuals to resist intolerance of rational progress. Many acquiesced and complied with this mass-mindedness because the language of enlightenment that has translated China into a socialist state still dominated the critical reflections of the Cultural Revolution after the death of Mao. Thus the great appeal of the aesthetics of primitivism as a compensatory adjustment to a set of one-

sided conscious attitudes, and thus the journey to China's backwaters to

seek one's roots and lost identities. (Wang 2008: 21-22)

It has been observed that Chinese attitudes towards "primitive" cultures mirrored those displayed by Western observers, as has been amply demonstrated by scholarship addressing the literary construction of Tibet in Chinese and Western literature: "[…] Tibet was beginning to emerge in the late nineteenth century as a romantic landscape to fuel Western fantasies of a utopian stronghold in the midst of a politicized, colonial vision of Central Asia. Moreover, Tibet concurrently became a complex symbol for Eastern mysticism in general and Buddhism as a generic, homogenous entity in particular." (Korom 2001: 173)

The romanticism and exoticization, for example, that many observers

have found pervading Western writings about Tibet, is also typical of

much Chinese writing on this subject, and not only in the descriptions of

noble primitivism that constitute much of the work of the "root-seeking"

school of Chinese literature." [...] Both tend to treat the Tibetans as

objects in stories of heroic achievement by outsiders, or as victims of

abuse who are incapable of agency. Perhaps this similarity should not

surprise us overmuch, since both the Western and the Chinese accounts

arise within societies with histories as invaders or would-be invaders of

the Tibetan plateau. (Barnett 2001: 273)

In 1986, Barmé issued a scathing indictment of China's (Han) intellectuals' infatuation with the primitivist imaginary. He stated that "in young literature and arts circles, a 'border regions fever' (*biansaire* 边塞热) has been *en vogue* for the last couple of years. This hankering to set foot into the border regions is an attempt to replenish the depletion and hollowness of mainland culture with the magnificence, mystery, and naturalness of the borderland minority cultures." (Barmé 1986: 96)[135] The author traces the beginnings of this fascination with China's "Wild West" to a small group of Sichuanese painters loosely grouped around Chen Danqing 陈丹青. He came to national attention almost overnight in the early 1980s when he published a series of Realist oil paintings (whose style imitated French Realist artist Jean-

---

[135] My translation, the original text was published in Chinese.

Francois Millet) portraying the lives of ordinary Tibetans in the Chinese *hinterlands*. According to Barmé, the choice of this *sujet* indicates a desire of Han intellectuals to shed off the constraints of mainstream Chinese culture and rediscover in the mirror of The Other a sense of lost self; a longing for simple happiness, harmony, and cultural ancestry. However, this was accomplished not through a willingness to engage with Tibetan culture eye-to-eye, but by an essentialist and eclectic attitude that simply appropriated cultural elements for its own purposes:

> [The painters around Chen Danqing] were by no means willing to emerge
> themselves in these lives wholeheartedly. Maintaining the senses and
> sensibilities of outsiders, they simply helped themselves to the physical
> manifestations and emotional expressions of an alien people, and used
> [this material] to enrich their own enunciatory worlds. (Barmé 1986: 96)
> [136]

Such conflicting attitudes are mirrored by the official stance of the Chinese government on ethnic relations in the People's Republic. Ethnic relations within the Peoples Republic of China have always been characterized by a strong ambiguity that not only relates to daily interactions or cultural representations, but also extends to the realm of Maoist theory. Mao Zedong in several key texts, most importantly in "On New Democracy", "On the Ten Major Relationships", and "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People" had warned against the dual danger of "Han Chauvinism" (*dahan shawen zhuyi* 大汉沙文主义), domination of the Han majority over ethnic minorities, and the "local" or "territorial ethnic chauvinism"

---

[136] 136 To reinforce this point, it might be interesting to refer to a highly revealing anecdote: Li Qingxi 李庆西 mentions a discussion that took place in the context of an often referred-to symposium on literature held in Hangzhou in December 1984 entitled "Literature of the New Era. Review and Predictions" (*Xin shiqi wenxue: huigu yu yuce* 新时期文学. 回顾与预测). Two prominent *Xungen* writers, Han Shaogong and Li Hangyu, pointed out that so-called traditional culture could be divided into "standard" culture and "nonstandard culture", and advocated that the cultural revival of Chinese literature should not limit itself to the narrow framework of "standard culture", meaning Confucian orthodoxy. Han spoke in favor of the traditions of "barbaric" ethnic minorities such as the Chu of Hunan province, while Li emphasized the folkways and local customs of the people of Zhejiang as a potential source for great literary inspiration. However, their suggestions were eventually not further pursued, because critics pointed out that their most formidable problem was fusing "Western" with "Eastern" culture. One could hence argue that this was the case because it meant a de-essentialization of "Chinese culture", and that a heterogeneous cultural heritage did not seem appealing to a group of intellectuals intent on pursuing what was essentially an agenda driven by cultural-political considerations. Can self-essentialization be an emancipatory act?

(*difang minzu zhuyi* 地方民族主义) of individual ethnic groups. While Mao in general regarded the self-determination of minority nationalities within China favorably, its priority was overwritten by a more profound contradiction that existed on the world stage; the historic struggle between imperialism and revolution. The chairman argued for a strategic alliance of the CCP with all progressive (i.e. revolutionary) forces within the Chinese nation, which incorporated not only different classes within society, but also different "peoples". "In 'New Democracy', Mao asserted that self-determination for minority nationalities was to be deferred until China's revolution united with the world socialist revolution. When that happened, and interstate barriers were revisited in a world united by socialism, the question of self-determination might again become appropriate." (Howland 2010: 183) What this outlook implied was that issues of ethnic relations within China would have to be shoehorned into the ideological categories of Marxism-Leninism, above all that of *class* and *nation-state*. Thus, the business of revolution and the interests of the Socialist state overwrote considerations of minority self-determination. Bulag, writing on the process of integration of the Mongol population of Inner Mongolia into the PRC after 1949, concurs when he states "that the Communist approach to non-Chinese nationalities before 1949 was deeply influenced by class-nation categories. The Mongols and other peoples were understood as oppressed and colonized nations, and they were promised self-determination as a way of achieving equality with the Chinese people." (Bulag 2002: 111)

As Howland (2011) in his account on the theoretical foundations of minority policies under Maoism has pointed out, Mao's perspective caused "profound contradictions […] at the heart of the minority nationalities policy." (ibid: 186): Mao's theory not only subsumed the interests of China's ethnic minorities under that of the Chinese state as a whole, it at the same time also – and quite paradoxically – enabled the very same "Han chauvinism" Mao had argued against: In 1954, Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇 himself in his address to the First National People's Congress declared that China's ethnic minorities should stand with the CCP against the common enemy of imperialism, and strengthen their patriotic commitment to the Chinese motherland. Imperialist agents were actively trying to undermine the unity of the Chinese peoples by supporting puppet regimes and stooges such as the Dalai Lama in Tibet, which represented the old, feudal society that Chinese Communism was determined to do

away with. But on the other hand, because the minority nationalities suffered from "economic and cultural backwardness", Liu contended that they were unable to progress without the help of their Han brethren. Thus, the state had a duty to send Han cadres to work in the minority areas, where they would serve and assist the minority nationalities to consolidate their internal unity and political maturity, until the time when they could assume leadership in the area. "But what" asks Howland in his analysis "is chauvinism if not the judgment that a minority is backward and that the majority has the solution for its path to progress?" (Howland 2011: 187)

> To be sure, Mao's stated intention was not to dominate minority nationalities, but to bring them into the world socialist revolution. Unfortunately for them, Mao's commitment to revolution relied on an imperialist principle and practice of the state, and deferred the question of the self-determination of autonomous regions until a future time when imperialism was crushed. Sovereignty was a principle of territory, the location of the nation and the state. But as noted above, the victory over imperialism proceeded first through the transformation of the nation and its society of class divisions; once that transformation had occurred, the state would be altered. (ibid. 190)

Returning to the context of environmental nonfiction, it is this contradiction between the self-understanding of the CCP and its leadership (overwhelmingly comprised of Han-Chinese cadres) as the main advocate for ethnic minority interests, while simultaneously maintaining an attitude of patronizing disregard, indeed contempt, for cultural, ethnic, or local idiosyncrasies that is characterizing relations between Han majority and ethnic minorities in China to this day. Bulag calls this "the violent provincialism of universalism": "Put differently, this is a conflict between difference and universalism. Universalism, or the difference-blind principle, is usually cloaked in neutrality, equality, dignity, and individualism. Its critics, on the contrary, frequently point out its hypocrisy as imposing 'one hegemonic culture' and see it as 'highly discriminatory'. (Bulag 2002: 132) Therefore, socio-cultural reality in China is often, and increasingly so, characterized by growing frictions between the Han Chinese majority and national minorities who feel increasingly subjected to chauvinistic and indeed racist attitudes: In a study conducted in the 1990s, Blum (2001) analyzed the attitudes of Han Chinese respondents towards different ethnic

minority groups, and found that Tibetans were typically seen as primitive, wild, dirty, and "backward". Ethnic minorities, according to Howland, often appear but nothing more than colorful exotic *accessories* within the mainstream Chinese media landscape:

> In place of unity, scholars in the past fifteen years have noted the persistence of differentiation in China, of a sort akin to colonialism and exoticism. Largely in the interests of tourism and the art and artifacts businesses, China's minorities have been feminized and eroticized: minorities are often represented by women draped in colorful costumes or nude in exotic backgrounds. Their primitiveness and free ways of life complement the discipline of the modernizing Han nationality, and underline the point that the inclusion of China's minorities has come at the cost of their cultural subordination to the Han majority. (Howland 2010: 191)

It is the tension between cultural hegemony and particularity that imbues this topic with relevance: As mentioned before, the notion of a public sphere as proposed by Habermas or Anderson was analytically closely connected to the concept of the nation state, and was hence burdened with issues such as homogenization and essentialization. Homi Bhabha stresses the analytical importance of challenging the concept of the nation state by paying greater attention to so-called "counter-narratives". Anderson's overly homogenous notion of the public sphere needed to be overcome by focusing on previously disenfranchised voices. In *Nation and Narrative* he writes:

> Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries - both actual and conceptual - disturb those ideological maneuvers through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities. (Bhabha 1990: 300)

To challenge essentialist identities – that im- or explicitly overlook the plurality of voices within society and drown out minority voices by paying too much attention to majority or national identity – the public sphere can be restored to its original heterogeneity. The emphasis of cultural difference over cultural homogeneity is an important part of such counter-narratives:

> [Cultural difference] addresses the jarring of meanings and values generated in-between the variety and diversity associated with cultural plentitude; it represents the process of cultural interpretation formed in the perplexity of living, in the disjunctive, luminal space of national society [...]. The question of cultural difference faces us with a disposition of knowledge or a distribution of practices that exist beside each other, Abseits, in a form of juxtaposition or contradiction that resists the teleology of dialectic sublation. In erasing the harmonious totalities of Culture, cultural difference articulate the difference between representations of social life without surmounting the space of incommensurable meanings and judgments that are produced within the process of transcultural negotiation. (Bhabha 1990: 312)

Chinese environmental nonfiction at times represents a Han Chinese critique of Han Chinese cultural hegemony, and respectively an advocacy for cultural particularity, hybridity, and difference, and can also be understood as an act of political assertiveness by Chinese environmental authors: does cultural pluralism equal political pluralism?

The following analysis presents two distinct yet interconnected literary representations of the wilderness imaginary in Chinese environmental nonfiction. One focuses on the topic of heroism and individual struggle, the other one on spirituality and the pursuit of a meaningful life. In both cases, the nature- as well as the ethnoscape of China's periphery play a crucial role as literary amplifiers to highlight the message through comparison with the "other".

VI.3   A land for heroes

Environmental nonfiction's representation of China's periphery as the land of adventure and individualism has to be understood in the context of the literary as well as the social and cultural currents of the 1980s. The "root-seeking" movement, the search for individuality and free space, China's youths' celebration of non-mainstream culture often employed the imaginary of the wilderness to give voice to their new sensibilities. The wilderness imaginary – and China's border regions with their connotations of exoticism and adventure in particular – lent themselves to

literary explorations that focused on issues of escape and individual fullfilment. "Norlang" (*Nuorilang* 诺日朗), a poem cycle by well-known "misty" or "obscure" poet Yang Lian 杨炼, might be the best example of a literary trend that fused the search for individuality with the Tibetan wilderness imaginary. Yang Lian and a number of other poets became known in China's literary scene through their affiliation with the journal *Jintian* 今天 ("Today"), a non-official publication, between 1978 and 1980. Coined "obscure" or "misty poetry" (*Menglongshi* 朦胧诗) by their critics, the school sparked no small amount of debate within the Chinese literary establishment, which found fault with the school's rejection of officially sanctioned aesthetics, its often hermetic and "obscure" imaginary, and charged their proponents with displaying "unhealthy" tendencies, and being overly individualistic and/or chauvinistic. [137] While this ostentatious rebellion meant that Yang's *Norlang* cycle was singled out for criticism during the "Anti Spiritual Pollution" campaign in late 1983, the poet later in the decade received a considerable amount of official recognition and, according to Edmond, was "seems to have been happy to take advantage of the growth in official publishing opportunities in the 1980s, while still actively participating in the unofficial scene." (Edmond 2006: 119)[138]

In Yang Lian's work, the connection between individualism and nature plays a crucial role: The school "played a key role allowing the 'I' to re-enter Chinese poetry and by opening up literature as a site for exploring subjectivity." (Edmond 2004: 72) As Xie (1989) has pointed out, it thus has to be understood in the context of the socio-cultural changes rocking China at the time, and in the context of larger debates of the relationship of Chinese tradition and modernity, and China's relationship with the

---

[137] For a collection of articles in this literary debate, see: Yao 1989; also: Xiang 1985 for an account of the criticism leveled against the school.

[138] For a detailed study of Yang Lian's publication history, see: Edmond 2006. He addresses the poet's initial ostentatious refusal to publish his work in official, i.e. government-controlled publications, an act that he argues can be understood not only as a political statement, but also as a strategic marketing decision: "Publishing unofficially was a statement of dissent, an attempt to create an alternative cultural sphere that did not rely on the favours of those in positions of power. But this oppositional and independent role was undermined by the utilitarian aspect of unofficial publications. That is, unofficial publication was not directed simply at creating a separate realm for literature outside official regulation but was also an integral part of attempts by writers such as Yang to establish themselves within the official literary field." (Edmond 2006: 119) This two-pronged approach of maintaining a critical distance from the political establishment while at the same time seeking its protection is another indication for the hybrid form of civil society in China as argued in previous chapters.

West. In the quest for this new subjectivity, landscape played a decisive role as a screen against which the 'I' could be projected against: The 'I' within the landscape could hence be understood as a stand-in for other binaries such as subjectivity and objectivity, the [cultural] "self" (*ziwo* 自我) engaging with the "world" (*shijie* 世界), or – as Kubin puts it – to merge "personal experiences and social perspectives" (Kubin 1993: 31) to form a new non-orthodox sociality. "The new sociality in Yang's poetry challenged the strict boundaries of subjectivity in China, at the moment when the country was moving from collectivism to rampant individualism. [...It] negotiates value in a dialectic play between self and other, the 'I' and the landscape. It opposes both the socialist Chinese literary system and an aesthetic of pure poetry, which was initially necessary in order to break free of the political demands of that system." (Edmond 2004: 74)

There has been substantial debate within the literature over the role of landscape, and also nature, in Obscure Poetry. While Bonnie McDougall in her discussion of Bei Dao's poetry (another "misty" poet), argues that "nature offers a refuge for the oppressed and the weary" (id. 1985: 252), Yeh identifies the author's role in Misty Poetry as "Nature's Child" and argues that "nature in Misty Poetry is portrayed in a predominantly positive way and is often contrasted to negative social systems. Nature promises freedom from inhibitions imposed by society [...]." (Yeh 1991: 409) Lo echoes a similar sentiment when he states that "for Misty poets like Yang Lian, nature designates the place where true and pure experience can be taken hold of in opposition to the leveled and denatured kinds." (Lo 1998: 92) The author also criticizes Yang's work for "the Enlightenment vision of man's domination over nature." (ibid: 113), and for his willingness to employ nature as a way to ascribe meaning to his own social identity: "The individual experience (to be more accurate, the experience of a modern Chinese subject) described in Yang's poetry is explicitly associated with nature. Nature becomes a 'world' for the experience to take place as well as a space to record and inscribe reference ineffable experiences in history, especially when the official historiography tends to present a highly filtered experience of the social collectivity." (ibid: 95) What is noteworthy here is that the nature experience in these accounts is of high artificiality, as it is written by and directed at what Yeh calls "frustrated urbanites" for whom literary escapes into wild nature provide a welcome break from the travails of everyday life in China's cities.

Given this background, it is not surprising that Zhang Xudong attacks Yang and his contemporaries for valorizing "the political illusions of searching for a lost, immanent social value", and exhibiting a "monolithic monumentality." Despite the undeniable essentialization of Chinese culture and romantization of nature, Yang Lian's work especially in Norlang is interested in non-orthodox cultural traditions that can complicate, redefine, and enrich the officially sanctioned cultural canon, as Edmonds (2004) points out. As the author himself states in the introduction, "Norlang", the topic of the poem cycle, is the name of a great waterfall in Sichuan province known for its natural beauty as well as a male Tibetan deity).

> In "Norlang", which is the name of a male god in Tibetan, as well as a
> mountain and waterfall in Sichuan, Yang draws on a Tibetan tradition in
> order to examine and complicate the assumptions of self and collective
> identity, and counteract the oppressive Han tradition. Nevertheless, this
> use of Tibetan culture is also a case of cultural appropriation and thus
> within the Chinese imperialist tradition. (Edmond 2004: 74-75)

Whatever the interpretation, "Norlang" and the surrounding discussion illustrates how the invocation of a particular naturescape, that of China's wilderness at the periphery, in lockstep with the invocation of non-Han, minority cultures can be used to create counter-narratives that challenge not only aesthetic, but also political hegemonic discourses. The naturescape hence again serves as a crucial amplifier to the underlying topic the respective author wants to convey.

Although nonfiction, Yang Xin's "Soul of the Yangtzi" has a strong narrative drive that allows the reader to re-live the author's adventures through his first-person narration. The sense of danger and adventure of the expedition is enhanced by the fact that the author is a child of the city, and as such unaccustomed to the rough life that awaits him and his friends in the wildlands of the Himalayan. After reaching their point of departure with trucks, train, and on horseback the expedition is supplied with rafts at Shuiwenzhan, a military outpost in Qinghai Province. Soon, the team is far removed from any signs of civilization. When it loses its way in the middle of a confusing network of waterways, lakes, and ponds that spans a high plateau, Yang – who is among the youngest and most physically fit of his team – is sent ahead to scout

the area from a higher point of view. Alone in the wilds he spots movement in the grass plains below his position:

> Wolves. The friends we met yesterday at Shuiwenzhan told us that there are many wolves here in the no-man's land that stretches over the next 800 *li* [ca. 400 kms]. In the past, the wolves roamed in packs of many hundreds, until the local militias organized hunts to wipe them out, as did the herders and the army with their jeeps. Now, there are not many wolves left. But end of last year, the pilots of an emergency helicopter discovered a pack of over 60 wolves. At the time, we did not take their story to heart, who would have thought that the first expedition I am taking part in would run into them? Freezing and hungry, I am shaking with fear. Little golden lights are dancing in front of my eyes. One of my legs is wobbly from kneeling in the cold water, I breathe heavily, one of my hands is clutching the camera hanging down my neck. I have come to raft the Yangtze, to die among the waves and billows of the Yangtze would be a hero's death, what would it matter to be eaten by wolves? The wolves are still coming closer, I couldn't fend off all of them if they rushed me all at once. I wished somebody came to help me, what did I have to play the tough guy earlier, going all alone to scout for the road?
>
> Now it is too late anyway, if I have to die I might just as well go down fighting: *fortes fortuna adjuvat*, as they say [*xialu xiangfeng yongzhe sheng* 狭路相逢勇者胜]. I draw the Tibetan dagger from my belt, and with my last strength and a mighty roar, I charge towards the wolves. Maybe it's because I am wearing a red duvet jacket, maybe those wolves have never seen a red creature storming towards them out of the water - they turn around and make a run for it. I am besides me with excitement: You want to chicken out? I'll get you! Screaming I chase after them until I reach the shores of a lake, but those wolves are long gone without a trace. Panting, I collapse on the ground. (CJH 43-44)

Yet not only wildlife, but river itself represents a danger the expedition needs to face. After a few calm days of rafting, the currents of the Yangtze become more dangerous.

June 21st: In the afternoon, our boats enter a gorge. I do not have a map, so I do not know where it is leading, just that these mountains are especially beautiful. The sheer cliffs towering above us are made of limestone, at their feet wild grass is growing abundantly, as if the rock walls were growing out of the green. High up, the mountain sides are riddled with caves and cracks in the rock, a scenery as far as the eye can see like from a *shanshui* landscape painting. With one hand I keep our boat on course, with the other hand I photograph this scenery. As we are swept into the gorge, I hear from the boat ahead a cry that turns into a big ruckus, but they are far ahead so I can't see what is happening. I am later being told that they spotted a bear, standing by the side of the river. Some of the team members were becoming anxious, and Yu Cheng had readied his gun, yet the bear had not moved and just stood there, watching. Xu Xinzhi put up his camera and started filming. As the boats were almost ahead, the bear suddenly threw itself into the water towards the foremost boat. Its crew shouted in panic and prepared to fight off the bear, but when the beast was only a few meters away, it suddenly swam to the opposite shore and disappeared into the mountains, its pelt dripping with water. (CJH 51)

What is notable in this paragraph is the contrast between pastoral tranquility and the danger posed by wilderness, and the speed with which the face of nature changes in an instant. The contemplative mood of the author, inspired by the picturesque landscape suddenly changes when nature shows its dangerous side in form a wild animal that poses a clear danger to the team members. The paragraph below follows immediately after the encounter with the bear. As Yang's team enters further into the gorge, they are for the first time confronted with the full power of an untamed river. Suddenly, the contemplative *shanshui* scenery – already unsettled by the encounter with the bear – turns into a place where Yang and his friends are forced to fight for their lives.

The waters of the gorge are becoming wilder and wilder; as we turn another corner the river ahead is fuming with white spume. This is the first time I am encountering the perilous shoals of the Yangtze, and I am mortally afraid, nothing has prepared me for this. The other boats have

been swept ahead out of sight, only two little boats remain, and I feel like
I am all alone. Before I can gather my thoughts, the currents have already
flung my little raft into the cataracts; it is being thrown up and down, left
and right. The waves are crashing onto us higher and higher, half a meter,
one meter, pounding our boat that is suddenly filling with water, and
drenching me head to toe. Amidst the crashing waves that are hitting us
from all sides, I frantically row left, row right, trying to steady the boat.
Under the attack of the waves, our boat is lifted up, it almost seems as if
it is hanging in free air and the oars are barely touching the water.
Mercifully, there is one last wave, and I take this opportunity to bring the
raft back on course. (CJH 51-52)

While Yang Xin is Han Chinese, other accounts of individual acchievment in the
context of environmental nonfiction are often filtered through the lens of race. The
literary representation of the supposed bravery of Tibetans in particular presents the
reader with an appealing counterpart that challenges established notions of propriety.
Such accounts can display a significant level of cultural essentialism as mentioned
above, but sometimes also feature a distinctive commitment to nuanced portrayals of
cultural particularities. This breaking-up of established perspectives through the
prism of ethnicity discourse can be visited in *Heavenly Beads* (*Tianzhu* 天朱), a 2009
book-length reportage written by Han-Chinese environmental investigative journalist
Liu Jianqiang 刘鉴强. He worked as a deputy editor of *chinadialogue.net*, a bilingual
Chinese-English online magazine with a focus on environmental issues in China,
who also worked as a senior investigative reporter for *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern
Weekend).[139] Some of Liu's most influential articles included his September 2004
exposé on the controversial Tiger Leaping Gorge Dams in southern Yunnan
Province. After reading Liu's story, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao ordered the project
suspended pending a central government investigation. His article on the Summer

---

[139] Liu was featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal on December 21, 2006 about the rise
of Chinese investigative journalism. He was also featured in *China Ink, the Changing Face of Chinese
Journalism*, a book published by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Maryland: 2008 In 2009, his story
on the Tiger Leaping Gorge won the TNC-SEE Award for Environmental Reporting. Liu's story on
China's environmental movement won the SOPA 2008 Award for Excellence in Reporting on the
Environment from the Society of Publishers in Asia. Liu was a 2005 nominee for the State
Environmental Protection Administration's "China Environmental Protection Person of the Year"
award.

Palace Lake reconstruction (in March 2005) resulted in the country's first state-level public environmental hearing held by the State Environmental Protection Administration.

Heavenly Beads contains accounts of the author's encounters and interviews with Tibetan of various walks of life; lamas, farmers, NGO workers, businessmen who are only unified by the fact that they strive to protect the environment and cultural traditions of Tibet. Liu's (who speaks Tibetan) portraits are remarkable inasmuch as he spent many months with his subjects, often going to great lengths to win their trust and get them to open up to the Han Chinese outsider. As one reviewer of the book puts it:

> I appreciate *Heavenly Beads* for the author's efforts to approach and understand Tibetan people with respect. Unlike most travelers and visitors to Tibetan areas, who are just fascinated by scenic landscapes and exotic customs, [the author] went further, knocking open the hearts of people there, listening to them and learning from them. His penetration into the innermost world of his subjects brought him to personal tales far more fascinating than exotic scenes, and resulted in a book that is being regarded as "a unique history of contemporary Tibet and its people".[140]

One can argue that the mere multi-facetted representation of Tibetan culture and society can be understood at creating a "counter-narrative" as described above, since it im- or explicitly challenges the essentialist attitudes found in most Chinese-language writing regarding Tibet. The author himself at many points of the narrative challenges his own perspective, reminding the reader of his bias. The following quote establishes the author's intent as a quest for a fairer view unbalanced by ideological restraints:

> When I was 7 years old, my brother and I one evening went to the next village to see [the 1963 produced propaganda film] "Serfs" (*Nongnu* 农奴
>). The miserable life of the poor Tibetan peasants scared me so much I didn't dare to open my eyes, I didn't want to watch the movie anymore,

---

[140] http://www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/3612-Books-understanding-Tibet. For the Chinese version, refer to: http://www.chinadialogue.net/books/3612-Books-understanding-Tibet/ch [both accessed 2011-10-11]

and I implored my elder brother to take me home. It is my least favorite movie, and the oppressive and gloomy picture it painted set the tone for my basic understanding of the Tibetan people.

Until 1987, when I attended middle school in Shouguang, Shandong province: One day, I read in the newspaper that *People's Literature*, in Vol. 1 and 2 of 1987 had published the novel "Stick Out Your Tongue Or You'll Have Nothing" [by Ma Jian], and that it had severely defamed and insulted the image of our Tibetan compatriots, misrepresented the life of the Tibetan people, and violated the Party's and the government's policies regarding nationalities and religion, instigating the discontent and righteous anger of our Tibetan compatriots. The issue of *People's Literature* had been banned, and the editor, a man named Liu Xinwu, been dismissed from his post.

Without hesitating for one second, I rushed into our school's library, and searched and searched for this particular issue of *People's Literature*, but couldn't find it. The librarian gave me a wink and said: "It's useless, the issue has been sacked." I thought: "I wonder what it says? How did it 'misrepresent the life of the Tibetan people'? What IS their actual life like?" At this point, all I knew about the Tibetans had been what "Serfs" had told me. Spellbound, I stood in front of the book shelf, and thought about the Tibetans: Do they have the same life as I? (HB: 81)

The same commitment to nuance and self-examination can be found in the interviews with Tibetan environmental protectionists. In contrast to other literary accounts mentioned above, *Heavenly Beads* is notable for refusing to engage in simplistic essentialist or romantic assertions about Tibetan society and maintaining a respectful attitude, while at the same time not shying away from portraying social reality in all its complexity. The themes introduced before, individualism, individual achievement, and personal dedication to the cause of environmentalism also all feature a prominent role. Liu's account offers several powerful portraits of (Tibetan) individuals who often struggle not only against the harsh natural environment they live in, but much more against social constraints and prejudice, often represented by the Han-Chinese dominated establishment.

We meet one of the main protagonists of the book, the Tibetan Gama 嘎玛, full name Karma Samdrup 如凯·嘎玛桑珠, an environmental activist (he is the founder of the *Three Rivers Environmental Protection Association*) and also a very wealthy merchant dealing in Tibetan antiques and jewelry. The book begins with the author, Liu, frantically racing to Beijing airport on an August day in 2006. He has just received a call from Samdrup who has arrived from Lhasa at Beijing only to find his three pieces of luggage containing antiques and heavenly beads missing.

Samdrup is described as having a sturdy muscular frame that makes him stand out of the Han Chinese around him. A thick braid of pitch-black hair falls down to his lower back, his broad flat face is adorned with a long "exotic" moustache, "in the style of Gesar Khan"[141] which – as the author observes – together with his goatee forms the character *gong* 公 ("public", also "fair-minded" or "unselfish") on his face. (Later, the author remarks that this is quite fitting since Samdrup always talks about taking care of others and attending to communal and public matters.) His intimidating and unrefined appearance, together with that fact that he speaks Mandarin only poorly, plays to the stereotype of the "uncivilized" and "wild" Tibetan often held in mainstream Chinese society. The author speculates that his "foreign" appearance might have increased the hostility of the *Starbucks* staff that refuses to let him see the surveillance tapes of their store where the luggage was last seen.

However, this superficial impression is contrasted with Samdrup's composed, indeed admirable, demeanor in the face of a potential devastating financial loss: When Liu receives the call, Samdrup has just reported the theft to the airport police, and is having a meal at Kentucky Fried Chicken. "Son of a gun (*hao jiahuo* 好家伙)", the author marvels, "to have an appetite in this situation!" Scurrying into the great Arrivals Hall of Beijing Airport, Liu spots Samdrup calmly observing the comings and goings of the crowd. The Tibetan does not seem to be especially worried about the loss of his extremely valuable merchandise. When asked about the approximate value of the goods, he dismissively estimates it at around 10 million *Yuan*, and has a good laugh at Liu's expense when the latter is trying not to faint at the prospect of

---

[141] King Gesar, or Geser was the legendary king of Ling, immortalized in the *Epic of King Gesar* said to date from the 12th century. The epos is still widely disseminated throughout central Asia through various oral traditions.

losing such a sum. Later, when it turns out that his luggage was simply erroneously stored away by the staff of the adjacent *Starbucks* and is returned to its rightful owner, Samdrup not only takes the trouble to formally apologize to all employees for the disturbance has caused, but lightheartedly jokes: "Today is a day of great fortune, I won 10 million in a single day". This portrait establishes the noble and "truly" civilized character of the Tibetan by reversing mainstream notions of savagery and etiquette. At one point, Liu calls his home city of Beijing dismissively as "so-called civilized" (HB: 1)

The portrayal of Samdrup also features a noticeable reference to relationship between Han Chinese and Tibetans, as far as masculinity is concerned. Samdrup's calm stoic demeanor in the face of (potential) ruin stands in stark contrast to the behavior of the Chinese who are portrayed as petty or hapless. Such representation resonates with the established trope of the Han Chinese as the "fragile scholar" (Geng 2004) in contrast to the Tibetan warrior. Hillman and Henfry find that "Tibetans are routinely masculinized" in contemporary representations in China (Hillman/Henfry 2006: 251), in contrast to southern ethnic minorities in China that usually are characterized by the effeminateness. Some scholars argue that the sexual metaphor is also one of domination, in which the literal or figurative femaleness of minority peoples defines them as subordinate to the Han majority. (ibid) In contrast, the masculinization of northern ethnicities in central Asia serves as a foil for Han Chinese fantasies about the construction of a martial identity. Thus, "we find that Han Chinese impressions of Tibetan men never stray far from 'danger', 'fighting', and 'sexual conquest', the ingredients of a hypermasculinization." (Hilman/Henfry 2006: 261)

Western pastoral writing

I would like to point out that Western pastoral writing also has a tradition of employing the "aesthetics of primitivism" as a language to challenge seemingly firmly established perspectives on "appropriate" social behavior: As Leo Marx points describes in *The Machine in the Garden*, a Virginian planter named Robert Beverly in 1705 published *The History and Present State of Virginia*, an early example of American pastoral writing trying to give voice to the experience of European settlers amidst the vastness of the new American continent. (Marx 2000: 75 ff.) In Beverly's *History*, the

"landscape provokes a utopian vision" (ibid: 77) of America as an edenic garden providing material as well as spiritual abundance. The original inhabitants of this garden, the native Indians, exert a strong allure on the European author who enthusiastically praises the luxuries and pleasures of primitive life in the embrace of abundant, unspoilt nature. The Indians, in the words of Beverly, live "without the Curse of Industry, their Diversion alone, and not their Labour, supplying their Necessities. [...] None of the Toils of Husbandry were exercised by this happy People." (cited in Marx 2000: 80) While the *History* does not fail to mention incidents of war and conflict between Indian tribes and European settlers, the Indians are presented in an "almost entirely favorable" light (79). At the end of his accounts, Beverly is overcome with much shame and grief about the treatment the Indians have endured at the hand of the white settlers, who have not only decimated the natives but also inadvertently destroyed the "primitive utopia" that had such an intoxicating effect on Beverly. He laments: "And indeed all that the *English* have done, since their going thither, has been only to make some of these Native Pleasures more scarce, by an inordinate and unseasonable Use of them", and hence the Indians have "reason to lament the arrival of the Europeans, by whose means they seem to have lost their Felicity, as well as their Innocence." (cited in Marx 2000: 81)

The key argument in this context is that through a deliberate reversal of perspectives, space for the deliberation of new voices and new perspectives opens up:

When in 1763, a white mob committed a massacre amongst the Indian population in Paxton, western Pennsylvania, Benjamin Franklin took command of a local militia to restore order and protect the survivors from further violence. Later, in his *Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America* (1784), Franklin condemned the use of the term "savages" for Native Americans and wrote that "savages we call them, because their manners differ from ours, which we think the perfection of civility; they think the same of theirs". Referring to the Paxton massacre, Franklin turned the phrase onto the European perpetrators of the carnage, calling the killers "Christian White Savages" to illustrate the point that morality and decency were not related to or wholly owned by any one culture: "O ye unhappy Perpetrators of this Horrid Wickedness!" [20] Instead, Franklin wrote approvingly about Indian society, and especially about the practice of tribe councils which reached agreement by

deliberation and consensus, the adoption of which he felt would be beneficial for the construction of a strong healthy American civil society. As Johansen puts it:

> There is in the writings of Franklin, as well as those of Jefferson, a sense of using the Indian example to recapture natural rights that Europeans had lost under monarchy. The European experience was not to be reconstructed on American soil. Instead, Franklin (as well as Jefferson) sought to erect an amalgam, a combination of indigenous American Indian practices and the cultural heritage that the new Americans had carried from Europe. In discussing the new culture, Franklin and others drew from experience with Native Americans, which was more extensive than that of the European natural rights philosophers. The American Indians' theory and practice affected Franklin's observations on the need for appreciation of diverse cultures and religions, public opinion as the basis for a polity, the nature of liberty and happiness, and the social role of property. (Johanson 1982: 84)

Thus, we can see in the writing of Franklin on the American Indians how the argument in favor of respect for and tolerance of diverse modes of living, one of the cornerstones upon which American civil society would be built, was greatly helped by being able to draw on the image of the cultural Other, in this case the native Americans, in order to provide a positive and healthy model against which to construct the Self. Johansen continues:

> Franklin's cultural relativism was perhaps one of the purest expressions of Enlightenment assumptions that stressed racial equality and the universality of moral sense among peoples. Systematic racism was not called into service until a rapidly expanding frontier demanded that enemies be dehumanized during the rapid, historically inevitable westward movement of the nineteenth century. Franklin's respect for cultural diversity did not reappear widely as an assumption in Euro-American thought until Franz Boas and others revived it around the end of the nineteenth century. Franklin's writings on Indians express the fascination of the Enlightenment with nature, the natural origins of man and society, and natural (or human) rights. They are likewise imbued with

> a search (which amounted at times almost to a ransacking of the past) for
> alternatives to monarchy as a form of government, and to orthodox state-
> recognized churches as a form of worship. (ibid: 84)

The issue of counter-narrative is even more relevant when within the larger context of international environmental writing, or even more broadly speaking of environmentalism, which it could be argued constitutes a large, comprehensive counter-narrative to modernity itself. In this context, the representation of The Other is a recurring and very prominent trope. This is especially true for the representation of minority people and so-called indigenous cultures, the academic consideration of which has received no small amount of attention under the concept of "indigenous knowledge":

> Just as the development of the concept of indigeneity was a reaction to
> modernity's delocalizing impacts, so was the rise in interest in indigenous
> knowledge in part a response to modernity's deskilling vision of and
> consequences for local communities. In an explicit effort to counter the
> dominant development discourse, indigenous knowledge scholars
> argued that indigenous peoples possess unique systems of knowledge
> that can serve as the basis for more successful development
> interventions. (Dove 2006: 195)

Often, counter-narratives to Western modernity were given a personalized form through accounts of "primitive" or "native" people whose societies represented a tangible alternative to industrialized society. Despite the fact that the introduction of concepts such as indigenous knowledge into developmental discussions was based on at least partially on empirical validity, such representation from its outset were inherently beset by issues of cultural essentialization and exoticism. These tropes are not confined to academic circles or environmental writing alone, but have also have become firmly established in new-age-inspired and later mainstream popular culture and cinema: The 1990 Western epic *Dances with Wolves* starring Kevin Costner, or more recently James Cameron's *Avatar* (in which alien inhabitants of a distant planet whose culture and appearance closely resemble that of Native American tribes try to fight off the exploitation of their planet my a ruthless human "military-industrial complex") are prominent examples.

Sonam Dargye

Arguably the most famous example for the use of this imaginary is the portrayal (and celebration) of the life and death of Sonam Dargye (chin. *Jiesang Suonandajie* 杰桑·索南达杰) in Chinese environmental nonfiction. He was the secretary of the working committee of Zhiduo County and dedicated protectionist who acquired posthumous fame in China after being killed in the line of duty by a group of poachers. His life and work are addressed in detail in a chapter entitled "Wilderness" (*huangyuan* 荒原). In 1992, Sonam Dargye first targeted the illegal gold diggers who had poured into the region by the tens of thousands. Their prospecting activities caused significant damage to the ecosystem, and many gold diggers turned to poaching once the gold rush had subsided: the Tibetan antelope is an endangered species seen only near the dangerous peaks of western China. The wool of its undercoat is famed all over the world for its quality. Although trade has been banned under international law, the garments continue to be bought, almost exclusively outside China, reportedly for $1,400 to $15,000 apiece. Poachers make less than $100 per pelt, already a small fortune in China. But the price escalates as the fur is smuggled abroad and sent to scarf makers and retailers.

When Sonam Dargye arrives in Kekexili in 1992, fewer than 50,000 antelopes are left, their packs cut down by the poachers' AK47s to just a few dozen each, at most reaching the low hundreds. The narrative in *Heavenly Beads* establishes the stage for the ranger's struggle against impossible odds: Kekexili, the Himalayan high plateau is described as a place of great cruelty but also beauty, imbued with almost mystical qualities: "Kekexili means 'beautiful maiden' in Mongolian. [...] In the epic of King Gesar, Kekexili is the realm of spirits and demons, where no grass will grow, where King Gesar buried evil spirits in the ground so that the water has become undrinkable. A beautiful female spirit lives there, *Adalamo* 阿达拉毛, a demon who ensnares King Gesar with her feminine wiles for nine years. Maybe the area is named after her." (HB: 95) But the natural environment is harsh and the climate vile, men cannot live there for any extended periods of time. This is the territory given to Sonam Dargye to police, an almost impossible job given its vastness and hostility to life, where the warmest area has an annual temperature average of minus 4 degrees Celsius, temperatures can drop to -50 degrees Celsius, and wind speeds are the highest in the

Himalayan. In fact, all Sonam Dargye and his men can do is to "enter" (*jinqu* 进去) Kekexili for short patrols that must not take up extended periods of time: The men cannot leave their cars to sleep in tents due to the high wind speeds and dangerous temperatures, and their outdated equipment is constantly on the verge of breaking down. But the danger also comes from poachers, illegal gold diggers and criminals: "This is not only no-man's land, it's also no-law land!" (HB: 95), the "battlefield" (*zhandi* 战地) on which the rangers fight against the poachers. Out-manned and out-gunned, against an enemy that can afford modern jeeps and machine guns, they time and time again try to protect the antelope population of Kekexili, and too often their attempts are thwarted when they arrive too late at the site of yet another massacre.

Sonam Dargye's portrait as sketched out by Liu Jianqiang paints the picture of a stoic warrior who only cares about fulfilling his duty as a ranger and is not concerned about ingratiating himself to his superiors. He maintains "the conduct of a chivalrous warrior with a strong sense of justice, he helps the weak and supports the poor. Many hate him, but many admire him." (HB: 88). Sonam Dargye's personality as well as professional conduct stands in stark contrast to that of the Han Chinese cadres in charge of the overall territory, as well as their Tibetan lackeys, who are busy fighting petty bureaucratic skirmishes. They are out of place in the harsh wilderness Sonam Dargye patrols and find his social graces somewhat "uncultivated" (at one point he treats visiting Han officials to boiled Tibetan marmot which they find disgusting), but Sonam Dargye is also the only one who understands the importance of environmental protection. Often, he gets into trouble with local party officials for putting environmental issues before economic considerations: "He has thought about these problems long before his superiors have. They only care about resources." (HB: 93-94) Portrayed this way, Sonam Dargye is a "loose cannon", somebody who does not care about his own advancement, or about giving his (Han Chinese) superiors frank and honest opinions. Often, he decides matters in his jurisdiction according to his own sense of justice and honor, protecting those he feels are most vulnerable: "The greatest thing I have ever done?" he muses, "not to pass along taxes to my superiors, and not to collect taxes from the people (*duishang bu jiao shui, duixia bu zheng shui* 对上不交税, 对下不征税)". (HB 89) What is of note in the account of his life – which for all intents and purposes is the glowing portrait of a gruff yet selfless hero – is the way in which his conduct is pitted against that of the Han Chinese

establishment that simply does not see the importance of his work, and thus does not grant him the equipment and manpower he needs to do his job adequately. The narrative thus turns the reader's notion of "civilized" and "competence" on its head, forcing him to ask whose values had been in the right place all along.

Sonam Dargye's motivation comes not so much from any sort of formal education or advanced ecological awareness, but from his own sociocultural background: "Although he has not received any Buddhist education, the deeply anchored traditional Tibetan culture - for example the notion of the equality of all creatures, the commandment not to kill, environmental protection - have caused him to care about the fate of the Tibetan antelope and other wildlife. Despite the lack of funds or equipment, he is fully committed to the task of preservation, an almost impossible job given the vastness of the territory he needs to patrol: "I'm the world's greatest CEO, I am in charge of 50,000 square kilometers", he jokes, "but I don't have one dime in my pocket, which also makes me the world's poorest CEO." (HB: 91)

The narrative of "Wilderness" ends with a climactic confrontation: After chasing a group of game thieves all over the plateau, in almost unbearable climatic conditions, Sonam Dargye and his team of four men capture twenty poachers and several trucks loaded with fresh kills. As they are making the long trek back to civilization, the captives one night turn on their captors when the rangers are exhausted from having to guard their prisoners and the trucks day and night. The last passage of the chapter, entitled "A hero's death", ends thusly:

> Before Sonam Dargye gets out of the car, his driver can hear him think aloud: "Maybe something's wrong." He pulls out his rusty .54 cal pistol. "I've been careless", he mumbles, then gets out and walks ahead.
>
> From across the other side, the injured man walks over, as if to greet him. Once at same level, he suddenly leaps forward, grabbing Sonam Dargye. The two men struggle back and forth, suddenly Sonam Dargye throws his opponent to the ground, raises his gun and the other man will never rise again. The .54 has been fired!
>
> Gunfire starts to ring "Bam! Bam! Bam!", a volley of bullets coming his way. All cars turn on their headlights, their beam on Sonam Dargye. The .54 in hand, he rushes them, into the lights and into the gunfire, like the

lone hero on stage taking on many enemies at once, like a Tibetan antelope that is caught in the headlights, without orientation, easy to kill. Sonam Dargye seems hit, he goes down on one knee, painfully tries to seek cover behind a car. He ducks down, but the gunfire continues, Han Weilin and Jin Yanzu only hear "crash", "Bang! Bang! Bang!" the sound of the bullets hammering into the car.

The guns are not firing anymore; Kekexili falls quiet again, into deadly stillness. After a long while, one of the poachers runs towards Sonam Dargye 's truck and yells: "Drive away, or you'll get the same!"

The driver roars off, in the passing light of the car he sees Sonam Dargye stretched out on the ground, gun in one hand, gun clip in the other. His furious eyes are wide open, but his body is completely still, just like an ice sculpture.

Nobody dares to approach him. Even in death, he terrifies people. (HB: 115)

It is notable that Liu Jianqiang is not present when these events occur. His account is based on eye-witness testimony provided by Dargye's colleagues present at the time, and interviews conducted years later with his friends, family, and fellow protectionists. Yang Xin's *Kekexili* provides a much more matter-of-fact report of Sonam Dargye's death (KKXL: 32-33) that coincides with Liu's account as far as the basic order of events is concerned: The rangers are overpowered by their captives, Sonam Dargye charges into the headlights and is shot to death, his body is left on the ground and is discovered later, frozen stiff, with his eyes open and his hands still holding the gun he was about to reload. Liu's account in this particular instance exceeds the boundaries of that can legitimately be called "nonfiction", as far as it adds considerable dramatic tension to the scene. This addition underscores the theme of heroism that the narrative has woven around Sonam Dargye, and can be read as indicative for the degree to which his role in the cause of environmental protectionism has been mythologized.

Eventually, Sonam Dargye's death (which throughout all the accounts it is mentioned is referred to as "sacrifice" *xisheng* 牺牲, usually used for refer to fallen soldiers fighting a just cause) brings the issue of preservation to the attention of the

entire country: In 1995, he is conferred the title of "Environment Defender" by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the State Forestry Administration, and in September of 1997, Yang Xin, who has become fascinated with his heroic story, constructs the *Sonam Dargye Natural Protection Station* located on the foot of Kunlun Mountain, east of Kekexili.

VI.4   A land of spirituality

The second strain of imaginary in this form of literary representation is an enduring reference to the spiritual dimension of Tibetan society and nature, which in turn elevates its protection to a similar metaphysical dimension. Often, this is achieved through descriptions of quotidian Tibetan life. Since the 1980s, Tibet has served as a locality onto which Han Chinese projected their desire for a spiritual life that was richer than what mainstream socialist culture could provide. [142]

Let us consider for example "Chasing Dreams at Snow Mountain" 雪山寻梦 by Shen Xiaohui 沈孝辉, a student of Tang Xiyang and participant of his Green Camps analyzed in the previous chapter. His book describes his "ecological journey" into Tibet. In the chapter "Entering Shangri-La", the author addresses Hilton's "Lost Horizon", and how it fathered the term "Shangri-La" as a name for a natural utopia. He describes the travel of the term into China, from a Hongkongese businessman (Robert Kuok 郭鹤年) who built the first Shangri-La themed hotel in Singapore in

---

[142] This does not mean, however, that such projections were always met with satisfactory results for those in search for them. We might point to Ma Jian's 马健 1987 work "Stick Your Tongue Out, Or You'll Have Nothing" (*Liangchu ni de shetai huo kongkong dangdang* 亮出你的舌苔或空空荡荡). It builds on the themes established in Ma's *Red Dust*, the lone (Han Chinese) wanderer's search for spirituality and freedom away from Chinese mainstream society in Tibet. Instead of finding his spiritual calling, however, the young author is appalled by the backwardness of Tibetan society, his account depicts graphic scenes of incest, poverty, sex, and superstition. (The story has been banned by the Chinese government, see below). On the other hand, Stick Your Tongue Out can be viewed as a "counter-narrative" Bhabha speaks of, one that disturbs the image of the nation as China would like to see it. (Koetse 2010: 53)

Nor does this imply that such counter-narratives have to be peaceful, conciliatory, or even pleasant. The connection between (often borderline racist) nationalism, machismo chauvinism, and wilderness imaginary in Chinese literature is yet another form of counter-narrative to the officially sanctioned discourse. Jiang Rong's 姜戎 novel "Wolf Totem" (*Lang tuteng* 狼圖騰), published in 2004, which was immensely popular in China and ranks very high on the list of all-time Chinese bestsellers, has caused criticisms due to its allusion to race politics and social darwinism. Despite its huge success and influence, it has spurred relatively little academic attention within Western academia. (See e.g.: Henningsen 2006)

1971, to the search of the location of the "actual" Shangri-La. Shen explains that in 1994, musical anthropologist Xuan Ke 宣科 after extensive study proclaimed to have found Shangri-La, and that it was located in Dêqên Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the Chinese province of Yunnan. In 1997, after long deliberations, the provincial authorities concurred with Xuan Ke's assessment, and *Zhongdian* 中甸 county in Dêqên changed its name officially to "Shangri-La" (*Xianggelila* 香格里拉) in an effort to attract tourism. (Shen 60-64)[143]

Shen is fully aware of the fictionality of Shangri-La, a fact that does not seem to trouble to author in the slightest. To the contrary, just as later the county changes its name since it perceives such an act in its own economic interest, Shen, the green traveler, has no problem in appropriating the term Shangri-La to his own ends. In his writing, the connotation that is associated with the term point towards a commitment to natural protection:

> Suppose Dêqên Prefecture had maintained Shangri-La as it was intended [my emphasis], a beautiful pure land [Note: the Chinese term here, *jingtu* 净土, is a Buddhist term, Sukhāvatī, the Western land of bliss] not yet exploited and alienated by modern industry, an unadorned village with pure, sincere, and kind inhabitants not yet affected by modern civilization's interference and assimilation, would it really matter whether Hilton's novel was true or real? Even if there had been no "Lost Horizon", wouldn't Shangri-La still have existed in Dêqên Prefecture? Shangri-La, first stop on Green Camp's long journey to Baimaxueshan (literally, White Horse Snow Mountain). (Shen 1998:64)

Thus charged with metaphysical significance, the quest to protect nature hence also becomes a quest for spiritual meaning for China's environmental activists. The following is a passage from Yang Yin's "Ten years in Kekexili", which describes the ceremony celebrating the completion of the *Sonam Dargy Environmental Protection Station* after many trials and tribulations:

---

[143] Shen's book is written after the confirmation of Dêqên as the "official" Shangri-La, but before its official change of names.

> August 19th [1998]: The wind blows strong this morning, as we are all standing in front of our just finished protection station. All eyes are on a national flag that rises steadily, clear and resonant rings out the national anthem, carried towards the Kunlun Mountains by the howling wind. At sunset, Secretary Zhaduo, [his wife] Baima, their two children, and myself together with Luola –representing our volunteers – climb the watchtower. We are fulfilling the dream Sonam Dargye had during his lifetime: that in death, he might be united with Kekexili. His ashes wave down from the tower towards the near river and the hills, as his soul becomes one with Kekexili. His successors who have vowed to protect Kekexili have just arrived at this mystical (shenqi 神奇) place; Sonam Dargye can rest at ease. (KKXL: 65)

Of special significance in this passage is the merging of their hero's soul with the very landscape through a burial ceremony, thus imbuing not only their mundane task, but also the very object of their efforts – nature – with a spiritual quality.

Similarly, spirituality plays a central role in Tang Xiyang's chapter detailing *Green Camp*'s visit to Tibet in *A Green World Tour* (reprinted also in CCC: 350-364). The very first paragraph establishes the connection between Tibetan culture, nature, and ecological issues. Man, nature, culture blend together to an inseparable one. Entering Tibet, especially Lhasa, Tang observes that "the atmosphere of religion blows in one's face" (CCC: 355) As the participants of Green Camp drive along the dusty mountain road snaking towards Lhasa, they drive past a Tibetan pilgrim who, in Tang's description, displays a resolute and proud expression despite his torn clothes and shabby appearance, prostrating himself in the ground. Some of the camp participants remark jokingly that: "This is the most devout form of an ecological journey". One should note that the Chinese word employed here to describe their reactions, *xixue* 戏谑, means to joke, to banter, but also to ridicule, indicating that the *Han* visitors maintain an ironic distance to the display of devout religiosity, thus indicating the cultural distance that separates them from the object of their curiosity. Members of the team talk about if and how "natural and social phenomena" in Tibet have something to do with the awareness of natural protection:

Participant Lang Yan 郎艳: Religion is some sort of ideology. People understand nature's meaning through their consciousness, and that's when they begin to approach the truth. When mankind still had no access to science, religion was a major force for protecting nature. We see the Tibetan people here are of an inartificial honesty (*chunpu* 淳朴) and devotion. They are *chunpu* because they are good and kind and they are devout because they are persevering. Their material condition might not be as ours by far, but their spiritual world is abundant and plentiful. I took the photo of an old Tibetan granny. A friend of mine after looking at the photo told me: In the expression of this old woman, there is something, apart from great kindness – something that is very hard to see in the eyes of other people: peaceful tranquility. It looks like the deep comprehension of live by a weather-beaten old human being. From her expression we can read out that Tibet is a way of living (*Xizang jiushi yizhong shenghuo fangshi* 西藏就是一种生活方式). (CCC: 355)

While there is no indication that this statement is uttered in anything other than the best of intentions, it allows us to visit the essentializing attitude of the outsider's gaze in its purest manifestation: Tang and his friends approach Tibet as outsiders, curious tourists, never being able or willing to abandon this position. The photo episode involuntarily illustrates this perfectly. A photo of a Tibetan woman, taken by a Han tourist, commented on by another (presumably) Han Chinese, discussing the nature of "the Tibetan people". Another Green Camp participant replies:

Participant Wang Baojian 王宝建: I have been to Tibet twice, and I have had a similar feeling; In Tibet, the relationship between man and nature is harmonious, and the relationship between people is also harmonious. The Tibetans live amidst a blue sky, white clouds, and the grass plains, the raise livestock, eat mutton, drink milk tea, live in tents, use dung as fuel, and when they die a sky burial is performed. Traditional people, and people's tradition, they're all similarly pure (*chunjing* 纯净). [...] The harmony between man and nature, and between people, comes from the fact that the Tibetans are at peace with themselves. Man must not only pursue a material life, but also a spiritual life. In today's world there is an overflow of desire for material wealth that has led to enormous

ecological destruction, the result of only caring for material things, but spiritual ones. Tibetan Buddhism gives the Tibetans another spiritual world, one that strives to bring spirit and body in harmony that unifies the inner self with the world. I think on the most fundamental level this is the reason for the nature between man and nature, and between people, and it is also an important prerequisite for the establishment of a new ecological civilization." (CCC: 356)

However, what is interesting are not the essentializing comments made by some of *Green Camp*'s participants, but how Tang Xiyang uses these homogenizing sweeping statements in order to start a deliberation on the value of engaging with opposing viewpoints. He lists a long lists of arguments on the relationship between religion, nature, and environmental protection, and shows how the encounter of the The Other can be used as a stimulant to think about the self. I will just list a few of these arguments here:

Although division between these opinions cannot be considered extreme, there are some viewpoints that are diametrically opposed. For example, some people say: „The Tibetans are only chunpu because they are backward." Others say that "The reason Tibetan society is chunpu lies in the fact that their spiritual world is so rich and noble." Yet still others may say that this argument is an entirely moot point, and that, from a macro level, regardless of individual people, what we might call "noble spiritual world" and "backward style of living" are one and the same. […]

Some say: "Religion is an overly idealistic philosophy, and not something we should rely on." The other side might say: "That's prejudice, religion has a humanitarian spirit, it is a quest for an ideal, a framework that transcends the pursuit of worldly material possessions. Hence, the quintessence of religious culture is also the quintessence of human culture. […]"

Some say that using religion as a way to protect the environment is a scientific tragedy. Others might say that in the past, we were used to pit science and religion against each other. In fact, religion and science each

> have their respective use and power; both are needed in the process of
> human existence. (CCC: 358)

Eventually, Tang reminds the reader that it is only the exposure to different viewpoints, in this case in the form of a different cultural as well as natural environment, which will achieve such a deliberative process:

> Such sharp contrasts of opinion cannot be found in any book, or heard in
> any lecture hall; you cannot touch upon them or think them up when you
> are just sitting in Beijing. What we have experienced [in Tibet] is not
> suffering and ignorance, to the contrary, it has enriched our thinking,
> opened our eyes, and deepened our knowledge. (CCC: 369)

Liu's *Heavenly Beads* provides a more nuanced approach in this regard as it focuses on the inner life of the Tibetans it portrays and allows them to speak on their own behalf. Often, the narrative combines quests for spirituality with issues of individual struggle non-conformism discussed earlier. One example for this is the account of a protectionist named Nima 尼玛, a young Tibetan man working for an environmentalist organization based in Sichuan province. His background is described as that of an angry youth who often gets into trouble, a *pizi* that would well fit into one of Wang Shuo's stories. He is characterized as the "black sheep" of his family, his own mother calls him *A-guo* 阿郭, an inferior mixed-breed yak (HB: 242). As a middle school student in Lhasa, he gets into an almost lethal fight with a Buddhist monk who tries to embezzle an expensive wrist watch belonging to an old woman. Nima comes to her help, resulting in the corrupt monk threatening him with a knife. In the ensuing fight, Nima cuts the monk down with his Tibetan dagger, while himself receiving a stab into the lower abdomen. (HB: 229) In another instance, Nima gets into a bar fight over a girl with a man named Zhaxi 扎西 (whom the reader already knows as an dedicated environmental protectionist): After smashing a beer bottle on Zhaxi's skull, the latter comes back with a posse of blade-brandishing friends. The police arrive just in time to prevent Nima from being killed, but not before skulls are cut open in a wild brawl.

However, these events introduce Nima to the clique of proud and determined Tibetan environmentalists: He becomes a student of Zhaduo 扎多, a protectionist who sees the young man's potential and views an assignment in Tibet's wilderness as the

perfect way to bring some structure into his life: "To have Nima sitting in an office would be a tragedy, let's unleash him, give him an assignment outside in the wilds to bring his talents to full fruit." (HB: 246). In a long interview (HB: 242 ff.) that is printed in form of a long narration at the end of the chapter, Nima reflects on his troubled past and his difficulty to come to terms with his place in the world:

> "In the past, I used to recite sutras every day right after getting up. I don't do that anymore, maybe every other day I recite them once. [...] My faith is not anymore the thing that is deepest in my heart, I tend to forget it now. It seems to fade away slowly, but where did it go? I don't know. Fortunately I like this job. What makes me a proud now is that I do something that is beneficial for Tibet. Even though I now live in the city, surrounded by Han people and foreigners, I have not abandoned the Tibetan people. I now protect the Tibetan environment, and the Tibetan culture, I now work on behalf of my people. (*wei wode minzu zuo shi* 为我的民族做事) I fight for the rights of the Tibetan people, and I can serve as a bridge between the world and the Tibetan people. When I enter Tibet on official business, and protect the holy mountains and divine lakes (*shenshan shenghu* 神山圣湖), I can pray daily at holy mountains or at a temple. Who gets a chance like that? My work and my faith are closely interlinked, and so I can hold on to my faith." (HB: 247)

When compared with the observations of Tang Xiyang's *Green Camp in Tibet*, we see a vast difference in terms of nuance in the two statements. By granting Tibetans their own voice, and not shying away from complicated issues such as the struggle for cultural identity, religious faith, and the individual's place in society, the author asks the reader to question their own pre-conceived assumptions.

Such dedication to nuance is not only found in the literal account of Tibetan lives, but also in the visual depiction of the Tibetan protagonists of the book. Usually, there is a distinct lack of photographic representation of Tibetans in the Chinese press, as Blum (2001) notes, and existing depictions center around portraying Tibetans in an exoticized setting, most often wearing traditional attire. She speculates that this must be either the result of a deliberate policy of withholding information about the true situation in Tibet or simply a reflection of a general lack of interest in the place. (Blum

2001: 128) In contrast to this, Liu Jianqiang's book features numerous photographs of Tibetan men and women from all walks of life in all forms of attire, traditional and modern.

Examples of visual representation of Tibetan environmentalists featured in *Heavenly Beads*. From left to right: Karma Samdrup, Sonam Dargye, Samdrup's wife Zhenga, environmentalist leader Zhaduo and his colleague Nima. (HV: V-VI)

The joys of individual achievement

The themes of individual achievement, fight against bad odds, and quests for a meaningful life have a socio-political resonance: Yang Xin near the end of "Ten years in Kekexili" can report how a few years after the establishment of his protection station, his colleague Liang Congjie participates in a joint Sino-German symposium on environmental challenges in China and Germany, held in Berlin with experts on China's civil society and environmental protection. A German scholar in his talk opines that the Chinese populace has a lack of environmental awareness and that there are no real (i.e. independent) NGOs in China. These remarks cause Liang Congjie to very casually mention the fact that Yang Xin's Green River organization financed the establishment of a environmental protection monitoring station in the inhospitable no-man's land of Kekexili on 4,500 meters through the charity sale of Yang's book, not taking a dime from the government, yet lending advice to government agencies for free. If Germany could point to anything comparable to this? The German falls silent. Yang further relates how he and Liang Congjie after this incident traveled to Germany, only to find out that almost no environmental monitoring stations or education centers in its natural reservations and public gardens, and that the government in almost all cases was financing or subsidizing environmental organizations of this kind. "This situation is entirely the opposite to how we financed and established the Sonam Dargye Environmental Monitoring Station" (KKXL: 217), and quite proudly points to the independent way in which he

established his own project. On another occasion, Yang Xin is being interviewed by an American journalist who ask him that he has heard that 90% of the funding of Chinese environmetnal NGOs comes from foreign institutions, government funds, and private donors. Yang, again with pride, points to the fact that it was the sale of the book that allowed him to establish the monitoring station, which in turn formed the basis for his grass-roots organization that keeps funding the work of Green River. (KKXL: 217)

———

The case of Kahrma Samdrup also highlights the dangers of environmentalism in China: In 2010, only one year after the publication of *Heavenly Beads*, and only four years after having been named "philanthropist of the year" by China Central Television (CCTV), he was arrested and accused of robbing graves and stealing cultural artefacts. He was eventually sentenced to 15 years in prison. The trial was widely viewed as a punishment for his outspoken defense of his two siblings, Rinchen Samdrup and Jigme Namgyal, both of whom had publicly denounced a local police chief who had hunted endangered species in a Tibetan nature preserve. Samdrup maintains his innocence and repeatedly stated he had been tortured during six months of custody in an effort to exact a confession. [144] *Heavenly Beads* has subsequently been banned by the Chinese authorities.

---

[144] JACOBS, Andrew. "Tibetan Environmentalist Receives 15-Year Sentence." (2010-06-25) *The New York Times*: A12. URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/25/world/asia/25tibet.html?_r=0

VII. Conclusions

This present thesis has demonstrated how an analysis of sociopolitical imaginaries in environmental nonfiction can provide insight into the underlying concepts and cultural repertoires that shape societal interactions in the context of environmentalism in China.

These imaginaries are heterogeneous and multi-facetted. The recognition of the environmental crisis, not only in China but on the global level, has resulted in a panoply of literary responses found in environmental nonfiction that have tried to come to terms with the scale of ecological problems, assign blame, and offer possible solutions. Inherent in these writings, sometimes found between the lines, sometimes frankly articulated, is a shared understanding that their authors, their supporters, and indeed their readers share (indeed are entitled to) a special social responsibility in the context of China's environmentalist framework.

Different authors have formulated different positions on what this role ought to be. In order to carve out their respective niches, environmental activist-authors can rely on the diversity of Chinese cultural traditions that contain varying precedents for the relationship between social actors and government bureaucracies. Secondly, the rich variety of literary responses in Chinese cultural history that have tried to give voice to the nature experience itself has provided authors of modern environmental nonfiction with a rich toolkit of imaginaries, vocabularies, and landscapes (sometimes figuratively, sometimes literally) that serve as aesthetic vehicles for their sociopolitical arguments. These results also might address one of the initial questions of this thesis, namely why citizen activism in China has so notably coalesced around environmental issues; the naturescape – charged with sociopolitical, historical, and aesthetic meaning – is uniquely qualified to facilitate political discourse due to its traditional cultural connotations.

Moreover, this thesis has found further evidence that the conflictual perspective between on state-society relations in China is not tangible; environmental nonfiction to a large part advocates for a constructive relationship between civic and governmental actors, a stance that is substantiated by a rich variety of cultural

precedents that have often emphasized conciliatory modes of interaction over conflictual ones. However, this is not to say that perspectives on state-society relations formulated in Chinese environmental nonfiction are simplistic or overly accommodating.

To the contrary, environmental nonfiction authors in China have created an elaborate variety of nuanced perspectives on the social dimension of Chinese environmentalism. As this thesis has demonstrated, a reading of their works shows that green authors in China take highly differentiated stances on various levels of government agencies; while the central government is often espoused as a source of help, understanding, and benevolent protection, environmental nonfiction does not shy away from strategies that involve publicly shaming, exposing, naming, or otherwise pressuring local government agencies that are often cast as the true perpetrators of environmental calamity. This strategic alignment again follows long established precedent found in the Chinese social imaginary and has taken on various faces; loyal remonstrance, the cultivation of personal character, the propagation of civilizatory progress, or the celebration of individual struggle in the service of China's ecosystem. Just as Edin stated that Chinese party-state maintains the ability to be *selectively effective* in terms of its governance capability, Chinese environmental nonfiction is selectively supportive or selectively confrontative in its stance towards government institutions.

Similar to the conceptualization of the relationship between civic and official actors, the relationship between the authors of Chinese environmental nonfiction and their readers is multilayered and complex. On the one hand, environmental authors clearly aim to highlight the importance of their task by casting themselves and their readership as being part of a cutting-edge movement that will be indispensable for China's journey into the 21st century. On the other hand, such an understanding at times results in noticeable elitist attitudes that voice contempt towards the broader Chinese populace for not measuring up to the lofty standards propagated in environmental nonfiction.

Chinese environemental nonfiction, however, can not only be understood as an agency shaping social developments, it is also influenced by the social transformations the People's Republic has been undergoing. Its readership it largely

comprised of members of China's new urban middle class, often young people who are materially secure enough to concern themselves with "post-material" values. This asymmetry in the social dispersion of their readership has caused environmental nonfiction to often address issues that correlate or at least touch upon its respective readership's cultural tastes and biases: accounts of adventure, self-discovery, and travel in China's natural environment often go hand in hand with accounts that feature exoticist, essentialist, and/or nationalistic attittiudes towards China's ethnic minorities and the West.

This thesis represents a step towards unlocking the previously understudied body of Chinese environmental nonfiction. While this study tried to explore the intricacies of sociopolitical imaginaries in the context of environmental activism, future research is presented with a multitude of possible research questions from which this material might be further analyzed.

In this context, one possible topic might be the question how the introduction of foreign-language terms and concepts (especially English) have shaped the environmental vocabulary that forms the body of Chinese "greenspeak". Such an endeavor might not just entail a precise archaeology of the complex processes of translation, adoption, and acculturation by which a set of specialized vocabulary is introduced into a linguistic and cultural framework, but also address questions relating to the construction of discursive authority that accompanies the formation of linguistic canons.

VIII. List of works cited

ALBROW, Martin (1990). "Introduction." In: ALBROW M. and KING, E., eds. (1990). *King, Globalization, Knowledge and Society*. London: Sage.

ANAGNOST, Ann (1997). "Constructing the Civilized Community." In: HUTERS, Theodore, WONG R. Bin, et al., eds. *Culture & State in Chinese History: Conventions, Accommodations and Critiques*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

    Id. (1997). *National Past-Times. Narrative, Representation, and Power*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

    Id. (2004). "The Corporeal Politics of Quality (*Suzhi*)." *Public Culture* 16 (2): 189-208.

ANDERSON, Benedict (1991). *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London & New York: Verso.

ANTHIAS, Floya (2001). "New Hybridities, Old Concepts: The Limits of `Culture'." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (4): 619-641.

APPADURAI, Arjun (1990). "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory, Culture & Society* 7: 295-310.

    Id. (2001). *Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press.

ARKUSH, R. David and LEE, Leo Oufan, eds./transl. (1989). *Land Without Ghosts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

ARMSTRONG, David and GILSON, Julie (2011). "Introduction. Civil Society and International Governance." In: ARMSTRONG, David, BELLO, Valeria, et al., eds. *Civil Society and International Governance. The Role of Non-State Actors in Global and Regional Regulatory Frameworks*. London & New York: Routledge: 1-13.

BAKKEN, Borge (2000). *The Exemplary Society: Human Improvement, Social Control, and the Dangers of Modernity in China*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

BARMÉ, Geremie R. (1986). "Zhongguo wenyijie de 'biansaire' [The 'frontier regions fever' in China's literature and arts circles]." *Jiushi niandai yuekan* [The Nineties Monthly] (October 1986): 96–97.

    Id. (1995). "To Screw Foreigners is Patriotic: China's Avant-Garde Nationalists." *The China Journal* 34 (Jul.): 209-234.

    Id. (1999). *In the Red: On Contemporary Chinese Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press.

BAUM, Richard and SHEVCHENKO, Alexei (1999). "The State of the State." In: GOLDMAN, Merle and MacFARQUHAR, Roderick, eds.: *The Paradox of China's Post-Mao Reforms*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press: 333–360.

BECK, Ulrich (2002). "The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies" *Theory, Culture & Society* 19 (1-2): 17-44.

BECK, Ulrich and SZNAIDER, Natan (2006). "Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda." *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 1-23.

Id. (2006). "A Literature on Cosmopolitanism: An Overview." *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 153-164.

BEJÁ, Jean-Phillippe (2006). "The Changing Aspects of Civil Society in China." *Social Research* 73 (1): 53-74.

BERKOWITZ, Alan J. (2000). *Patterns of Disengagement. The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

BERNSTEIN, Thomas (1977). *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages. The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

BHABHA, Homi K. (1990). "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." In: id., ed.: *Nation and Narration*. London and New York: Routledge: 291-322.

BIERMANN, Frank and DINGWERTH, Klaus (2004). "Global Environmental Change and the Nation State." *Global Environmental Politics* 4 (1): 1-22.

BLUM, Susan (2001). *Portraits of "Primitives": Ordering Human Kinds in the Chinese Nation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

BLUMENBERG, Hans (1981). *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

BO, Wen (1998). "Greening the Chinese Media." *Woodrow Wilson Center China Environment Series* 2: 39-44.

BONNIN, Michel (2004). *Génération Perdue: Le mouvement d'envoi des jeunes instruits a la campagne en Chine, 1968-1980*. Paris: Editions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales.

BRECKENRIDGE, Carol A., POLLOCK, Shelden, et al (2002). *Cosmopolitanism*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

BROOK, Timothy (1992). *Quelling the People: The Military Suppression of the Beijing Democracy Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press.

BROOK, Timothy, and FROLIC, Michael B., eds. (1997). *Civil Society in China*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

BROWN, Llyod D. (2008). *Creating Credibility. Legitimacy and Accountability for Transnational Civil Society*. Sterling: Kumarian Press.

BUELL, Lawrence (1995). *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Pr. of Harvard University Press.

BULAG, Uradyn E. (2002). *The Mongols at China's Edge. History and Politics of National Unity*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

BULHOF, Ilse N. (1992). *The Language of Science. A Study of the Relationship between Literature and Science in the Perspective of a Hermeneutical Ontology*. Leiden: Brill.

BURNS, John P. (1983). "Reforming China's Bureaucracy, 1979-82." *Asian Survey* 23 (6): 692-722.

BÜSGEN, Michael (2006). "NGOs and the Search for Chinese Civil Society. Environmental and Non-Governmental Organizations in the Nujiang Campaign." *Working Paper Series, Institute of Social Studies* 422.

CALHOUN, Craig (1994). *Neither Gods nor Emperors. Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

CAO Wenxuan 曹文軒 (1988). *Zhongguo bashi niandai wenxue xianxiang yanjiu* [A Study of Literary Phenomena in 1980s China]. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

CASTELLS, Manuel (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden: Blackwell.

Id. (2008). "The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance." The *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616: 78.

CASTORIADIS, Cornelius (1987). *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

CERTEAU, Michel de (1986). *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

CHAMBERLAIN, Heath B. (1998). "Civil Society with Chinese Characteristics?" *China Journal* 39: 69–81.

CHAN, Anita (1993). "Revolution or Corporatism? Workers and Trade Unions in post-Mao China." *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 29 (Jan.): 31-61.

CHANG, Hao (1971). *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and Intellectual Transition in China, 1890-1907.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

CHARTIER, Roger (1990). *Les Origines Culturelles de la Révolution Française*. Paris: Éd. du Seuil.

CHEEK, Timothy (1992). "From Priests to Professionals. Intellectuals and the State Under the CCP." In: WASSERSTROM, Jeffrey N. and PERRY, Elizabeth J. (eds.). *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China: Learning from 1989*. Boulder: Westview Press: 124-145.

CHELLANEY, Brahma (2001). *Water: Asia's New Battleground*. Uttar Pradesh: Harper Collins.

CHEN Fong-ching and JIN Guantao (1997). *From Youthful Manuscripts to River Elegy. The Chinese Popular Cultural Movement and Political Transformation 1979-1989*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

CHEN Kuide 陈奎德 (1991). "Wenhuare: Beijing, sichao ji liangzhong qingxiang [Culture fever: background, intellectual currents and two kinds of tendencies]." In: id., ed. *Zhongguo dalu dangdai wenhua bianqian, 1978-1989* [Contemporary cultural transformations of mainland China, 1978-1989]. Taibei: Guiguan tushu gufen youxian gongsi: 37-61.

CHEN Lai 陈来 (1989). "Fulu: Sixiang chulu de sandongxiang [Appendix: Three trends in intellectual thought]." In: GAN Yang, ed. *Zhongguo dangdai wenhua yishi.* Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian: 581-587.

CHEN, Jie (2001). "Burgeoning Transnationalism of Taiwan's Social Movement NGOs." *Journal of Contemporary China* 10 (29): 613-644.

Id. (2010). "Transnational Environmental Movement: Impacts on the Green Civil Society in China." *Journal of Contemporary China* 19 (65): 503-523.

CHENG, Yinghong (2009). *Creating the 'New Man'. From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

CHOY, Timothy (2005). "Articulated Knowledges: Environmental Forms after Universality's Demise." *American Anthropologist* 107(1): 5-18.

CLIFFORD, James, ed. (1986). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley*: University of California Press.

Id. (1989). "Notes on Travel and Theory.", in: *Inscriptions*, 5 [access: http://culturalstudies.ucsc.edu/PUBS/Inscriptions/vol_5/clifford.html; 2012-09-01]

COHEN, Myron L. (1994). "Cultural and Political Inventions in Modern China: The Case of the Chinese 'Peasant'." In: TU Wei-ming, ed. *China in Transformation.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

COOPER, Caroline (2006). "'This is Our Way In': The Civil Society of Environmental NGOs in South-West China." *Government and Opposition* 41 (1): 109-136.

COSIMA, Bruno (2012). *Between the Lines: Yang Lian's Poetry in Translation*. Leiden: Brill.

CROSSLEY, Pamela K., SIU, Helen F. et al., eds. (2006). *Empire at the Margins. Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

CZARNIAWSKA, Barbara and SEVON, Guje, eds. (2005). *Global Ideas. How Objects, Ideas and Practices Travel in the Global Economy*. Malmö: Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.

DARNTON, Robert (1982). *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

DAVIS, A. R. (1996). "The Fortunate Banishment: Liu Tsung-yuan in Yung-chou." *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 4 (2): 38-48.

DE BARY, Theodore and LUFRANO, Richard, eds. (1999). *Sources of Chinese Tradition: 1600 through the Twentieth Century.* New York: Columbia University Press.

DEAN, Jodi (2001). "Cybersalons and Civil Society: Rethinking the Public Sphere in Transnational Technoculture." *Public Culture* 13 (2): 243-265.

DEAN, Kenneth (1997). "Ritual and Space: Civil Society or Popular Religion?" In: BROOK, Timothy and FROLIC, B. Michael, eds. *Civil Society in China*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe: 172-192.

DELANTY, Gerard (2006). "The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory." *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 26-47.

DENG Xian 邓贤 (1996). *Zhongguo zhiqing meng* [Dream of a Chinese Educated Youth]. Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe.

DING Xiaoyuan 丁晓原 (1999). *20 shiji Zhongguo baogao wenxue lilun piping shi* [History of 20th Century's Chinese Reportage Theory and Criticism]. Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe.

DOVE, Michael R. (2006). "Indigenous People and Environmental Politics." *Annual Review of Anthropology* (35): 191–208.

DREZE, Jean and SEN, Amartya (1989). *Hunger and Public Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DUAN Hongxia and FORTNER, R.W. (2005). "Chinese college students' perceptions about global versus local environmental issues." *Journal of Environmental Education* 36: 23–32.

DYNON, Nicholas (2008). "'Four Civilizations' and the Evolution of Post-Mao Chinese Socialist Ideology." *The China Journal* 60: 83-109.

ECONOMY, Elizabeth (2004). *The River Runs Black. The Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.

Id. (2005, Feb. 7). "China's Environmental Movement." *Testimony Before the Congressional Executive Commission on China Roundtable on Environmental NGOs in China: Encouraging Action and Addressing Public Grievances*. [URL: http://www.cfr.org/publication/7770, accessed 2010-10-11]

Id. (2007). "The Great Leap Backward. The Costs of China's Environmental Crisis." *Foreign Affairs* 86 (5): 38-59.

EDIN, Maria (2003). "State Capacity and Local Agent Control in China: CCP Cadre Management from a Township Perspective." *The China Quarterly* 173: 35-52.

EDMOND, Jacob (2004). "Locating Global Resistance: The Landscape Poetics of Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Lyn Hejinian, and Yang Lian." *Journal of Australian Universities Language and Literature Association (AUMLA)* 101: 71-98.

Id. (2006). "Dissidence and Accommodation: The Publishing History of Yang Lian from *Today* to Today." *The China Quarterly* 185: 111-127.

EDMONDS, Richard L. (1994). *Patterns of China's Lost Harmony. A Survey of the Country's Environmental Degradation and Protection*. London & New York: Routledge.

EISENSTADT, Shmuel N. (2000). "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129 (1): 1-29.

ELVIN, Mark (1993). "Three Thousand Years of Unsustainable Growth. China's Environment from Archaic Times to the Present." *East Asian History* 6: 7-46.

Id. (2004). *The Retreat of the Elephants. An Environmental History of China*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

ESHERICK, Joseph and WASSERSTROM, Jeffery (1990). "Acting Out Democracy: Political Theater in Modern China." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49 (4): 835-865.

ESTY, Daniel C. (2004). "Environmental Protection in the Information Age." *NYU Law Review* 79 (1): 115–211.

FABIAN, Johannes (1983). *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object.* New York: Columbia University Press.

FEWSMITH, Joseph (1983). "From Guild to Interest Group: The Transformation of Public and Private in Late Qing China." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 25 (4): 617-640.

FLORINI, Ann, ed. (2000). *The Third Force. The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*. Tokyo: Japan Center for International Exchange.

FONT, Mauricio and QUIROZ, Alfonso W. (2005). *Cuban Counterpoints*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

FOSTER, Kenneth W. (2002). "Embedded Within State Agencies: Business Associations in Yantai." *China Journal* 47 (Jan.): 41–65.

FRIEDMAN, Sara (2004). "Embodying Civility: Civilizing Processes and Symbolic Citizenship in Southeastern China." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63 (3): 687-718.

FROLIC, B. Michael (1997). "State-led Civil Society." In: BROOK, Timothy and FROLIC, B. Michael, eds.. *Civil Society in China*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe: 46-67.

FU Shaoliang 傅绍良 (2003). *Tangdai jianyi zhidu yu wenren* [The system of voicing dissent during the Tang, and the literati]; Beijing, Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.

FUKUYAMA, Francis (1992). *The End of History and the Last Man.* New York: Free Press,

GALIK, M. and FINDEISEN, R.D. (2009). "Foreign Literature in China." In: LEESE, D., ed. *Brill's Encyclopedia of China. Handbook of Oriental Studies, Vol.IV*. Leiden: Brill: 346-350.

GAONKAR, Dilip P. (2001). "On Alternative Modernities." In: id., ed. *Alternative Modernities*. Durham & London: Duke University Press: 1-23.

Id. (2002). "Toward New Imaginaries: An Introduction." *Public Culture* 14 (1): 1-19.

GARE, Arran (2012). "China and the Struggle for Ecological Civilization." *Capitalism Nature Society* 23 (4): 10-26

GENG Song (2004). *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

GIFFORD, Terry (2006). *Reconnecting with John Muir: Essays in Post-pastoral Practice*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

GITTINGS, John (2005). *The Changing Face of China: From Mao to Market*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

GLACKEN, Clarence J. (1976). *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

GLADNEY, Dru C. (1994). "Representing Nationality in China: Refiguring Majority/Minority Identities." *Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (1): 92-123.

GOLD, Thomas (1990). "Tiananmen and Beyond: The Resurgence of Civil Society in China." *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1): 8-31.

GOLDING, Wyatt F. (2011). "Incentives for Change. China's Cadre System Applied to Water Quality." *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* 20 (2): 399-428.

GOLDMAN, Merle (2002). "A New Relationship between the Intellectuals and the State in the Post-Mao Period." In: GOLDMAN, Merle and LEE Ou-fan, eds. *An Intellectual History of Modern China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

GRANDE, Edgar (2006). "Cosmopolitan Political Science." *The British Journal of Sociology* 57 (1): 87-111.

GU Xin 顾昕 (1994). "Dangdai Zhongguo youwu gongmin shehui yu gonggong kongjian? Ping Xifang xuezhe youguan lunshu [Is there a civil society or public space in contemporary China? A review of the relevant studies by Western scholars]." *Dangdai Zhongguo yanjiu* 4: 57–73.

GU, Edward (1999). "Cultural Intellectuals and the Politics of the Cultural Public Space in Communist China (1979-1989): A Case Study of Three Intellectual Groups." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58 (2): 389-431.

GU, Edward and GOLDMAN, Merle, eds. (2004). *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

GUO Hailiang 郭海亮 and DONG Liang 董梁 (2009). "Xizang lüse lüyou de fazhan ji qi duice yanjiu [Investigation of the development of green tourism in Tibet and its countermeasures]." *Xizang Daxue Xuebao* 24 (2): 19-21.

HABERMAS, Jürgen (1964). "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article." *New German Critique* 3: 49-55.

Id. (1989). *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Id. (1992). "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere." In: CALHOUN, Craig, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press: 421-461.

HAN Shaogong 韩少功 (1985). "Bababa [Dad dad dad]." *Renmin wenxue* 6: 83-102.

Id. (1985). "Wenxue de 'gen' [The 'roots' of literature]." *Zuojia* 4: 2-5.

HAN Shi 寒士 (1992). *Baishi niandai: gaibian Zhongguo de 33 ben shu* [The 1980s: 33 books that changed China]. Hongkong: Tiandi dushu gongsi.

HANNERZ, Ulf (1987). "The World in Creolisation" *Africa* 57 (4): 546-559.

Id. (1990). "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture." *Theory Culture & Society* 7: 237-251.

Id. (1992). *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning.* New York. Columbia University Press.

Id. (1997). "Flows, Boundaries and Hybrids: Keywords in Transnational Anthropology."

HARGETT, James (1986). "Yu-chi wen-hsüeh" In: NIENHAUSE, William Jr., ed. *The Indiana Compendium to Traditional Chinese Literature*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 936-939.

Id. (1989). "On the Road in Twelfth Century China. The Travel Diaries of Fan Chengda (1126-1193)." *Münchener Ostasiatische Studien* 52. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

HARRÉ, Rom, BROCKMEIER, Jens, et al. (1999). *Greenspeak. A Study of Environmental Discourse*. London: Sage.

HE Bochuan (1991). *China on the Edge. The Crisis of Ecology and Development*. San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals Inc.

HE, Baogang (1997). *The Democratic Implications of Civil Society in China*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

HE, Donghui (2010). "Coming of Age in the Brave New World: The Changing Reception of *How the Steel Was Tempered* in the People's Republic of China" In: BERNSTEIN, Thomas P. and LI Hua-yu, eds. *China Learns from the Soviet Union. 1949 - Present*. Lanham: Lexington Books: 393-420.

HE, Xueqin, HONG, Ting, et al. (2011). "A Comparative Study of Environmental Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors Among University Students in China." *International Research in Geographical and Environmental Education* 20 (2): 91-104.

HEINZ, Bettina, CHENG Hsin-I, et al. (2007). "Greenpeace Greenspeak: A Transcultural Discourse Analysis." *Language and Intercultural Communication* 7(1): 16-36.

HEISE, Ursula K. (2008). *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

HELD, David (2004). *Global Covenant. The Social Democratic Alternative to the Washington Consensus*. Cambridge: Polity.

HENNINGSEN, Lena (2006). "Yiguo de huhuan? Jieyu Jieke Lundun yu Jiangron zhijian de Zhongguo langxiaoshuo [The Call of the Foreign? Chinese Fiction on Wolves Between Jack London and Jiang Rong.]." Hangzhou, Symposium "When China Meets the West." (Oct. 2006)

HERRMANN-PILLATH, Carsten (1995). "On the Importance of Studying Late Qing Economic and Social History for the Analysis of Contemporary China, or: Protecting Sinology Against Social Science." *Duisburg Working Papers in East Asian Studies* 3.

HILLMANN, Ben and HENFRY, Lee-Anne (2006). "Macho Minority: Masculinity and Ethnicity on the Edge of Tibet." *Modern China* 32 (2): 251-272.

HO, Peter (2001). "Greening Without Conflict? Environmentalism, NGOs and Civil Society in China." *Development & Change* 32 (5): 893-921.

    Id. (2006). "Trajectories for Greening in China: Theory and Practice." *Development & Change* 37 (1): 3-28.

HO, Peter and EDMONDS, Richard L., eds. (2008). *China's Embedded Activism. Opportunities and Constraints of a Social Movement*. London & New York: Routledge.

HOLCOMBE, Charles (1989). "The Exemplar State: Ideology, Self-Cultivation, and Power in Fourth-Century China." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49 (1): 93-139.

HOPPER, Paul (2007). *Understanding Cultural Globalization.* Cambridge: Polity.

HOWELL, Jude (2004). "New Directions in Civil Society: Organizing Around Marginalized Interests." In: id, ed. *Governance in China*. Lanham, MD: Rowman&Littlefield: 143–171.

HOWLAND, Douglas (1996). *Borders of Chinese Civilization. Geography and History at Empire's End*. London: Duke University Press.

    Id. (2011). "The Dialectics of Chauvinism: Minority Nationalities and Territorial Sovereignty in Mao Zedong's New Democracy." *Modern China* 37 (2): 170-201.

HUANG, Philip (1993). "'Public Sphere'/'Civil Society' in China? The Third Realm between State and Society." *Modern China* 19 (2): 216-240

    Id. (1998). "Theory and the Study of Modern Chinese History: Four Traps and a Question." *Modern China* 24 (2): 183-208

HUNG, Ho-fung (2007). "Changes and Continuities in the Political Ecology of Popular Protest: Mid-Qing China and Contemporary Resistance." *China Information* 21 (2): 299-329.

HUTERS, Theodore (2005). *Bringing the World Home. Appropriating the West in Late Qing and Early Republican China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

INDA, Jonathan X. and ROSALDO, Renato (2002). *The Anthropology of Globalization*. Malden: Blackwell: 1-34

JACOBS, Andrew. "Tibetan Environmentalist Receives 15-Year Sentence." (2010-06-25) *The New York Times*: A12. URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/25/world/asia/25tibet.html?_r=0 [2013-01-08]

JAHIEL, Abigail R. (1997). "The Contradictory Impact of Reform on Environmental Protection in China." *The China Quarterly* 149: 81-103.

JAHIEL, Abigail R. (1998). "The Organization of Environmental Protection in China." *The China Quarterly* 156: 757-787.

JAMESON, Fredric (1998). *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern 1983-1998*. London [u.a.]: Verso.

JANKU, Andrea (2003). *Nur leere Reden. Politischer Diskurs und die Shanghaier Presse im China des späten neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* [Only Empty talk: political discourse and the Shanghai press in the late nineteenth century China]. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

JENEI, György and KUTI, Eva (2008). "The Third Sector and Civil Society." In: OSBORNE, Stephen P., ed. *The Third Sector in Europe. Prospects and Challenges*. New York: Routledge.

JIANG Rong 姜戎 [LÜ Jianmin 呂嘉民] (2004). *Lang tuteng* [Wolf Totem]. Wuhan: Changjiang wenyi chubanshe.

JING, Jun (2000). "Environmental Protests in Rural China." In: PERRY, Elizabeth and SELDEN, Mark, eds. *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*. New York: Routledge: 143-160.

JOHANSEN, Bruce E. (1982). *The Forgotten Founders*. Ipswich, Mass: Gambit Inc.

JONES, Andrew F. (1992). *Like a Knife: Ideology and Genre in Contemporary Chinese Popular Music*. Ithaca: Cornell University Publ.

KAM, Louie (1987). "The Short Stories of Ah Cheng: Daoism, Confucianism and Life." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 18: 1-13.

Id. (2002). *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

KANG Xiaoguang and HAN Heng (2008). "Graduated Controls: The State-Society Relationship in Contemporary China." *Modern China* 31 (1): 36-55.

KLASCHKA, Siegfried (1998). *Die Chinesische Reportageliteratur. Das Genre Baogao Wenxue und seine gesellschaftspolitischen Bezüge*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz.

KNOX, P. (1995). "World Cities and the Organization of Global Space." In: JOHNSTON, R.J. et al.: *Geographies of Global Change. Remapping the World in the Late Twentieth Century.* Oxford UK, Blackwell: 232-247.

KOETSE, Manya (2010). "Stick Out Your Tongue" *Shilin. Leiden University Journal of Young Sinology* 1 (1): 49-57.

KONRAD, George (1984). *Antipolitics*. San Diego & New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

KOROM, Frank J. (2001). "The Role of Tibet in the New Age Movement." In: DODIN, Thierry and RÄTHER, Heinz, eds. *Imagining Tibet. Perceptions, Projections & Fantasies*. Boston: Wisdom Publications: 167-182

KUBIN, Wolfgang (1993). "The End of the Prophet. Chinese Poetry Between Modernity and Postmodernity." In: LARSON, Wendy and WEDELL-WEDELLSBORG, Anne, eds. *Inside Out. Modernism and Postmodernism in Chinese Literary Culture*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press: 19-37.

KUHN, Philip A. (2002). *Origins of the Modern Chinese State*. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press.

LASH, Scott and URRY, John (1994). *Economies of Signs and Space*. London: Sage.

LAUGHLIN, Charles A. (2002). *Chinese Reportage. The Aesthetics of Historical Experience*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

LEE, Benjamin and LiPUMA, Edward (2002). "Cultures of Circulation: The Imaginations of Modernity." *Public Culture*, 14 (1): 191-213.

LEE, Namju (2006). "The Development of Environmental NGOs in China: A Road to Civil Society?" *China Brief* 6 (23), available at:
http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=32261 [2012-01-08]

LEE, Ou-fan. (1994). "On the Margins of the Chinese Discourse. Some Personal Thoughts on the Cultural Meaning of the Periphery." In: TU Weiming, ed. *The Living Tree. The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*. Stanford: Stanford University Press: 221-241.

Id. 1999. *Shanghai Modern. The Flowering of a New Urban Culture, 1930-1945*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

LEGGE, James (1895). *The Chinese Classics. Book II, The Book of Mencius*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Id. (1966): *The Chinese Classics. Vol.III, Pt.1: The Shu-King*. Taibei: Wenxing chubanshe.

LEI Ming 雷鸣 (2007). "Dangdai Shengtai Baogao Wenxue chuangzuo jige wenti de shengsi [Reflexions on several problems with contemporary Eco-Reportage writing]." *Wenyi Pinglun* (6): 45-48.

LEUNG Laifong (1994). *Morning Sun. Interviews with Chinese Writers of the Lost Generation*. Armonk: M.E.Sharpe.

LI Qingsong 李青松 (2004). "Wo shuo Xu Gang [Concerning Xu Gang]." *Senlin yu renlei* 8: 37–38.

LI Qingxi (2000). "Searching for Roots. Anticultural Return in Mainland Chinese Literature of the 1980s." In: CHI Pangyuan and WANG, David Der-Wei, eds. *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century. A Critical Survey*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 110-123.

LI Qiuxue 李秋学 (2009). *Zhongguo Xinfang Shilun* [A historical account of China's 'Letters and Visits']. Tianjin: Tianjian daxue shehui kexue wenku.

LI Shaqing 李沙青 (1986). "Beijing Shiqu Pingheng [Beijing has lost its balance]." *Baogao wenxue* 4: 3-18.

LI Tuo (2000). "Resistance to Modernity. Reflections on Mainland Chinese Literary Criticism in the 1980s" In: CHI Pangyuan and WANG, David Der-Wei, eds. *Chinese Literature in the Second Half of a Modern Century. A Critical Survey*; Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press: 110-123.

LI, Kwok-Sing, ed. (1995). *A Glossary of Political Terms of the People's Republic of China*. Hong Kong: HK University Press.

LI, Luyan (2003). *Social Campaigns and Media Flows in China: Five Case Histories of Environmental Campaigns. 1949-2000*. Published Doctoral Thesis, Northwestern University.

LIANG Congjie 梁从诫 (2002). *Bu zhonghe de quan* [The unclosed circle]; Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.

LIANG Congjie 梁从诚 and KANG Xue 康雪, eds. (2005). *Zou xiang lüse wenming* [Marching towards a green civilization]. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.

LIANG Congjie 梁从诚 and LIANG Xiaoyan 梁晓燕, eds. (2000). *Wei wugao de daziran* [Speaking on behalf of nature]. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe.

LIANG Zhiping 梁治平 (1989). "Chuantong wenhua de gengxin yu zaisheng [The renewal and rebirth of traditional culture]." *Dushu* (3): 5-14.

LIAO Hong 廖鸿 (2000). "1999 nian minzheng shiye fazhan baogao [Report on the development of civil affairs in 1999]." [http://cws.mca.gov.cn/article/tjbg/200801/20080100009396.shtml, accessed: 2012-01-09].

LIAO Xiaoyi 廖晓义 (2010). *Dong zhang xi wang. Liao Xiaoyi yu Zhongwai zhexueren liao huanbao yaofang* [Environmental Remedies: Sheri Liao's Talks with Eastern & Western Thinkers]. Beijing: Chenyingku yinxiang chubanshe.

LIEBERTHAL, Kenneth and ECONOMY, Elizabeth (2007). "Scorched Earth. Will Environmental Risks in China Overwhelm Its Opportunities?" *Harvard Business Review* (June): 88-96.

LIN Weiping 林伟平 (1986). "Xinshiqi wenxue yixitan: fang zuojia Li Tuo" [A conversation on the literature of the New Era: An interview with Li Tuo]." *Shanghai Wenxue* 10: 96.

LIU Jianqiang 刘鉴强 (2009). *Tianzhu. Cangren chuanqi* [Heavenly Beads. Legends of the Tibetans]. Lhasa, Xizang renmin chubanshe.

LIU Weimin 刘为民 (1995). *Pizi Wenhua* [Hooligan/Pizi Culture]. Beijing: Zhongguo jingji chubanshe.

LIU Wenjie 刘文杰 (1994). *Jiyang yu cuotuo.* [Encouragement and Idleness]. Zhengzhou: Henan renmin chubanshe.

LIU, Lydia (1995). *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China 1900-1937.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

LIU, Xiaobo [LINK, Perry, ed.] (2012). *No Enemies, No Hatred: Selected Essays and Poems*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press.

LO, C.W.-H., LO, J.M.-K. and CHEUNG, K.-C. (2001). "Service organization in the environmental governance system of the People's Republic of China.", in: LEE, P.N.-S. and LO, C.W.-H., eds. *Remaking China's Public Management*. Westpoint: Greenwood Publ.: 41–63.

LO, Kwai-Cheung (1998). "Writing the Otherness of Nature: Chinese Misty Poetry and the Alternative Modernist Practice." *Tamkang Review* 29 (2): 87-117.

LU Junqing 卢俊卿, QIU Fangying 仇方迎, et al. (2011). *Di sici langchao: Lüse wenming. Yibu lüse wenming shidai de xuanchuanshu* [The Fourth Wave: Ecological Civilization. A propaganda book for the age of green civilization]. Beijing: Zhongxin chubanshe.

LU, Hongyan (2003). "Bamboo Sprouts After the Rain: The History of University Student Environmental Associations in China." *Woodrow Wilson Center: China Environment Series* 6: 55-66.

LU, Yiyi (2007). "Environmental Civil Society and Governance in China." *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 64 (1): 59-69.

LUO Zongyu 罗宗宇 (2002). "Dui shengtai weiji de yishu baogao. Xin shiqi yilai de shengtai baogao wenxue jianlun" [Artistic Reportages on the Ecological Crisis. Brief Comments on Eco-Reportages since the New Era]." *Wenyi lilun yu piping*: 636-642.

MA Jun 马军 (1999). *Zhongguo shui weiji* [China's Water Crisis]. Beijing: Zhongguo huanjing kexue chubanshe.

MA, Qiusha (2006). *Non-Governmental Organizations in Contemporary China. Paving the Way for Civil Society?* London & New York: Routledge.

MA Yinchu 马寅初 (1997). *Xin renkou lun* [New population theory]. Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe.

MARX, Leo (2000) [orig. publ. 1964]. *The Machine in the Garden. Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MASON, Michael (2008). "The Governance of Transnational Environmental Harm: Addressing New Modes of Accountability/Responsibility." *Global Environmental Politics* 8 (3): 8-24.

McDOUGALL, Bonnie S. (1985). "Bei Dao's Poetry: Revelation and Communication." *Modern Chinese Literature* 1 (2): 225-252.

McGOVAN, Elizabeth (1987). "The Yangtze Affair." *Backpacker* (Jan. 1987): 21-22.

MERTHA, Andrew C. (2008). *China's Water Warriors. Citizen Action and Policy Change*. Ithaka & London: Cornell University Press.

MITTLER, Barbara (2004). *A Newspaper for China? : Power, identity, and change in Shanghai's news media, 1872-1912.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

> Id. (2007). "Domesticating the Alien Medium. Incorporating the Western-style Newspaper into the Chinese Public Sphere." In: WAGNER, Rudolf G., ed. *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1879-1910.* New York: University of NY Press: 13-45.

MOL, Arthur P. (2006). "Environmental Governance in the Information Age: The Emergence of Informational Governance." *Environment and Planning* C 24 (4): 497–514.

> Id. (2009). "Environmental Governance Through Information: China and Vietnam." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 30: 114–129.

MORAN, Tom (2002). "Lost in the Woods: Nature in 'Soul Mountain'." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 14 (2): 207-236.

MORRISON, Roy (1994). "Two Questions for Theory and Practice. Can You Be Marxist and Green?" *Rethinking Marxism* 7 (3): 128-136.

MORTENSEN, Klaus P. (1998). *The Time of Unrememberable Being: Wordsworth and the Sublime, 1787-1805.* Aarhus: Museum Tusculanum Press.

MORTON, Katherine (2005a). "The Emergence of NGOs in China and their Transnational Linkages: Implications for Domestic Reform." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 59 (4): 519-532.

> Id. (2005b). *International Aid and China's Environment. Taming the Yellow Dragon*. London & New York: Routledge.

MURCK, Alfreda (2000). *Poetry and Painting in Song China. The Subtle Art of Dissent*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

MURPHY, Patrick D. (2000). *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature Oriented Literature*. Charlottesville [u.a.]: Univ. Press of Virginia.

NASH, Roderick F. (2001). *Wilderness and the American Mind.* Fourth Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press.

NEVITT, C. E. (1996). "Private Business Associations in China. Evidence of Civil Society or Local State Power?" *The China Journal* 36: 25-43.

NG, Mau-sang (1988). *The Russian Hero in Modern Chinese Fiction*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Publ.

NISBET, H.B. (Trans.) (1974). *Georg Friedrich Hegel: Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction.* Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.

NUSSBAUM, M. et al. (1996). "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism." In: COHEN, J., ed. *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

NYIRI, Pal (2006). "The Yellow Man's Burden: Chinese Migrants on a Civilizing Mission." *The China Journal* 56: 88

O'BRIEN, Marie (1998). "Dissent and the Emergence of Civil Society in Post-Totalitarian China." *Journal of Contemporary China* 7 (17): 153-166.

OCKO, Jonathan K. (1988). "I'll Take It All the Way to Beijing: Capital Appeals in the Qing." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47 (2): 291-315.

OELSCHLAEGER, Max (1991). *The Idea of Wilderness. From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

OI, Jean C. (1992). "Fiscal reform and the economic foundations of local state corporatism in China." *World Politics* 45 (Oct.): 99–126.

OLIVO, Christiane (2001). *Creating a Democratic Civil Society in Eastern Germany*. New York: Palgrave.

ONG, Aihwa (2004). *Flexible Citizenship. The Cultural Logics of Transnationality.* Durham: Duke University Press.

ORTIZ, Fernando (1947). *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar*. New York: Knopf.

ØSTERGAARD, Clemens Stubbe (1989). "Citizens, Groups, and a Nascent Civil Society in China: Towards an Understanding of the 1989 Student Demonstrations." *China Information* 4 (2): 28-41.

PALMER, Michael (1998). "Environmental Regulation in the People's Republic of China: The Face of Domestic Law." *The China Quarterly* 156: 788-808.

PAN, Yihong (2003). *Tempered in the Revolutionary Furnace: China's Youth in the Rustication Movement*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

PAN Yue (2006). "China's Green Debt.", 2006-11-28, (URL: www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-s-green-debt, accessed: 2012-12-21).

PEPPER, David (1996). *Modern Environmentalism. An Introduction*. London: Routledge.

PERRY, Elizabeth (2001). *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China*. Armonk: M.E.Sharpe.

PERRY, Elizabeth J. and FULLER, Ellen V. (1991). "China's Long March Towards Democracy." *World Policy Journal* 4 (3): 663-683.

PERRY, Elizabeth and SELDEN, Mark, eds. (2000). *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*. New York: Routledge.

PIETERSE, Jan N. (2001). "Hybridity, so what? The Anti-hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition." *Theory, Culture & Society* 18: 219-245.

Id. (2009). *Globalization and Culture. Global Mélange*. Lanham: Rowman&Littlefield

PRATT, Mary L. (1992). *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation.* London: Routledge.

PRICE, Richard (2003). "Transnational Civil Society and Advocacy in World Politics." *World Politics* 55: 579-606.

PYE, Lucian (1993). "How China's Nationalism was Shanghaied." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 29 (Jan.): 107-133.

QU Geping 曲格平 (1997). *Women xuyao yichang biange*.Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe.

QU Geping 曲格平 and LI Jinchang 李金昌 (1992). *Zhongguo renkou yu huanjing* [Population and the Environment in China]. Beijing: Zhongguo huanjing kexue chubanshe.

RANKIN, Mary B. (1986). *Elite Activism and Political Transformation in China: Zhejiang Province, 1865-1911*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Id. (1993). "Some Observations on a Chinese Public Sphere." *Modern China* 19 (2): 158-182.

ROBERTSON, Robert (1995). *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture.* London: Sage.

ROETZ, Heiner (2010). "On Nature and Culture in Zhou China." In: VOGEL, Hans U. and DUX, Günter, eds. *Concepts of Nature. A Chinese-European Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Leiden: Brill: 198-219.

ROWE, William T. (1993). "The Problem of 'Civil Society' in Late Imperial China." *Modern China* 19 (2): 139-157.

Id. (1984). *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Id. (1989). *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

SAICH, Tony (2000). "Negotiating the State: The Development of Social Organizations in China." *China Quarterly* 161: 124–41.

Id. (2001). *Governance and Politics of China*. New York: Palgrave.

SASSEN, Saskia, ed. (2002). *Global Networks, Linked Cities.* New York: Routledge.

SCHACK, David C. and HUDSON, Wayne (2003). "Civil Society in Asia" In: id., eds. *Civil Society in Asia*. Ashgate: Burlington.

SCHEIN, Louisa (1997). "Gender and Internal Orientalism in China." *Modern China* 23 (1): 69-98.

SCHIAFFINI, Patricia (2004). "The Language of Divide: Identity and Literary Choices in Modern Tibet." *Journal of International Affairs* 57 (2): 81-98.

SCHMIDT-GLINTZER, Helwig (2010). "On the Relationship Between Man and Nature in China." In: VOGEL, Hans U. and DUX, Günter, eds. *Concepts of Nature. A Chinese-European Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Leiden: Brill: 526-542.

SCHWARTZ, Jonathan (2004). "Environmental NGOs in China: Roles and Limits." *Pacific Affairs* 77 (1): 28-49.

SCHOENHALS, Michael (1992). *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics. Five Studies.* Berkeley: Curzon Press.

SHAPIRO, Judith (2001). *Mao's War Against Nature. Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

SHEN Lijiang 沈立江 and MA Lihong 马力宏, eds. (2010). *Shengtai wenming yu zhuanxing shengji* [Ecological Civilization and Upgrade Through Transformation]. Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe.

SHEN Xiaohui 沈孝辉 (1998). *Xueshan qiumeng* [Chasing dreams at snow mountain]. Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe.

SHI, Weimin 史卫民 and GAO Lan 高岚 (1996). *Zhiqing beiwanglu: Shangshan xiaxiang yundong zhong de shengchan jianshe bingtuan* [Memoirs of Educated Youth: Production-Construction Corps during the Rustification Movement]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe.

SIMA, Yangzi (2011). "Grassroots Environmental Activism and the Internet: Constructing a Green Public Sphere in China." *Asian Studies Review* (35) 4: 477–497.

SOLINGER, D. J. (1992). "Urban Entrepreneurs and the State. The Merger of State and Society." In: ROSENBAUM, A., ed. *State and Society in China. The Consequences of Reform.* San Francisco: Westview Press.

SPITTA, Silvia (1995). *Between Two Waters: Narratives of Transculturation in Latin America*. Houston: Texas A & M University Press.

STALLEY, Phillip and YANG Dongning (2006). "An Emerging Environmental Movement in China?" *The China Quarterly* 186: 333-356.

STRAND, David (1989). *Rickshaw Beijing: City People and Politics in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

   Id. (1990): "Protest in Beijing. Public Sphere and Civil Society in China." *Problems of Communism* 39: 1-19.

SULLIVAN, L. (1990). "The Emergence of Civil Society in China, Spring 1989." In: SAICH, Tony, ed. *The Chinese People's Movement, Perspective on Spring 1989*. Armonk: East Gate Book.

SUN Yifeng (2008). "Opening the Cultural Mind: Translation and the Modern Chinese Literary Canon." *Modern Language Quarterly* 69 (1): 13-27

SUN Yongfu 孙永福, ed. (2001). *Zhongwai minjian zuzhi jiaoliu yu hezuo* [Cooperation and Communication Between Chinese and Foreign NGOs]. Beijing: Zhongguo duiwai jingji maoyi chubanshe.

SVENSSON, Marina (2002). *Debating Human Rights in China: A Conceptual and Political History*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

TALIAFERRO, Charles and EVANS, Jil (2011). *The Image in Mind: Theism, Naturalism, and the Imagination*. New York: Continuum Internat. Publishing Group

TANG Shui-yan and ZHAN Xueyong (2008). "Civic Environmental NGOs, Civil Society, and Democratization in China." *Journal of Development Studies* 44 (3): 425-448.

TANG Xiyang 唐锡阳 (1981). "Wuyishan kai kexuehua [Sciene is blossoming at Wuyishan]." *Daziran zazhi* [*Great Nature*] 3 (5): 3-6.

Id. (2007). *Lüse Ying* [Green Camp]. Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe.

TANG Xiyang 唐锡阳 and Ma Xia 马霞 [Marcia B. Marks] (1993). *Huanqiu Lüsexing* [A Green World Tour]. Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe.

TANG Xiyang 唐锡阳 et al. (2004). *Cuo! Cuo! Cuo! Tang Xiyang lüse chensi yu baijia pingdian* [Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! – Tang Xiyang's green thoughts and critical suggestions from one-hundred authors]. Shengyang: Shengyang chubanshe.

TANG, Shui-yan, LO Wing-hung, et al. (1997). "Institutional Constraints on Environmental Management in Urban China: Environmental Impact Assessment in Guangzhou and Shanghai." *The China Quarterly* 152: 863-874.

TAYLOR, Charles (1995). "Two Theories of Modernity." *Hastings Center Report* 25 (2): 24-33.

Id. (2002). "Modern Social Imaginaries." *Public Culture* 14 (1): 91-124.

THERBORN, G. (2003). "Entangled Modernities." *European Journal of Social Theory* 6 (3): 293–305.

THØGERSEN, Stig (2003). "Parasites or Civilisers: The Legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party in Rural Areas." *China: An International Journal* 1 (2): 200-223.

THORNBER, Karen L. (2012). *Ecoambiguity: Environmental Crises and East Asian Literatures*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

TREIB, Oliver and BÄHR, Holger, et al. (2007). "Modes of Governance: Towards a Conceptual Clarification." *Journal of European Public Policy* 14 (1): 1–20.

TU Wei-ming (1991). "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center." *Daedalus* 120 (2).

TURNER, Jennifer, and WU Fengshi, eds. (2001). *Green NGO and Environmental Journalist Forum: A Meeting of Environmentalists from Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong*. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

UNGER, Jonathan (2008). *Associations and the Chinese State: Contested Spaces*. Armonk: M.E.Sharpe.

UNGER, Jonathan and CHAN, Anita (1995). "China, Corporatism, and the East Asian Model." *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 33 (Jan.): 29–53.

URRY, John (2003). *Global Complexity*. Cambridge: Polity.

VITTINGHOFF, Natascha (2001). "Readers, Publishers and Officials in the Contest for a Public Voice and the Rise of a Modern Press in Late Qing China." *T'oung Pao* 87 (4-5): 393-455.

Id. (2002). "Unity vs. Uniformity: Liang Qichao and the Invention of a New Journalism for China." *Late Imperial China* 23 (1): 91-143.

VOGEL, David (1997). "Trading Up and Governing Across: Transnational Governance and Environmental Protection." *Journal of European Public Policy* 4 (4): 556-571.

VOLLAND, Nicolai (2003). *The Control of the Media in the People's Republic of China*. Doctoral Dissertation, accessible under: http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/8048/ [2012-12-12]

WAGNER, Rudolf G. (1982). "The Cog and the Scout. Functional Concepts of Literature in Socialist Political Culture: The Chinese Debate in the '50s." In: KUBIN, Wolfgang and WAGNER, Rudolf G., eds. *Essays in Modern Chinese Literature and Literary Criticism*. Bochum: Brockmeyer: 334-400.

Id. (1983). *Literatur und Politik in der VR China.* Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M.

Id. (1992). *Inside a Service Trade. Studies in Contemporary Chinese Prose*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press.

Id. (1995). "The Role of the Foreign Community in the Chinese Public Sphere." *The China Quarterly* 142 (June): 423-443.

Id. (2009). "Literature and Politics." In: LEESE, D., ed. *Brill's Encyclopedia of China. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Vol.IV*. Leiden: Brill: 597-601.

Id., ed. (2007). *Joining the Global Public. Word, Image and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910*. New York: State University of New York Press.

WAKEMAN, Frederic (1993). "The Civil Society and Public Sphere Debate: Western Reflections on Chinese Political Culture." *Modern China*, 19 (2): 108-138.

WALDER, Andrew G. (1989). "The Political Sociology of the Beijing Upheaval of 1989." *Problems of Communism* (Sept/Oct): 30-40.

WANG Hui 汪晖 (1998). "'Kexuezhuyi' yu shehui lilun de jige wenti ['Scientism' and several issues concerning social theory]." *Tianya* (6): 132-160.

WANG, David Der-Wei (1992). *Fictional Realism in Twentieth Century China. Mao Dun, Lao She, Shen Congwen.* New York: Columbia University Press.

WANG, Jing (1996). *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng's China.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

WANG Nuo 王诺 (2007). *Shengtai yu xingtai. Dangdai Oumei wenxue yanjiu* [Ecology and Mentality. Studies in Comtemporary Euro-American Literature]. Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe

Id. (2008). *Oumei shengtai piping* [Euro-American Ecocriticism]. Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe.

Id. (2011). *Oumei shengtai wenxue* [Euro-American Ecoliterature]. Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe.

WANG, Rujie (2008). "The Mosaic of Chinese Modernism in Fiction and Film: The Aesthetics of Primitivism, Taoism, and Buddhism." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (March-June): 14-39.

WANG, Shaoguang and HE, Jianyu (2004). "Associational Revolution in China: Mapping the Landscapes." *Korea Observer* 35 (3): 1-66.

WANG Shudong 汪树东 (2008). "Lun 1980 niandai Zhongguo wenxue de shengtai yishi [Ecological consiciousness in 1980s Chinese literature]." *Jianghuai luntan* 4: 136‒141.

WANG Shudong 汪树东 and ZHOU Xufeng 周旭峰 (2009). "Lun 20 shiji 90 niandai yilai de shengtai yishi [On the ecological consciousness in Chinese literature since the 1990s]." *Xuzhou shifan daxue xuebao* 5 (2): 28‒33.

WANG Yongchen 汪永晨 (2004). Lü jingtou. Daziran de zuotian yu jintian [Green lens. Nature's yesterday and today]. Beijing: Sanlian shudian.

WANG Zhian 王治安 (1993). *Renlei shencun sanbuqu. Guotu yousi* [Trilogy on Human Existence. Troubled Thoughts on our Nation' Soil]. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe.

WANG, Zuoyue (2002). "Saving China Through Science: The Science Society of China, Scientific Nationalism, and Civil Society in Republican China." *Osiris* 17: 291-322.

WANK, David L. (1995). "Civil Society in Communist China? Private Business and Political Alliance, 1989." In: HALL, John A., ed. *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison.* Cambridge: Polity: 56-79.

WARD, Julian (2001). *Xu Xiake (1587-1641). The Art of Travel Writing*. Richmond: Curzon Press.

WASSERSTROM, Jeffrey (2001). "New Approaches to Old Shanghai." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32 (2): 263-279.

WELLER, (2006). *Discovering Nature. Globalization and Environmental Culture in China and Taiwan*. Cambridge: Cambrdige University Press.

WELSCH, Wolfgang (1999). "Transculturality. The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today." In: LASH, Scott and FEATHERSTONE, Mike, eds. *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*. London: Sage: 194-213.

WHITE, Gordon (1993). "Prospects for Civil Society in China: A Case Study of Xiaoshan City." *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 29: 63-87.

WHITE, Gordon, HOWELL, Jude, et al. (1996). *In Search for Civil Society. Market Reform and Social Change in Contemporary China*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

WHYTE, Martin K. (1992). "Urban China: A Civil Society in the Making?" In: ROSENBAUM, A., ed. *State and Society in China: The Consequences of Reform*. San Francisco: Westview Press.

WILLIAMS, Dee M. (1997). "The Desert Discourse of Modern China." *Modern China* 23 (3): 328-355.

WILSON, Edward O. (1978). *On Human Nature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

WONG, Koon Kwai (2005). "Greening of the Chinese Mind: Environmentalism with Chinese Characteristics." *Asia-Pacfic Review* 12 (2): 39-57.

WONG, Loong (2003). "Belonging and Diaspora: The Chinese and the Internet." *First Monday* 8 (4).

WORSTER, Donald (2008). *A Passion For Nature: The Life of John Muir*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

WU Jingming 吴景明 (2007a). "Lun xinshiqi yilai ziran zhuti zai wenxue changyu zhong de shanbian. Yi zhiqing wenxue、xungen wenxue wei zhongxin [The transmutations of the nature

theme in the literary domain during the new era, with a focus on *zhiqing* and *xungen* literature]." *Shehui kexue bianji* 3: 266–268.

Id. (2007b). *Zouxiang hexie. Ren yu ziran de shuangcheng bianzou* [Towards Harmony: Man and Nature's Double Variation]. PhD Dissertation, downloadable at: http://cdmd.cnki.com.cn/Article/CDMD-10200-2007158131.htm [2011/03/11].

WU Jingming 吴景明 and LIU Zhongshu 刘中树 (2009). "Cong zhanshi weiji dao canyu chongjian. Zhongguo dangdai shengtai wenxue fazhan jianlun [From exposing crisis towards participating in reconstruction. Brief comments on contemporary Chinese ecological literature]." *Xueshujie* 6: 256–264.

WU, Fengshi (2002). "New Partners or Old Brothers? GONGOS in Transnational Environmental Advocacy in China." *Woodrow Wilson Center; China Environment Series* 5: 45-58.

Id. (2009). "Environmental Activism in China: 15 Years in Review, 1994-2008." *Harvard-Yenching Institute Working Paper Series*. Harvard, Harvard-Yenching Institute.

XIANG Chuan (1985). "Differing Views on Yang Lian's Recent Works." *Renditions* 23: 164-165.

XIAO San 肖三 [Emi Hsiao] (1951). *Mao Zedong tongzhi de qingshaonian shidai* [Childhood and youth of comrade Mao Zedong]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

XIE, Lei and MOL, Arthur P. (2006). "The Role of Guanxi in the Emerging Environmental Movement in China." In: McCRIGHT, A., ed.. *Community and Ecology. The Dynamics of Place, Sustainability, and Politics*. Amsterdam, Elsevier**:** 269-292.

XU Gang 徐刚 (1997). *Famuzhe, xinglai!* [Woodcutter, wake up!]. Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe.

XU Jilin [Barmé, G./Davies, G. transl.] (2004). "The Fate of an Enlightenment: Twenty Years in the Chinese Intellectual Sphere (1978-98)." In: GU, Edward and GOLDMAN, Merle, eds. *Chinese Intellectuals Between State and Market*; London: Routledge: 183-203.

XU Zhixin 徐志新 and GAO Hongying 高红樱 (2009). "Zhongguo dangdai 'huangjing wenxue' de queshi yu jiangou [Shortcomings and structure of contemporary 'environmental literature' in China]." *Tianjin shifan daxue xuebao* 5: 67‐71.

XU Zidong 许子东 (1989). "Xiandai zhuyi yu Zhongguo xinshiqi wenxue." [Modernism and Chinese literature of the New Era] *Wenxue Pinglun* (4): 21-34.

YANG Jianlong 杨剑龙 and ZHOU Xufeng 周旭峰 (2005). "Lun Zhongguo dangdai shengtai wenxue chuangzuo" [On Contemporary China's Writing of Eco-Literature]." *Shanghai Shifan Daxue Xuebao* (Zhexue shehui kexue ban) 34 (2): 38-43.

YANG Jianlong 杨剑龙 and ZHOU Xufeng 周旭峰 (2005). "Lun Zhongguo dangdai shengtai wenxue chuangzuo [On Contemporary China's Writing of Eco-Literature]." *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 34 (2): 38-43.

YANG Lian 杨炼 (1983). "Chuantong yu women." [Tradition and us] translated in: *Renditions* 19-20: 69-73.

Id. (1983). "Nuorilang." *Shanghai Wenxue* 5: 54–57.

YANG Xin 杨欣 (1997). *Changjiang hun* [Soul of the Yangtze]. Guangzhou: Lingnan meishu chubanshe.

Id. (2007). *Qinli Kekexili 10 nian* [10 years in Kekexili]. Beijing: Sanlian shudian.

YANG, Guobin (2003a). "Weaving a Green Web: The Internet and Environmental Activism in China." *China Environment Series* 6: 89-93.

Id. (2003b). "The Internet and the Rise of a Transnational Chinese Cultural Sphere." *Media, Culture & Society* 25(4): 469-490.

Id. (2003c). "The Co-Evolution of the Internet and Civil Society in China." *Asian Survey* 43 (3): 405-422.

Id. (2005). "Environmental NGOs and Institutional Dynamics in China." *The China Quarterly*: 46-66.

Id. (2009). *The Power of the Internet in China. Citizen Activism Online*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Id. (2010a). "Brokering Environment and Health in China: Issue Entrepreneurs of the Public Sphere." *Journal of Contemporary China* 19 (63).

Id. (2010b). "Civic Environmentalism." In: HSING, You-tien and LEE, Ching Kwan, eds.. *Reclaiming Chinese Society: The New Social Activism*; London: Routledge: 119-139.

YANG, Guobin and CALHOUN, Craig (2007). "Media, Civil Society, and the Rise of a Green Public Sphere in China." *China Information* 21 (2): 211-236.

YANG Xiangrong 杨向荣 and ZENG Ying 曾莹 (2010). "Shengtaixue shiyu xia de Zhongguo xin shiqi baogao wenxue [Reportage Literature of the New Era in the Perspective of Ecology]." *Wenyi lilun yu piping* 3: 111 – 114.

YAO Jiahua 姚家华, ed. (1989): *Menglongshi lunzhan ji* [Anthology of Articles Concerning the 'Misty Poetry' Debate]. Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe.

YEH, Michelle (1991). "Nature's Child and the Frustrated Urbanite: Expressions of the Self in Contemporary Chinese Poetry." *World Literature Today* 65 (3): 405-411.

YOUNG, Nick (2001). "Searching for Civil Society: 250 NGOs in China." *China Development Brief*, Hongkong.

Id. (2004): "NGOs: The Diverse Origins, Changing Nature and Growing Internationalization of the Species." *China Development Brief*.

Id. (2009 (Feb 16th)). "NGOs and Civil Society in China." Retrieved 2009/12/15, from http://hausercenter.org/chinanpo/2009/05/ngos-and-civil-society-in-china/

YOUNG, Robert J.C. (1995). *Colonial Desire. Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race.* London: Routledge.

YU Bin 余斌 (1990). "Minzuhua wenti yu Zhongguo dangdai wenxue de fazhan [The problem of indigenization and the development of contemporary Chinese literature]." *Wenxue pinglun* (6): 46-55.

YUAN Qinglin 袁清林, ed. (1990). *Zhongguo huanjing baohu shihua* [Historical discussion of the conservation of nature in China]. Beijing: Zhongguo huanjing kexue chubanshe.

YUE Daiyun and WANG Ning, eds. (1990). *Xifang wenyisichao yu ershishiji Zhongguo wenxue* [Western *Trends of Literary Thought and 20th century Chinese Literature*]. Beijing: Zhongguo shehuikexue chubanshe.

ZENG Daorong 曾道荣 and YU Dazhong 余达忠 (2010). "Wenhua xungen xiaoshuo de shengtai shenmei shiye [The perspective of ecological aesthetic in the *Xungen* novel]." *Jiamusi daxue shehui kexue xuebao* 28 (4): 61-64.

ZENG Ying 曾营 and YANG Xiangrong 杨向荣 (2010). "Shengtai zhuti de shixing xushi. Xu Gang shengtai baogao wenxue de fengge tese [Ecologically-themed poetic narrative. The stylistic features of Xu Gang's ecological reportages]." *Hunan keji daxue xuebao* 13 (4): 105-109.

ZENG Ying 曾莹 and HE Jianliang 何建良 (2010). "Xu Gang dui shengtai baogao wenxue de zhuti kuozhan [Xu Gang's major contribution to the propagation of ecological reportage]." *Xiangtan daxue xuebao* 34 (3): 119-125.

ZHANG Juzheng 張居正 (1993). *Dijian tushuo pingzhu* [The annotated 'Imperial Mirror'] Beijing: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe.

ZHANG Xiaoqin 张晓琴 (2008). "Zhongguo shengtai baogao wenxue zongshu [Summary of Chinese Eco-Reportage]." *Xibei chengren jiaoyu xuebao* (6): 28-29.

ZHANG Yanmei 张艳梅 and WU Jingming 吴景明 (2007). "Jindai 20 nian Zhongguo shengtai wenxue fazhan gaiguan [Survey of the development of Chinese Eco-Literature in the last 20 years]." *Shandong ligong daxue xuebao* 23 (2): 10-14.

ZHANG, Lei, MOL, Arthur et al. (2007). "The Interpretation of Ecological Modernisation in China." *Environmental Politics* 16 (4): 659 – 668.

ZHANG Wei 張威 (2011). "Lüse xinwen yu Zhongguo huanjing jizhequn de jueqi [Green news, and the rise of China's environmental journalists]." Xinwen jizhe 5: 13-17.

ZHANG, Xudong (2008). *Postsocialism and Cultural Politics. China in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century*. Durham: Duke University Press.

ZHANG, Ye (1995). "Chinese NGOs: A Survey Report." In: *Emerging Civil Society in the Asia Pacific Community*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, JCIE and The Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium.

ZHAO Suisheng (1994). "China's Center-Local Relationship: A Historical Perspective." In: JIA Hao and LIN Zhimin, eds. *Changing Central-Local Relations in China. Reform and State Capacity*. Boulder: Westview Press: 19-34.

ZHAO Xiaqiu 赵遐秋 (1987). *Zhongguo xiandai baogao wenxue shi* [A History of Chinese Modern Reportage Literature]. Beijing: Beijing renmin daxue chubanshe.

ZHAO, Dingxin (2001). *The Power of Tiananmen. State-Society Relations and the 1989 Beijing Student Movement*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

ZHAO, Suisheng (2004). *A Nation-State by Construction. Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

ZHONG Xueping (2000). *Masculinity Besieged? Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late 20th Century*. Laham: Duke University Press.

ZOU Yalin 邹雅林 (2006). "Dang zheng jun min gongjian lüse fengbei [The party, the government, the army, and the people jointly erect a green monument]." *Gansu keji* 22 (4): 1-4.

ZWEIG, David (2003). "The 'Externalies of Development': Can New Political Institutions Manage Rural Conflict?"In: PERRY, Elizabeth and SELDEN, Mark, eds. *Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, First Edition. New York: Routledge: 120-142.