

# TESTING THE MARGINS OF LEISURE

Case Studies on China, Japan, and Indonesia

Rudolf G. Wagner, Catherine V. Yeh,  
Eugenio Menegon, and Robert P. Weller  
*Editors*

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Case Studies on China, Japan, and Indonesia

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Rudolf G. Wagner, Catherine V. Yeh, Eugenio Menegon  
and Robert P. Weller

## Introduction

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Leisure is a constant, at least among higher organisms, if we define it as taking place in a space/time not dictated by vital needs such as sustenance or security.<sup>1</sup> Although leisure pursuits might be related to vital needs such as social status and/or procreation, these links are hidden in the “subjunctive” freedom of choice.<sup>2</sup> The distinct character of leisure allows for a definition of its margins that map the parameters within which the variety of these pursuits in their historical changes take place and delineate the difference to other pursuits. Although higher organisms share many features of their leisure pursuits, humans alone have left an easily decipherable linguistic and artifactual footprint that shows the diversity and historical change of human leisure and is thus accessible for research by humanities and social science scholars. This book therefore deals with human leisure.

Since the late nineteenth century, leisure in various European and North American settings has begun to attract some scholarly attention, although many scholars engaged with serious historical or social issues continued to consider it a lightweight topic associated with entertaining anecdotal documentation.<sup>3</sup> Prompted by two factors, attention to leisure by authorities as well as leisure research has slowly increased since the early 1960s. These two factors were: first, the steeply rising economic importance of leisure-related goods and activities from smartphones to tourism during the last two decades, with many large cities (New York, Berlin, Paris) and entire countries (Italy, Spain, Thailand, among others) beginning to derive the bulk of their income from tourism; and second, the shifting relationship between work and leisure under “post-industrial” conditions. The separation between work and leisure characteristic of the early industrial age became less clear, and people increasingly defined themselves through

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- 1 Animal leisure has often been discussed under the rubric of “play.” See Gordon A. Burghardt, *The Genesis of Animal Play* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005). For the summary, see 382–383.
  - 2 The term “subjunctive” is taken from the grammatical “subjunctive mood,” which is used in many languages to denote things that are not objective facts but wishes or hypothetical suppositions. It is used here instead of “subjective,” which comes with a whole load of assumptions about the “subject.” These are historical and not necessarily shared by all cultures. The term has been suggested by Robert Weller’s essay in this volume.
  - 3 The same prejudice has hampered research on animal play. “Serious scholars typically ignore play,” Burghardt, *Genesis*, 6.

their leisure rather than their work.<sup>4</sup> The focus of these studies has been on contemporary urban developments and tourism. A “World Leisure Board” elevated leisure in 2000 to a fundamental human right.<sup>5</sup>

Modern state institutions, religious authorities, and foundations have begun to closely monitor the development of leisure habits among citizens and to enhance controls at the notoriously soft borders between leisure and illegal practices.<sup>6</sup> They have also increased their efforts to proactively promote “healthy” or serious leisure pursuits, helped by a growing body of normative proposals for leisure of this kind from diverse religious groups and sociologists.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, leisure scholarship has developed from its modest beginnings with a steep rise since the 1960s. It has used different methodologies for the study of leisure: sociological,<sup>8</sup> anthropological,<sup>9</sup> commercial,<sup>10</sup>

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4 Robert A. Stebbins, “Serious Leisure: A Conceptual Statement,” *The Pacific Sociological Review* 25, no. 2 (April 1982): 254.

5 World Leisure Organization, “World Leisure Charter for Leisure,” (2000), accessed April 21, 2017, [http://worldleisure.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Charter-for-Leisure\\_WEB.pdf](http://worldleisure.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Charter-for-Leisure_WEB.pdf). First proposed in 1970, this charter is the result of several revisions.

6 A masterly historical survey of the effort of European state authorities to mark the borders of legitimate leisure was compiled by none other than Henry Fielding (1707–1754), see his *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers etc., with some Proposals for Remediating this Growing Evil* (London: Millar, 1751). Since the late 1990s, countries in the European Union have conducted the Harmonised European Time Use Surveys, HETUS, accessed November 29, 2019, <https://www.h6.scb.se/tus/tus/>. For Taiwan, see Xingzhengyuan zhujichu 行政院主計處 [Statistical Office, Executive Yuan], ed. *Zhonghua Minguo. Taiwan diqu shehui fazhan qushi diaocha baogao. Xiuxian shenghuo yu shijian yunyong* 中華民國臺灣地區社會發展趨勢調查報告. 休閒生活與時間運用 [Republic of China. Investigation report about social development trends in the area of Taiwan. Leisure life and time use] (Taipei: Xingzhengyuan Zhijichu, since 2000). Since 2003, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics produces the *American Time Use Survey*, which specifies content and times of leisure activities, accessed April 23, 2017. <https://www.bls.gov/tus/>. For the PRC, the *Zhongguo jingji shenghuo da diaocha* 中國經濟生活大調查 [Macro-survey of Chinese economic life], conducted annually since 2012 by the CCTV Financial Channel, the PRC Bureau of Statistics, and the Central Post Office, contains a segment on leisure. For studies based on it, see Lou Jiajun 樓嘉軍, Yang Yong 楊勇, and Li Limei 李麗梅. *Zhongguo chengshi xiuxian wenhua fazhan yanjiu baogao* 中國城市休閒文化發展研究報告 [Research report on the development of leisure in urban China] (Shanghai: Jiaotong University Press, 2013), and Xiang Wei and Monika Stodolska, “Leisure in Urban China: General Patterns Based on a Nationwide Survey,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 47, no. 3 (2015): 373–387.

7 The “rational leisure” movement in nineteenth century England was an early expression of this. On the scholarly side, sociologists since Veblen’s time combined their study of leisure with critiques and proposals of reform.

8 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class, an Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899); Joffre Dumazedier, *Toward a Society of Leisure* (New York: Free Press, 1967); Alain Corbin, ed., *L’avènement des loisirs, 1850–1960* (Paris: Aubier 1995).

9 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949). First published in Dutch in 1938, the English edition was translated anonymously from the 1944 German edition.

10 Alessandro Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance. Attitudes towards Leisure and Pastimes in European Culture c. 1425–1675* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan,

conceptual,<sup>11</sup> cultural,<sup>12</sup> administrative,<sup>13</sup> gender,<sup>14</sup> management,<sup>15</sup> and urban.<sup>16</sup> While the overwhelming majority focused on Europe and North America, a slowly growing number addressed other regions, such as Asia<sup>17</sup> and Africa,<sup>18</sup> or specific religious or ideological environments, Buddhist,<sup>19</sup> Christian,<sup>20</sup> or Muslim.<sup>21</sup> Handbooks have been produced to summarize leisure theory or management experiences,<sup>22</sup> specialized associations of leisure and tourism research have formed with directories to list them; finally, specialized journals and book series with a leisure focus have been launched.<sup>23</sup>

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- 2003); Warwick Frost and C. Michael Hall, *Tourism and National Parks, International Perspectives on Development, Histories and Change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); John Tribe, *The Economics of Recreation, Leisure, and Tourism* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2011).
- 11 Rhona and Robert N. Rapoport, "Four Themes in the Sociology of Leisure," *The British Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (June 1974): 215–229. B. G. and Nancy C. Gunther, "Leisure Styles: A Conceptual Framework for Modern Leisure," *Sociological Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 361–374. Chris Rojek, *The Labour of Leisure. The Culture of Free Time* (London: Sage, 2010).
  - 12 Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis for Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru with an introduction by T. S. Eliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964). Originally written in 1947, a 1998 retranslation is also available.
  - 13 Fielding, *An Enquiry*.
  - 14 Betsy and Stephen Wearing, "'All in a Day's Leisure': Gender and the Concept of Leisure," *Leisure Studies* 7, no. 2 (1988): 111–123. Valeria Freysinger et al. eds., *Leisure, Women, and Gender* (State College: Venture Publishing, 2013); Betsy and Stephen Wearing, "'All in a Day's Leisure': Gender and the Concept of Leisure," *Leisure Studies* 7, no. 2 (1988): 111–123.
  - 15 George Torkildsen, *Leisure and Recreation Management* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).
  - 16 June Wang, Tim Oakes, Yang Yang, eds., *Making Cultural Cities in Asia, Mobility, Assemblage and the Politics of Aspirational Urbanism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).
  - 17 Catherine V. Yeh, *Shanghai Love. Courtesans, Intellectuals and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Adrian Athique and Douglas Hill, *The Multiplex in India: A Cultural Economy of Urban Leisure* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Jing Wang, ed., *The State Question in Chinese Popular Culture*, special issue of *positions: east asia cultures critique*, 9, no. 1 (Spring 2001); Di Wang, *The Teahouse: Small Business, Everyday Culture, and Public Politics in Chengdu, 1900–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008). Charles A. Laughlin, *The Literature of Leisure and Chinese Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008); and the historical essays in leisure in China in *Leisure and Chinese Culture: A Symposium*, ed. Charles A. Laughlin, *The Chinese Historical Review* 23, no. 2 (2016).
  - 18 Paul Tiyanbe Zeleza, *Leisure in Urban Africa* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003).
  - 19 Justin McDaniel, *Architects of Buddhist Leisure. Socially Disengaged Buddhism in Asia's Museums, Monuments, and Amusement Parks* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016).
  - 20 Troy Messenger, *Holy Leisure: Recreation and Religion in God's Square Mile* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
  - 21 Patrick Haenni, *L'Islam de Marché* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005).
  - 22 Chris Rojek, Susan M. Shaw, and A. J. Veal, eds., *A Handbook of Leisure Studies* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Gary S. Cross, *Encyclopedia of Recreation and Leisure in America* (Farmington Hills: Charles Scribner & Sons, 2005).
  - 23 Examples for the journals are *Loisir et Société/Society, Leisure; Leisure Sciences, Leisure Studies*, and the *World Leisure Journal*. Among the series one might mention the Springer/Palgrave series *Leisure Studies in a Global Era*, and *Routledge Studies in Contemporary Geographies of Leisure, Tourism, and Mobility*.

Several major issues remain. The overwhelming majority of published research on leisure deals with Europe and North America and the entirety of the theoretical conceptualizations assumes that the particular experiences of people in these two regions reflect the typical experiences of mankind altogether. The history and sociology of leisure in the rest of the world and the very intense transcultural interactions linking them were given short shrift and the theoretical concepts as well as methodological conventions of the Europe- and North America-centered studies were applied to other contexts without further contextualization or justification. Most important among these methodological conventions is an assumption that the nation-state is the natural framework of analysis, even though the transcultural element is always present and often dominant in leisure pursuits. Other neglected issues of importance are the history of leisure outside of Europe and North America; the role of state and religious authorities in the control and management of leisure; the relationship between the providers of leisure and those pursuing it, as well as between the rules of the money economy and those of the leisure economy; the role of leisure in cultural and social change; and finally, the often unstable margins of leisure that differentiate it from other pursuits. The studies in this volume set out to explore these marginalized areas, so as to bring these perspectives into the mainstream of leisure research.

These lacunae are not trivial. The prevalent focus on Europe and North America in leisure studies unwittingly implies a situation where the inhabitants of the north are consuming the leisure that is to a substantial degree provided by what is sometimes referred to inaccurately as the Global South. This focus repeats a feature common in fields such as sociology, economics, political science, and psychology of elevating Euro-American people, as well as societal structures and processes, into the standard against which all other regions present deficient modes not intrinsically worthy of detailed study and conceptualization. In the process, it neglects the extensive circular exchanges in leisure goods and practices and has furthermore become dated as some of the original tourist destinations such as Japan or China have themselves become engines driving international tourism, and as innovations in leisure-related goods, services, and management are increasingly developed outside the old metropolises.

Exploring the historical trajectory of leisure in different cultural environments around the world is a crucial element in developing a general understanding of the social dynamics of leisure in the tension between an identity-supporting path-dependency and the relentless incorporation of new elements from abroad, above, and below. The studies in this volume mostly focus on recent history and the present day. For these periods the old pathways of transcultural exchange linking the Arab and Turkish realms, Persia, South Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia, as well as the closer connections between, for example, Central, South, and Southeast Asia or within East Asia, have become far less important than those of all these regions to the "West." The links between the regions and countries of Asia

are now centered on elements that have to do with this new overarching connection. The contributions in this volume reflect this shift by focusing on the multiple ways in which leisure in modern China, Indonesia, and Japan is engaged with the “West” in an approach that predicated a study of leisure that accounts for the global transcultural interaction and exchange in this field.

Leisure studies have largely focused on the pleasures associated with it. The anomic side of leisure, with its vast grey economy of providers ranging from dealers of drugs and other intoxicating substances to gambling sites or brothels, has received little attention. From the perspective of the state’s interest in social order and the religious authorities’ interest in moral order, however, this grey domain is in urgent and constant need of policing as well as efforts to crowd out these anomic pursuits by healthy leisure. It follows that these authorities are important actors in the field of leisure and deserve study.

Leisure is situated in a life world in which it is set off, competes with, and interacts with other domains such as religion, work, family, natural environment, or state action. These domains come with their own particular rules and the study of the complex relationships and interactions with them along the borderlines of leisure is crucial for the delineation of the elements defining leisure.

Finally, leisure is the main port of entry and exchange for new forms of social interaction, taste, and values, which makes it the testing ground for social change.

The present volume sets out to contribute to the exploration of these crucial but neglected aspects, with case studies on Asia where these are in prominence. It is the result of two workshops at Boston University and a conference at Heidelberg University, focused on “Leisure and Money,” “Leisure and the State,” and “Leisure and Social Change” respectively. It brings together scholars whose work bridges the divide between historians, social scientists, and theorists, and it challenges both empirically and theoretically many of the hidden assumptions, routines, and conceptualizations dominating the bulk of received leisure studies. As a series of first forays into largely uncharted territory, it is intended to stimulate further research, but most certainly will not and cannot claim to offer anything approaching completeness in the coverage of regions, issues, historical trajectories, or theoretical frames. The imbalances in coverage—such as a lamentable lack of studies on the Indian subcontinent or mainland Southeast Asia or the strong presence of China-related articles—are in part due to differences in the different scholarly traditions. While anchored in the particular issues and sources they explore, and set in their vastly different historical, geographic and socio-cultural context, the chapters in this volume interact as they test the contested and unstable margins of the frames that set off leisure from other pursuits. They do so in conversation with theoretical conceptualizations and empirical research.

This volume is organized into three parts. Part one “The State’s Leisure Agenda” offers two papers (Tim Oakes and Catherine V. Yeh), which address the interaction between the state and local actors in managing and shaping leisure. It offers case studies of the efforts a highly invasive state (Tim Oakes on the People’s Republic of China) and a largely dysfunctional one (Catherine V. Yeh on the Republic of China during the 1910s and 1920s) in harnessing leisure for an agenda of civilizing the population, of the state’s dependency on local elites, and of the disconnect between the given state’s normative powers and the willingness or unwillingness of its populace to go along. The methods used draw on anthropology, government studies, history, sociology, and geography (Oakes) as well as on cultural history, theater studies, transcultural studies, literary studies, and hermeneutics (Yeh). The disputed margin is that between the normative agenda of the state’s management of leisure, and the subjunctive agency that is a core feature of leisure pursuits.

Part two, “The Margins of Leisure,” contains four studies that focus on the borders framing leisure and their historical shifts. Robert Weller draws on the methodologies of anthropology and history of mentalities to explore the common elements increasingly linking leisure and religious practices, as well as the evolving “subjunctive” elements that set the two apart. Eugenio Menegon, relying on a rich body of hitherto unexplored materials from the Propaganda Fide Archives, studies the thinking behind the strategy of different European Catholic orders in the eighteenth century to have their China missionaries devote a large part of their time not to preaching the gospel, but to producing high-luxury leisure goods such as clocks and automata as gifts for the Chinese court and its entourage. Although such leisure pursuits were disdained from a doctrinal perspective, they were legitimized as a way to secure the goodwill necessary for their missionary work to be tolerated. His approach is that of the cultural historian who is aware of and engages with the transcultural dimensions and tensions inherent in the processes studied. Sarah Frederick’s and Nancy J. Smith-Hefner’s case studies take up Veblen’s “leisure class” approach to analyze the social function of leisure pursuits rather than the subjunctive mode of those engaging in it. Sarah Frederick explores the tenuous borders between leisure and “vicarious labor” in the acquisition of modern and westernized cultural skills such as piano playing for girls in her study of the interwar Japanese adaptations of the American novel and film *Stella Dallas*. The tension here comes from the message for the girls’ mothers to show their love by creating the leeway for their daughters to acquire these skills while not letting their own lack of them get in the way of the girls’ advancement. Basing her work on anthropological field research among young adults hanging out in shopping malls in Yogyakarta in Java and the study of advice handbooks for their behavior from Muslim religious writers, Nancy Smith-Hefner explores the way in which these malls serve as a “leisurely” social training ground in urban “gaul” behavior for students from the countryside, a behavior that might open the way to a white-collar

job and the transition from window shopping to actual consumerism. Instead of the state authorities or films with a didactic message, religious teachers intervene here to regulate what they see as the anomic potential in these leisure pursuits for young people without blocking the acquisition of “gaul” career skills.

The two papers in part three, “Leisure as a Contact Zone,” focus on the tension between the openness of leisure pursuits for transcultural imports and the urge to secure an ultimate cultural authenticity even in the very international environment of East Asian treaty ports. Lai Yu-chih focuses on the processes and tensions of transcultural interaction in art at work in the extensive incorporation of Japanese paintings in Chinese painting manuals on sale in Shanghai during the last decades of the nineteenth century that were conceptualized and published by an Englishman, Ernest Major. The pressure for authenticity already showed in the selection of the type of Japanese paintings that were included, but eventually extended to the point of a selective redrawing of Japanese paintings before they were included. Rudolf Wagner deals with the complex relationship between provider and consumer of leisure products in the context of transcultural interaction. His case study examines the strategy implied in the publishing practice of the British-owned Shenbao guan Chinese-language publisher in the Shanghai International Settlement. Principally a provider of Chinese leisure products from a settlement that was staging itself not just as an international commercial center but also as a paradise of leisure, this publishing house still had to establish its cultural credibility as a provider of Chinese leisure products by publicly insisting that it was guided by commercial rather than missionary or political motives. The agency in making or breaking his enterprise was thus, via the market, completely in the hands of the Chinese readership. While very explicitly making use of the most advanced Western technologies and management methods, the British manager made sure to select and present them through forms and formats attractive to literate Chinese audiences. Emulations of his highly successful approach by other publishing ventures ended up turning the Shanghai International Settlement into the Chinese media capital for decades to come.

In the process of the joint discussions, Rudolf Wagner and Catherine Yeh, two of the contributors to this volume, have sketched a set of “frames” of leisure that took up the results of the case studies as well as the critical discussions with the other participants of the workshops and conferences while engaging with available conceptualizations derived from European and North American cases. The resulting theoretical forays try to make the best of the existing studies while also trying to overcome the limitations coming with a Europe- and North-America-centered nation state approach and to incorporate the results of the empirical case studies presented here.

The case studies contained in this volume hope to contribute to the discussion of some critical issues in leisure studies as outlined above. The book comes out at a time of a rapid social transformation in Asia which

is accompanied by dramatic changes in lifestyle and behavior as well as steeply rising transcultural interaction in leisure and other fields, but also by a growing nervousness about a loss of cultural and religious authenticity and ideological control. The studies engage with the present in a historically informed way, critically connecting with the developing field of leisure studies as well as with developments in different parts of Asia.

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PART I

# The State's Leisure Agenda

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Tim Oakes

# Leisure as Governable Space: Transcultural Leisure and Governmentality in Urban China

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**Abstract** This chapter explores transcultural leisure development in contemporary China through the analytical lens of government. Drawing on research conducted in small cities and towns in Guizhou Province, the chapter focuses on the conception, construction, and use of new urban leisure spaces, and suggests that we view these as part of the state's spatial apparatus of social ordering. Leisure is thus viewed as part of a suite of governing technologies designed to shape the conduct of China's citizens in particular ways and toward particular normative goals of the state. The chapter explores the transcultural production of leisure in China under these circumstances, and finds that the governmentality of leisure derives from both Chinese and non-Chinese experiences, histories, and discourses of leisure. However, while leisure is promoted in China as a form of social ordering, actual practices of governing through leisure produce effects and outcomes that are both unintended and unpredictable from the perspective of planners, designers, and other governmental agents. These outcomes reveal a tension between the promotion of leisure as a new kind of 'active' citizenship and leisure as an instrument of social control on the part of the state. Viewed as 'governable spaces', then, leisure spaces are anything but straightforward sites for the reproduction of dominant modes of power. Instead, urban leisure spaces are also claimed by urban residents as constitutive of collective urban identities.

**Keywords** governmentality, governable space, leisure space, urban development, citizenship

## Introduction

In his book *Leisure Theory*, Chris Rojek argues that leisure has emerged from its earlier theorization as “a segmented realm of human experience magically insulated from the rest of life,” to being viewed as a central component of our daily social lives.<sup>1</sup> We can no longer view leisure, he argues, as a compartmentalized or segregated form of life. “On the contrary, it is in our leisure time that we are exposed to information and policy options regarding the appropriate rights and responsibilities of active citizenship and also to news about the infringement of these conditions.”<sup>2</sup> Rojek’s effort to resituate leisure from the margins of a social model based on paid employment to a central component of a “post-work” sociology reflects the fact that we now view recreation and leisure as *the* primary area of social life in which central values of care, preservation, and justice are propagated. He thus calls for an equation of leisure with “active citizenship.”<sup>3</sup> That is, leisure should play a central role in redefining social inclusion, distributive justice, and empowerment. Instead of a “right to leisure” hinging on one’s paid employment status,<sup>4</sup> then, we must “break the work ethic’s long association between leisure, hedonism, and the reward for work. A revitalized model of leisure and the community is required, built around the principle of leisure as a primary source of social capital, and voluntary activity in generating and defending social capital as a source of self-worth and distinction.”<sup>5</sup> This ultimately means redefining the “model citizen” as constituted through leisure rather than labor.

Rojek’s constitution of citizenship through leisure aligns in some interesting ways with contemporary Chinese urban planning, where designs for transforming China’s post-socialist urban built environment seem fixated on an exemplary model of an “active leisure citizen” as the ideal urban subject. Not only has leisure become central to the planning and reconstruction of urban space in China, but leisure has also become central to new models of citizenship there as well. Given China’s history of appropriating and adapting transcultural approaches to shaping and regulating leisure, such an alignment may not be that far-fetched. In 2010, a Chinese translation of *Leisure Theory* was published by China Tourism Press, joining a rapidly growing body of work in Chinese leisure studies.<sup>6</sup> In fact, however, Rojek’s visions of leisure as active citizenship differs in significant

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1 Chris Rojek, *Leisure Theory: Principles and Practices* (London: Palgrave, 2005), 3.

2 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 4.

3 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 2.

4 The “right to leisure” was at the heart of the *Charter for Leisure* adopted in 2000 by the World Leisure and Recreation Association without, however, explicitly addressing the existing inequalities in access to leisure pursuits. Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 197.

5 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 205.

6 Luo Jieke 羅傑克 [Rojek], *Xiuxian lilun yuanli yu shixian 休閒理論原理與實踐* [Leisure theory: Principles and practices], trans. Zhang Lingyun 張凌雲 (Beijing: Zhongguo lüyou chubanshe, 2010).

ways from China, where leisure is approached more as a kind of governing instrument. Although Rojek seeks to firmly establish contemporary leisure within a civil society framework capable of challenging the power of the state and of capital, this potentially subversive transcultural vision of active citizenship is somewhat lost in translation when viewed in the context of Chinese urban planning. Leisure has indeed been valorized in China as a new model of citizenship, but one primarily defined by orderliness and governability. In this, China has also drawn on the transcultural dimensions of leisure, but in this case as a form of social ordering and regulation more than autonomous and self-governing citizenship.

This chapter therefore sets out to apply an analytic of government to the study of leisure development in contemporary China. I am particularly interested, in this endeavor, in examining the obvious tension between Rojek's vision of a socially inclusive, justice-seeking, empowered leisure citizen and what we might conveniently think of as the Chinese state's vision of an orderly, consuming, "harmonious", and above all governable leisure citizen. In viewing leisure—and, in particular, urban leisure space—as a practice of government geared towards regulating the anomic potential of leisure discussed in the "Theoretical Essay" and in the study by Catherine V. Yeh in this volume, I hope to demonstrate how the Chinese state's promotion of leisure consumption, tourism, and recreation can be interpreted as a form of governmentality. That is, the chapter argues that leisure is part of a governmental apparatus designed to shape the conduct of China's citizens in particular ways and toward particular normative goals of the state. The chapter explores the transcultural production of leisure in China under these circumstances, and finds that the governmentality of leisure derives from both Chinese and non-Chinese experiences, histories, and discourses of leisure. However, while leisure is promoted in China as a form of social ordering, actual practices of governing through leisure produce effects and outcomes that are both unintended and unpredictable from the perspective of planners, designers, and other governmental agents. Whether these effects are capable of constituting Rojek's "active citizens," particularly given recent constraints on civic organizations in China,<sup>7</sup> remains to be seen.

## Urban leisure space in China

While it may be true that "leisure creates its space" as the "Theoretical Essay" argues, the Chinese state has nevertheless been busy creating spaces for leisure as well. Since the early 2000s, leisure has been built into China's urban landscape in a way that has shifted away from the demarcated tourism and shopping zones of the 1990s to comprehensive plans in which

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7 Andrew Jacobs and Chris Buckley, "In China, Civic Groups' Freedom, and Followers, are Vanishing," *New York Times*, February 26, 2015, A4.

leisure space is a fundamental feature of the urban environment. This shift can be situated within a more general process of cultural development in China in which the state began to recognize the economic power and governmental utility of cultural and leisure production and consumption.<sup>8</sup> The national tourism and leisure planning outline for 2013–2020 called for a comprehensive orientation toward leisure spaces and activities in both urban and rural development.<sup>9</sup> And in 2014, the *People's Daily* claimed that with leisure becoming central to urban and rural infrastructure construction, China had entered a new stage of national development.<sup>10</sup> The vast—and in many ways alienating—public spaces of state socialism (think Tiananmen Square) have given way to consumable spaces of leisure.<sup>11</sup> As Miao and others have pointed out, many of these new leisure spaces serve as little more than window dressing for mayors and governors—referred to in China as *mianzi gongcheng* (“face projects”)—that fail to serve the needs of ordinary citizens.<sup>12</sup> Many of these are only quasi-public spaces,<sup>13</sup> serving primarily private commercial interests as extensions of larger gentrification projects.<sup>14</sup>

While much scholarly attention has been directed toward major urban centers like Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, China's urbanization push has—at least from a policy perspective—concentrated on the country's thousands of towns and small cities. Mayors of such lower-tier urban centers, as well as district leaders and provincial governors, are eager to demonstrate their urbanization credentials by creating highly visible landscapes that symbolize progress, modernity, and prosperity. Thus, China has recently witnessed a spate of spectacular urban redevelopments in relatively minor towns and cities that represent little more than a lavish waste of public funds in the eyes of many residents. Public squares and refurbished shopping districts are two of the most common elements of these

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8 See Tim Oakes, “Cultural Strategies of Development: Implications for Village Governance in China,” *Pacific Review* 19, no. 1 (2006): 13–37; Guo, Yingjie, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: The Search for National Identity under Reform* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); and Jing Wang, “Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital,” *Positions* 9, no. 1 (2001): 69–104.

9 Guowuyuan bangongting 國務院辦公廳 [China State Council], “Guomin Lüyou Xiuxian Gangyao (2013–2020 nian) de tongzhi 國民旅遊休閒綱要 (2013–2020 年) 的通知 [Notification on the *National Tourism and Leisure Outline* (2013–2020)],” *Guoban fa* 國辦發 10, 2013, accessed October 2, 2014, <http://baike.baidu.com/view/2275169.htm>.

10 Liu, Jia 劉佳, “Zhongguo xiuxian fazhan jinru xin jieduan: guomin xiuxian tixi zheng zhubu xingcheng 中國休閒發展進入新階段 國民休閒體系正逐步形成 [China's leisure development enters a new stage as the national leisure recreation system gradually takes shape],” *Renmin ribao*, October 9, 2014, accessed October 10, 2014, <http://travel.people.com.cn/>.

11 Piper Gaubatz, “New Public Space in Urban China,” *China Perspectives* 4 (2008): 72–83.

12 Pu Miao, “Brave New City: Three Problems in Chinese Urban Public Space since the 1980s,” *Journal of Urban Design* 16, no. 2 (2011): 179–207.

13 Weiping Wu and Piper Gaubatz, *The Chinese City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 243.

14 Miao, “Brave New City,” 188–195.



image engineering projects. However, while such “face projects” might be viewed as largely irrelevant to residents’ daily leisure lives, planners do tend to imbue their planning with governance objectives of improving population quality and encouraging a more self-determining and autonomous citizenry.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, while there is a significant and growing demand for public leisure space among urban residents in China, and while the state has recognized, responded to, and in many ways guided and even cultivated this demand, many of the country’s spectacular new public and quasi-public spaces fail to meet the basic leisure needs of many ordinary people. Throughout urban China, people lay claim to all sorts of spaces, both formal and informal alike, for their leisure practices. While many spaces designed for orderly leisure are indeed actively used, many others are avoided. Why do certain spaces work as public leisure spaces, while others clearly do not? In what ways do people claim spaces for leisure? How do such claims relate to the governance objectives of leisure development? To what extent, in short, do leisure practices in urban China reinforce or subvert the social ordering objectives that the state has defined for leisure development? These questions, and others, were central to research I conducted in Guizhou, in collaboration with local colleagues, between 2012 and 2014. Fieldwork consisted of informal interviews, surveys, and participant-observation among public space users in two urban sites. This chapter focuses primarily on results from one of those two sites.

Danjiang is the seat of Leishan County in Southeast Guizhou’s Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture. The town underwent a massive renovation between 2008 and 2012, with two new public squares as dual centerpieces of the new urban plan. Nearly all of the town’s buildings were refaced with Miao ethnic motifs, marking a significant shift in the ideological role the townscape has played as a model of urban modernity for the surrounding countryside (Fig. 1). Dating to the eighteenth century, when Qing general Ortai established a garrison during his campaign to suppress the Miao and enforce direct imperial administration, Danjiang was a Han Chinese outpost deep within Miao territory. During the Mao era, it was built over in the typical style of functional modernism: a cluster of unremarkable low-rise cement block buildings. As such, Danjiang, like similar towns throughout Guizhou’s ethnic countryside, rendered visible the new modernity of state socialism. It was a space where the rural Miao could literally enter modernity, a space where they would eventually lose their ethnic cultural distinctiveness and give up traditional dress, where they would join the Han and march toward China’s bright socialist future.

Leisure was never a deliberate part of this socialist space (which is not to say that there were not plenty of collective leisure activities for residents

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15 Luigi Tomba, *The Government Next Door: Neighborhood Politics in Urban China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 42, 179.



Figure 1: Original Danjiang house, with dressed-up apartment building behind.

to engage in). But that began to change during post-Mao reforms with the introduction of ethnic tourism throughout the region. Tourism transformed nearby Miao and Dong villages into leisure spaces first for foreigners, and then for urban Chinese tourists. By the mid-2000s, local governments were hoping to capture more tourism revenue by also turning towns and cities throughout the region into leisure spaces. At the same time, planners also began to see leisure not simply as a revenue generating tool, but also as a new technology for the governance of urban populations themselves.

Danjiang's huge makeover project illustrates both of these trends: an effort to turn the town into the branded center of Miao ethnic tourism in the region, and an effort to create a new (leisure) environment for a new kind of (consumer) citizen. One town planner in Danjiang explained to me that development is not just about economic growth, but also includes developing the environment and people's thinking. "We've created a new environment," he said. "It has a big influence on people. If people live in a nice environment, their thinking changes, their quality improves; the environment can create more civilization." He also explained that the reason this had not happened during the Mao era was that the local people could not understand the modernist environment of the socialist city. "The environment needs to come from the local culture," he said. "Otherwise, people cannot relate to it and it won't have the same influence on their thinking. They'll think they don't belong there, like it's a foreign place." Thus, Danjiang's ethnic theming was not merely a branding ploy or face project, in his eyes, but a deliberate project of social engineering. Indeed, while the prefectural government had been advocating a plan to refurbish all the

towns in the region in symbolic ethnic styles in order to promote tourism, Danjiang's efforts were being articulated in much more governmentalized ways. Most significantly, though, the town's social ordering project was being enacted through leisure; that is, through the transformation of the town itself into a single leisure space.

## Leisure as ordering: transcultural dimensions

What are the transcultural precedents underlying Danjiang's transformation and its leaders' vision of social ordering through the production of leisure space? To address this question, we must first consider the concept of leisure itself, and how it emerged within a context of what we might think of as nineteenth-century middle-class anxieties over working class idleness. Conventional definitions of leisure tend to reflect this, relying on its separation from labour, and viewing it in normative terms, as a reward for fulfilling one's obligations to society. Joffre Dumazedier, for instance, conceived of leisure as "the time whose content is oriented towards self-fulfillment as an ultimate end. This time is granted to the individual by society, when he has complied with his occupational, family, socio-spiritual and socio-political obligations."<sup>16</sup> This approach relegates leisure to the margins of social inquiry and categorizes it as the residual effect of more fundamental (work-related) social processes and relations. But such an approach also makes leisure potentially transgressive and subversive. As Rojek put it in *Decentering Leisure*:

Leisure, with its time-worn associations with pleasure and freedom, was welcomed as the reward for work. But an excess of leisure was feared as undermining society. Leisure was always treated as secondary. The Romantic argument that it is only through leisure that we truly enrich ourselves and society was treated as a threat to society precisely because it encouraged a disrespect for the inflexible, time-tabled existence favored by the ruling order.<sup>17</sup>

In this way, leisure is entwined with the social reproduction of capital and is thus critical to contesting that social reproduction. Leisure cannot but be viewed as a constitutive element of social ordering because leisure must remain in good order if society is to function. It is thus a fundamentally contested terrain of social order.

In industrializing Britain, for example, leisure served as part of the mode of regulation that maintained the highly uneven regime of accumulation of industrial capitalism. Leisure time provided a normative institution that

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<sup>16</sup> Joffre Dumazedier, *The Sociology of Leisure* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1974), 71.

<sup>17</sup> Chris Rojek, *Decentering Leisure: Rethinking Leisure Theory* (London: Sage, 1995), 57.

reinforced dominant bourgeois ideals of civility. Leisure enabled a normative process of naturalization, where individual choice and self-determination (how one used his/her free time) aligned with the needs of a particular social order. One prominent example explored by Rojek is the mid-nineteenth century's Rational Recreation Movement, in which "middle-class fears of moral decay and physical contagion resulted in campaigns to clean up the leisure activities of deserving workers and to instill in them habits of thrift, industry, and self-improvement."<sup>18</sup> Included in the movement were art galleries for the working class, promotion of sport and exercise, parks, and youth organizations. In the United States, the movement with its link to "muscular Christianity" helped spawn the establishment of the YMCA as an institution shaping healthy and moral leisure conduct. The movement promoted what could be called a governmentalized approach to leisure, one in which the conduct of the working class might be "improved," thereby improving the broader social order and stability.<sup>19</sup> Leisurely reading was similarly targeted for the governing of moral conduct, perhaps most prominently by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and their *Penny Magazine*.

Such self-improvement was in many ways embraced by the working class itself. The moral regulation of leisure, in other words, emanated from multiple agents and sources of power, rather than from a simple top-down application of class power. As E. P. Thompson has pointed out, improvement was something that the working class did to itself as much as was done to it.<sup>20</sup> Pressure for orderly moral conduct among the working class came not only from the factory and the church, but was also exerted by various working class social organizations (such as friendly societies, trade unions, mutual aid associations, and civic organizations) upon themselves. Thompson emphasizes the self-disciplining role of such organizations as fundamental to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century working class formation, and this included the disciplining of working class leisure time. Such discipline included temperance, rules against

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18 Rojek, *Decentering Leisure*, 15.

19 This is not to suggest that the Rational Recreation Movement was a government-sponsored project in any official sense. The movement's primary agents were non-state charitable institutions, not government agencies. It was a governmentalized movement, however, in the sense of government articulated by Rose as "all endeavors to shape, guide, direct the conduct of others, whether these be the crew of a ship, the members of a household, the employees of a boss, the children of a family or the inhabitants of a territory," see Nikolas Rose, *The Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3. Since the late eighteenth century, the government, properly speaking, had increased its efforts to police urban leisure activities that were deemed criminal and likely to undermine the social order, such as gambling. It did so by developing an urban police force that would be able to enforce regulations that had already been in place. The "Theoretical Essay" at the end of this volume references Henry Fielding's work in this context.

20 Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966): 401–429.

gambling, and various rules against traditional amusements on Sundays and other free periods.

The social ordering role of leisure was also evident in the spectacular exhibition spaces of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, in which orderly leisure activity was purposefully modeled and displayed. The City Beautiful movement, which reached its apogee at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, sought to quell the chaotic and unseemly merriment of boisterous city life. The Exposition was heralded in contemporary accounts as a landscape that cultivated civilized conduct among its patrons. As one visitor exclaimed, “No great multitude of people ever showed more love of order. The restraint and discipline were remarkable.”<sup>21</sup> Half a century earlier, Charlotte Brontë had a similar impression during her visit to the Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition of 1850: “the multitude seems ruled and subdued by some invisible influence.”<sup>22</sup> Disneyland was conceived with a similar inspiration. It was Walt Disney’s middle-class “answer to the rowdiness, dirt, and threat of social chaos and bodily excess that afflict amusement arcades and parks in decay—egregiously, Coney Island.”<sup>23</sup> These were exemplary spaces upon which the common masses were to model their behavior.

Thompson’s account makes clear that leisure was constitutive of class. In pointing to disciplined leisure as a feature promoted by trade unions to distinguish a self-respecting working class from the so-called mob that consistently plagued bourgeois fears of working class movements, Thompson’s account also makes clear how the ever-present threat of social *disorder* necessitated viewing leisure as an ordering project. For leisure was rife with many unhealthy practices, such as excessive drinking, gambling, prostitution, fighting and other forms of social aggression, hooliganism, petty crime, vulgar exuberance, and other expressions of discontent with the standard hierarchies by which social order is maintained. The point here is simply this: that viewing leisure as a project of social ordering requires that we remain focused on the fact that such projects are never complete and emerge along multiple valences of social power. Social ordering projects require continual maintenance and even innovation.

## Leisure as ordering in China

The ambiguity with which leisure was typically viewed by nineteenth-century Euro-American elites—as both a pathway to moral degeneracy and a resource for social harmony and individual improvement—suggests

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21 Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 230.

22 Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park*, 231.

23 Yi-Fu Tuan and Steven D. Hoelscher, “Disneyland: Its Place in World Culture,” in *Designing Disney’s Theme Parks: the Architecture of Reassurance*, ed. Karel Ann Marling (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 192–198.

its inherently contested qualities when called upon in the enactment of social reforms. For Chinese elites of the same era, leisure was viewed as a key instrument for the importation of Western science, modernity, and rationality. Here, the transcultural dimension of leisure practices served to legitimize the elite's modernizing agenda. Rather than undermining the state's moral economy, the importation of leisure practices from the West served to reinforce a cosmopolitan vision of New China in healthy competition with the West. Ever since the initial modernization and reform movements of the late Qing, the state in China has taken an interest in shaping and regulating leisure in order to modernize society and make it more governable. Chiang Kai-shek's "New Life Movement" of the 1930s is a case in point.<sup>24</sup>

It is helpful to consider the elite embrace of transcultural leisure as a governing tool in the context of China's broader encounter with the legal standard of civilization as it emerged in the nineteenth century. As laid out by Gong,<sup>25</sup> only states that could meet the legal standard of civilization could legitimately claim sovereignty within the emerging norms of international governance. States meeting this standard demonstrated that they could guarantee basic human rights, had a rationally organized political bureaucracy, adhered to accepted international laws, maintained an active diplomatic corps, and accepted the norms of civilized international society (as defined, of course, by Europe's colonial powers). Chinese elites, like their counterparts facing Europe's gunboat diplomacy throughout the world, were willing and eager to demonstrate their civilized status on Europe's own terms in order to secure the international legitimacy of their nation's sovereignty. At issue, principally, was the extraterritoriality of China's treaty ports. Significantly, it was from these key sites of transculturalism in China that new ideas of "civilized" public leisure activities emerged<sup>26</sup> and spread to other parts of China.<sup>27</sup>

Wang Di's work on early twentieth-century social reformers in Chengdu illustrates a familiar collection of anxieties on the part of elites regarding the leisure practices of the lower classes, similar to those driving the Rational Recreation Movement in the West. Wang notes that in pre-twentieth-century Chengdu, the lack of an overarching urban administration meant that all social classes enjoyed relatively equal access to most urban public spaces: "Commoners freely conducted all sorts of recreational and

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24 Jennifer Lee Oldstone-Moore, "The New Life Movement of Nationalist China: Confucianism, State Authority and Moral Formation" (PhD diss., University of Chicago Divinity School, 2000).

25 Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

26 See the studies by Yu-chih Lai and Rudolf Wagner in this volume as well as further references there, both of which deal with leisure in the Shanghai International Settlement.

27 Wang Min 王敏, Wei Bingbing 魏兵兵, Jiang Wenjun 江文君, and Shao Jian 邵建, eds., *Jindai Shanghai chengshi gonggong kongjian* 近代上海城市公共空間 [Urban public space in modern Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2011).

commercial activities on the street and in other shared spaces such as public squares, temple fronts, ends of bridges, and teahouses.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, commoners were the predominant occupants of urban public space, “which served as market, work site, stage, shelter, and social center for the lower classes.”<sup>29</sup> By the twentieth century, many elites felt driven by a need to imbue such public spaces with a new moral order upon which a strengthened and civilized modern nation could be built.<sup>30</sup> The model for such a civilized modern nation was clearly the West, and was diffused throughout China via the extraterritorial spaces of treaty ports like Shanghai.<sup>31</sup> The standard of civilization thus translated into a transcultural discourse in which the commoner’s *lack of*, and thus *need for*, improvement could be articulated, categorized, and made meaningful within the broader project of Western-style modernization and nation-building.

Leisure was a key realm within which such improvement could be carried out. In *My Country and My People*, Lin Yutang famously noted that it is only during a man’s leisure time that we can see his true character: “We do not know a nation until we know its pleasures of life, just as we do not know a man until we know how he spends his leisure.”<sup>32</sup> More often than not, that man’s leisure time, and thus his “true character,” was castigated by elites as indicative of China’s weaknesses: the commoners had nothing better to do than “play cards and then get drunk.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, popular fairs and festivals were targeted for reform, “bad” operas were purged and purified, new operas were written, and teahouses became particularly intense sites of reform, where it was important to display “healthy” leisure practices (such as bowling!), and encourage rational discussion of current affairs by making newspapers and magazines available for reading. These were meant to counter the temptation to resort to time-wasting diversions such as playing cards and gambling. By the early twentieth century, deviant leisure activities were being criminalized as part of the modernization of urban policing. This included the close regulation of public storytelling in teahouses. Wang notes that by 1902:

[P]olice could investigate and even arrest anyone for a variety of vague offenses, including “bizarre speech,” “unusual behavior,” “weird clothing,” or “evil and licentious talk.” Singing purportedly “licentious” folk songs and gathering in public to “disturb the peace”

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28 Di Wang, *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Commoners, and Local Politics, 1870–1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 23.

29 Wang, *Street Culture*, 69.

30 Mingzheng Shi, “From Imperial Gardens to Public Parks: The Transformation of Urban Space in Early Twentieth-Century Beijing,” *Modern China* 24, no. 3 (1998): 219–254.

31 Wang Min et al., *Jindai Shanghai chengshi*.

32 Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (London: William Heinemann, 1936), 304.

33 Wang, *Street Culture*, 107. The hierarchy in leisure pursuits and the assessment articulated here, that the laboring people must get rid of their coarse leisure habits, echoes that of Fielding and the Rational Recreation Movement.

by shouting were forbidden. For the first time, regulations governed traffic, prostitution, gambling, and hygiene, as well as the behavior of specific groups of people, such as monks and nuns, second-hand item traders, and witch doctors.<sup>34</sup>

Healthy forms of leisure consumption were also promoted within the incipient realm of travel in early twentieth-century China, as has been argued by Dong in her study of Shanghai's *China Traveler* magazine.<sup>35</sup> Travel to relatively accessible destinations for leisure was promoted by the magazine as a healthy form of consumption, in contrast to the sorts of debauched consumer practices Shanghai had become infamous for by the 1930s. Dong observes that "leisure-time escapes to the Chinese countryside [were] not . . . a traditionally Chinese habit. Repeatedly [*China Traveler's*] pages highlighted the contrast between Europeans and Americans, who enjoyed traveling, and the Chinese, who tended to stay home."<sup>36</sup> In contrast to Germans who, for example, loved music, liked to go outdoors, and traveled to faraway places, the Chinese were said to like to "drink and play mahjong to kill time."<sup>37</sup> These were viewed as unhealthy leisure practices that exemplified China's colonial status as the so-called "sick man of Asia."

The desire to travel, and a sense of pleasure in travel, had to be cultivated. Leisure travel might be viewed, in other words, as a transcultural practice called on to produce a specific vision of modern social order and harmony in China. Indeed, it was the transcultural qualities of leisure travel that made this vision possible, for it constituted an exemplary Chinese consumer as a "citizen of the world," rather than, say, a Chinese nationalist. Shanghai elites in the 1930s tended to view leisure travel not as an extension of imperialism and colonialism, but as a "politically neutral and modern form of cosmopolitanism."<sup>38</sup> As such, leisure travel—along with other sanctioned forms of leisure practice—could be embraced and emulated as Western cultural practices by modern Chinese without fear of betraying their national loyalties.

Today, leisure remains central to elite Chinese visions of national self-strengthening. A "leisure ethic," as Rolandsen has recently called it,<sup>39</sup> continues to inform the state's moral economy discourse in China. Leisure studies have become a significant field of scholarship, and most of the work in this field conveys a normative, moralizing view of leisure as a form of nation-state pedagogy and a resource to be cultivated in China's

34 Wang, *Street Culture*, 132.

35 Madeleine Yue Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," in *Everyday Modernity in China*, ed. Madeleine Dong and Joshua Goldstein (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 195–226. See also "The Chinese Wanderlust," *China Critic* 14, no. 6 (August, 1936): 128.

36 Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," 204.

37 Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," 205.

38 Dong, "Shanghai's *China Traveler*," 220.

39 Unn Målfrid H. Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power in Urban China: Everyday Life in a Chinese City* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 4.



global competitiveness.<sup>40</sup> As with their late-nineteenth-century forebears, many intellectuals today display anxiety over the Chinese people wasting time and using their leisure time for unproductive activities. Like any other precious national resource—land, energy, or water—leisure time should not be wasted. Quoting Sun Xiaoli,<sup>41</sup> Rolandsen puts it this way: “[. . .] in order to establish a scientific, healthy and civilized lifestyle,” the Chinese masses must at least be educated in “modern concepts” such as scientific family planning, and a concept of consumption that does not encourage hedonism and the worship of money. They also need to adopt a concept of leisure where leisure is regarded as a resource “that must be governed in a scientific, civilized and cherishing manner.”<sup>42</sup>

Festa has looked at contemporary Chinese leisure practices—specifically mahjong—and found a similar emphasis on leisure as a tool for moral regulation. Noticing a broader state-sponsored discourse that links leisure to population quality, Festa quotes Shi Ren’s book *Nightlife*: “how people spend their leisure time is a direct qualitative expression of their personal nature and level of cultural attainment and civility.”<sup>43</sup> He then turns to an extended reading of Sheng Qi’s *Mahjong Studies*<sup>44</sup> to argue that Sheng’s book situates mahjong within this broader discourse of leisure as quality. Sheng, in other words, articulates a discourse of social regulation in which mahjong enables a new kind of cultivation of the self.

With Sheng’s project of rehabilitating mahjong, however, we see an effort to move away from earlier transcultural practices in which Western leisure influences were embraced in the early twentieth century. Sheng’s Chinese self is no longer trying to meet the defunct pretensions of an international standard of civilization, but is instead drawing upon a national folk cultural tradition which is at once non-elite and essentially Chinese. Thus, for Festa, the recovery of mahjong in Chinese popular culture from its Mao-era and earlier<sup>45</sup> associations with gambling and other unhealthy and unproductive forms of (bourgeois) leisure is a result of state efforts to “discipline and control a consumption-driven mass culture without suppressing the diversity and heterogeneity of personal interests and desires

40 See e.g. the collection of case studies in Zhang Jing’an 張景安 and Ma Huidi 馬惠娣, eds., *Zhongguo gongzhong xiuxian chuanguang diaocha* 中國公眾休閒狀況調查 [Survey studies of the state of leisure life among the Chinese public] (Beijing: Zhongguo jingji chubanshe, 2004).

41 Sun Xiaoli 孫曉莉, “jianli kexue, jiankang, wenming de shenghuo fangshi 建立科學、健康、文明的生活方式 [Establish a scientific, healthy, and civilized lifestyle].” In *Zhongguo gongzhong xiuxian chuanguang diaocha* (Beijing: Zhongguo jingji chubanshe, 2004), 73–90.

42 Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power*, 88.

43 Shi, Ren 石人, *Ye shenghuo zonghengtan: dangqian xianxia wenhua tansuo* 夜生活縱橫談：當前閒暇文化探索 [Nightlife: An investigation of leisure culture in contemporary China] (Beijing: Zhongguo Wenlian Chubanshe, 1997). Paul Festa, “Mahjong Politics in Contemporary China: Civility, Chineseness, and Mass Culture,” *positions: east asia cultures critique* 14, no. 1 (2006): 20.

44 Sheng, Qi 盛琦, *Majiang xue* 麻將學 [Mahjong studies] (Beijing: Tongxin, 1999).

45 See Edward Y. K. Kwong, “Mahjong, the Curse of a Nation,” *China Critic* 15, no. 1 (October 1936): 15–17.

that the market thrives upon."<sup>46</sup> Mahjong is a mass cultural form, the manipulation of which, for Festa, allows the state to maintain its "grip on society."

Festa's approach seems to reproduce a somewhat state-centric and instrumental view of leisure. This is a criticism that might be applied to moral regulation theory in more general terms as well. As Rojek himself has pointed out, moral regulation theory tends not to emphasize the extent to which people negotiate this process of normalization, nor does it see regulation as an ongoing project. Moral regulation theory tends to assign to the state the pre-eminent role in ordering social life.<sup>47</sup> It seems, then, that there is still a need for an analysis of leisure in China that is not content to view it as just another tool at the state's disposal for the purpose of maintaining its grip on society. If anything, the state remains deeply conflicted and ambivalent over the healthiness of mahjong, the visible (public) playing of which has been prohibited among state officials. Public enthusiasm for the game has been cause for considerable moral and legal concern on the part of state and quasi-state actors, as recently noted by Wang.<sup>48</sup>

Rolandsen's analysis of leisure in Quanzhou begins by noting that leisure has been viewed as a case demonstrating "how the Communist party-state to a certain extent still seeks to dominate and control the everyday lives of the Chinese people."<sup>49</sup> But she finds that "the local population has considerable agency and room to maneuver in the local leisure space," and that the elite leisure ethic—perhaps not surprisingly—has little or no impact on how people actually spend their leisure time. Indeed, she finds that

. . . not only is the discourse of healthy and chaotic leisure of little consequence for the actual leisure practices that take place in Quanzhou, but also that the policies of the local government towards the leisure market are not pursued with any consistency by the relevant government agencies . . . [O]fficially approved leisure activities, however healthy, receive little or no support from the local government.<sup>50</sup>

This official retreat from active state investment in guiding leisure is a partial result, she argues, of an official willingness to relinquish leisure to the market as a strategy for enhancing state revenue rather than regulating social order. It also reflects the increasingly neoliberal ideals of officials for whom reform tends to mean little more than marketization.

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46 Festa, "Mahjong Politics," 8.

47 Rojek, *Decentering Leisure*, 45.

48 Di Wang, "Mahjong and Urban Life: Individual Rights, Collective Interests, and the City Image in post-Mao China," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (2014): 187–210.

49 Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power*, 3.

50 Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power*, 12–13.

Rolandson's approach is to focus on the failure of the state to follow through with its own prescriptions for social ordering. Yet this tells us little about the ways leisure practices might actively contest or subvert those prescriptions themselves. Farquhar's study of the everyday park-going habits of contemporary Beijingers moves somewhat in this direction. She is interested in the continued practice of Mao-era collective activities of Beijing park-goers—fan dancing or group singing, for instance—and what type of politics such activities might constitute in hyper-marketized, capitalist-oriented post-reform China. Farquhar is careful not to overstate the political aspects of such leisure activities. She argues that “this is not a politics of rebellion or resistance.” But she does point out that it nevertheless “advances a compliant civilizational nationalism with deep roots in China's revolutionary twentieth century,” and that “even this quiet form of action must be appreciated for its political significance, [because] even compliance works on the dispositions of power in public.”<sup>51</sup>

While I am unsure whether this differs appreciably from Festa's conclusion that leisure helps solidify the state's grip on power, Farquhar at least recognizes that the regulation of leisure practice is not a straightforward process of state social control. This is because she finds that going to the park actively subverts the overwhelming tide of privatization that now dominates everyday life in Beijing: “Rather than denounce the collective activity of an uncritical mainstream as compliant and quietist, and therefore not political at all, we should seek in the ordinary action of the people a form of collective assertion that creates a political space.”<sup>52</sup> This political space is asserted not so much against the constraints of state power but against the neoliberalization of daily life, where everything is privatized and rendered marketable. In that context, the park is a space of “the good life” in central Beijing that has been lost to land speculation, development, and other forms of primitive accumulation that dominate urban China today.<sup>53</sup>

Like E. P. Thompson's working class, Farquhar's park-goers regulate their own leisure practices and spaces as a fundamental part of constituting themselves as a collective social body. In Beijing, they dress up for the park. “What would the city be,” Farquhar asks, “if its spaces and times were not constantly made and remade in the daily rounds of its citizens? People told me, for example, that the achievement of a wholesome old age in public, in Beijing, is a service to the nation. It looks good, they said, and it shows off citizens' collective good health, to have ninety-year-olds in the neighborhoods and in the parks.”<sup>54</sup> Here, then, is a clearer expression of leisure as social ordering: not simply as a state project of social control, but

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51 Judith Farquhar, “The Park Pass: Peopling and Civilizing a New Old Beijing,” *Public Culture* 21, no. 3 (2009): 555.

52 Farquhar, “The Park Pass,” 559.

53 You-tien Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

54 Farquhar, “The Park Pass,” 574.

as a realm within which multiple actors negotiate the projects of ordering with a variety of outcomes which, in turn, must be themselves subject to further projects of ordering.

Rather than being marginal or residual, leisure is thus embedded in everyday social activity, and is constitutive of social relations rather than an after-effect of those relations. We might productively treat leisure, as Festa does, as a lens through which to better understand the nuances of state power in contemporary China and its efforts to “govern from afar” as Zhang and Ong called it.<sup>55</sup> But it seems necessary to keep reminding ourselves that such governing strategies are best viewed as inherently incomplete, as demonstrated by Rolandsen,<sup>56</sup> and always productive of outcomes that emerge—in practice—from the particular constellations of discourse and space created by such ordering projects. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault referred to emergent hetero-sexualities as “instrument-effects,”<sup>57</sup> and this term can be usefully applied to any broader array of unintended outcomes that emerge from social engineering projects, as has been suggested by Ferguson.<sup>58</sup> A more deliberately spatial perspective can help appreciate such outcomes as more than the residuals of plans gone awry (or of plans never implemented in the first place). The idea of governable space may be a useful perspective from which to explore these ideas in ways that avoid the linear conception of power lurking behind Festa’s mahjong games as well as help sort out just what kind of politics is going on in Farquhar’s Beijing parks.

## Leisure as governable space

The idea of governable space emerges initially from Foucault’s late-1970s lectures at the Collège de France.<sup>59</sup> Foucault laid out a genealogy of modes of power as they emerged in Western Europe, culminating with the “apparatus” (*dispositive*) of security for which government has become the dominant ensemble of institutions. While there is obviously much to be said about the emergence of a governmentalized form of state power as a particularly distinguishing characteristic of modernity, what concerns me is the spatial expression of this governmentalized form of power. Indeed, as argued by Rose, by the 1990s governmentality studies, drawing from Foucault’s broad analytic, began focusing less on (national) society as a discrete unit through which governmental power was territorialized,

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55 Li Zhang and Aihwa Ong, eds., *Privatizing China: Socialism from Afar* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

56 Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power*, 106.

57 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 48.

58 James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

59 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78*, translated by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

and more on the micro-scale spatial expressions of that power, such as community.<sup>60</sup>

The most important thing to understand about the role of space in Foucault's formulation of the governmentalized state is that space—like the state itself—becomes a kind of *effect* of governmentalized power. Such governmentalized spaces—for example, administrative regions, cities, towns, zones of various kinds, ghettos and other specially administered areas, colonies, and even extraterritorial spaces—emerge out of the territorialization of discrete populations, making them governable by authority and subject to state sovereignty. Such territorialized populations can be organized and articulated by a variety of other kinds of spaces as well: schools, factories, hospitals, prisons, museums, and even shopping malls as studied by Nancy Smith-Hefner in this volume, airports, or department stores.<sup>61</sup> These governable spaces are not merely settings within which the governance of populations happens; they are not simply stages upon which the techniques of calculation and categorization of populations are played out. Rather, they are socially constructed spaces that actively constitute subjects in new ways: “they make new kinds of experience possible, produce new modes of perception, invest percepts with affects, with dangers and opportunities, with saliences and attractions.”<sup>62</sup> Such spaces realize our ideas and thoughts through material procedures and practices of inscription, calculation, and action.

In his discussion of governable space, Rose proposes the concept of “render[ing] visible” to identify one of the most important of these material procedures and practices that enable such spaces to “make new kinds of experience possible.” Rose points out that governable space needs to be visible space; it needs to be clearly bounded and distinguished. In these terms, rendering visible is not just about looking. Governable space needs to be “re-presented in maps, charts, pictures, and other inscription devices. It is made visible, gridded, marked out, placed in two dimensions, scaled, populated with icons and so forth. In this process, and from the perspective of its government, salient features are identified and non-salient features rendered invisible.”<sup>63</sup> Maps are perhaps the most obvious technique of rendering visible, as map-making serves as a kind of uber-inscription device. But inscription is also rhetorical. Rose calls it “a little machine for producing conviction in others,”<sup>64</sup> and making possible the extension of authority over that which is inscribed. Rendering visible thus involves a power relation between knowledge and its subjects—those objects made

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60 Nikolas Rose, “The Death of the Social? Re-figuring the Territory of Government,” *Economy and Society* 25 (1996): 327–356. See also Tim Bunnell and Neil M. Coe, “Re-fragmenting the ‘Political’: Globalization, Governmentality and Malaysia’s Multimedia Super Corridor,” *Political Geography* 24 (2005): 831–849.

61 Nikolas Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 35.

62 Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 32.

63 Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 32, 36.

64 Rose, *The Powers of Freedom*, 37.

visible—and it is this question of power that lies at the heart of the concept. Governable space, then, is a way of thinking about the spatial nature of social ordering projects from a perspective that insists on a particular focus on power.

Working with some of these ideas in the context of urban China, Bray has explored the space of the community (*shequ*) as the basic unit of urban social, political, and administrative organization in China today. The *shequ*, Bray argues, were developed in a hybrid spatial strategy of urban governance combining “governmental intervention with the mobilization of local self-help”.<sup>65</sup> As such, community building also implies raising the moral quality of urban citizens. This moral quality ultimately suggests a certain kind of autonomous and self-determining citizen. Boland and Zhu have similarly argued that one of the main goals of *shequ* development is to “increase public participation in community affairs.”<sup>66</sup> Yet while the *shequ* is deliberately constructed as a space that puts into practice a certain ideal of self-governance, self-control, and self-determination, Heberer and Göbel point out that it is an “imposed community” that facilitates the reimposition of state power in response to contemporary urban social fragmentation.<sup>67</sup> Tomba, similarly, refers to *shequ* governance as a kind of “pastoral government” aimed at stabilizing society’s weakest groups.<sup>68</sup>

The community, then, “no longer stands in opposition to the state, but instead is re-created as a willing partner in the government of itself.”<sup>69</sup> The *shequ* is, in short, a governable space. Yet how effective are such spaces in producing social order? Are they merely enabling the state to keep its grip on power, as Festa argues that playing mahjong does? What seems needed is an approach to governable space that suggests less the inevitability of state or corporate power, but the spatial contingencies of power.<sup>70</sup> As Ghertner has argued in a different context, powerful state spaces may indeed offer normalized interpellations through which urban subjects come to inhabit space, but those spaces nevertheless “operate as a contested arena, allowing those subjects to fashion new political demands and visions.”<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Lisa Hoffman has argued that “important questions

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65 David Bray, “Building ‘Community’: New Strategies of Governance in Urban China,” in *China’s Governmentalities: Governing Change, Changing Government*, ed. Elaine Jeffreys (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 89.

66 Alana Boland and Jjiangang Zhu, “Public Participation in China’s Green Communities: Mobilizing Memories and Structuring Incentives,” *Geoforum* 43, no. 1 (2012): 151.

67 Thomas Heberer and Christian Goebel, *The Politics of Community Building in Urban China* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 9–11.

68 Tomba, *The Government Next Door*, 49.

69 Bray, “Building ‘Community,’” 90.

70 For “ungovernable space” see Michael Watts, “Development and Governmentality,” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 24, no. 1 (2003): 6–34.

71 D. Asher Ghertner, “Rule by Aesthetics: World-class City Making in Delhi,” in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, ed. Ananya Roy and Aiwa Ong (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 281.

remain about how people negotiate the regulation and discipline inherent" in contemporary Chinese spaces of government.<sup>72</sup>

What does it mean, then, to think about leisure spaces as governable spaces? Two key issues readily present themselves: First, rendering leisure space visible would seemingly be a key technique or strategy in the broader project of governing populations through leisure. Second, understanding the nature of power in leisure as a project of social ordering also seems to be a necessary component of any interpretation. This does not simply mean the straightforward exercise of state authority over subjects, as Festa tends to see in the politics of mahjong. Rather, it means appreciating the unfinished and contingent nature of ordering projects.

### Governing leisure space in Guizhou

How effective, then, has Danjiang's transformation into a governable leisure space been? While the town's residents have clearly embraced a new subjectivity as leisure consumers, they have constituted themselves as such through their own, often unintended and ungovernable practices and spatial productions. Most obviously, this could be seen from the palpable disavowal of ownership of the town's newly built environment on the part of many townspeople. Several residents told us that they felt the entire ethnic theming project was a huge waste of money. "There are many poor people in Leishan County," one said, reflecting the comments of many. "What will dressing these buildings up to look nice do to help them?" There was, for the most part, bemused skepticism among residents as to whether the makeover would affect or improve their lives in any way. The town's largest new public space, the Bronze Drum Square, was a vast void situated across from the lavish new county government complex and next to a new sports arena on the outskirts of the main town. It stood largely empty, day and night, and included all the design elements of the typical window dressing projects identified by Miao: extravagant size, depletion of former arable land, disconnect from retail and residential areas frequented by pedestrians, ornamental space dominated by a symmetrical and cold monumentalism meant to vaguely mimic the European plaza, and resulting in little more than a tourist attraction rather than a community space.<sup>73</sup> In this sense, the Bronze Drum Square was more of an ungovernable space, one which utterly failed in any kind of social ordering due to its sheer irrelevance to residents' daily lives as anything but the butt of jokes. Reinforcing this irony was the fact that the new government office complex next to the

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72 Lisa Hoffman, "Urban Modeling and Contemporary Technologies of City-Building in China: The Production of Regimes of Green Urbanisms," in *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, ed. Ananya Roy and Aiwa Ong (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 69.

73 Miao, "Brave New City," 181–185.



Figure 2: Early evening broadcast exercise session, Bronze Drum Square, Danjiang.

square ended up being auctioned off to the provincial tourism bureau and refitted as a luxury hotel when the county could no longer finance its construction (Fig. 2).

Yet there was almost universal praise and enthusiasm among the residents for the second public space created during the town's renovation: the Wooden Drum Square. This space was not part of the town's original plan, but emerged instead from the unexpected resistance of a group of residents facing the demolition of their neighborhood. The square now occupies the former site of a ramshackle ghetto of falling-down huts—the poorest, most squalid and depraved neighborhood in town. Other than those who lived there, few were sorry to see it go. But when the town proposed replacing the neighborhood with a new high-end apartment complex and shopping mall, the residents dug in their heels and refused to leave. County leaders eventually broke the stalemate between these “nail house” residents and the town by proposing a leisure space, rather than the revenue-generating real estate and retail space wanted by town leaders.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, residents throughout the town had already been actively calling for a new leisure space in the heart of the town; their support for the nail houses put the town in a difficult position. After two years, the town backed down and promised to build a public square instead. In effect, the Wooden Drum Square was a leisure space claimed by the residents of Danjiang even before it was built. It was the outcome of ungovernable action.

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74 “Nail house” (*dingzi hu* 釘子戶) is a common term in China, referring to a house left standing in an otherwise demolished neighborhood due to residents refusing to vacate, typically in dispute over compensation.





Figure 3: Evening at the Wooden Drum Square, Danjiang.

And yet, ultimately, the Wooden Drum Square has become the most governable space in town, a space where a new kind of leisure citizen has been made real (Fig. 3).

On almost any given evening, but especially on weekend nights, the square is unmistakably experienced as a community leisure space. Over the course of our fieldwork during the summer months between 2012 and 2014, the square was consistently “hot and noisy” (*renao*) every evening. There were three bouncy castles, and several portable sandboxes with all sorts of playthings. An arcade along the side of the square featured balloon shooting, pottery painting, little electric cars for kids to drive around the square, in-line skate rentals (with glowing front wheels), and little portable fishing ponds with toys to catch (and real fish!). Children raced around the square at full tilt, having a great time as parents sat watching and chatting and enjoying the cool evening air. Three different areas of the square were turned over to different dancing groups, each with its own blaring sound system. Old men sat smoking in the pavilions, joking and telling stories. The whole square felt alive until late at night—and unlike those vast spaces of socialist modernity that passed for public space during the Mao era, the Wooden Drum Square really felt like a people’s space. While the space was indeed rendered visible as governable space, with its clearly marked out leisure activity sites and Miao ethnic symbolism (wooden drums are displayed along one side of the square, and there are numerous other ethnic motifs on display here and there, including a huge stone flour mill), whatever social ordering was going on there was a project in which Danjiang’s citizens were actively participating.

Governable spaces are fabricated to make new kinds of (in this case leisure) experience possible. That experience, Rojek tells us, is constitutive of a new kind of citizenship.<sup>75</sup> Danjiang's Wooden Drum Square, despite its origins in popular protest, is clearly inscribed as a certain kind of state space. And as noted by Rose earlier, such inscriptions can be viewed as "a little machine for producing conviction in others." Does it necessarily follow, then, that what is going on in here is an extension of (state) authority over that which is inscribed (in this case Miao culture)? Do the leisure activities there enable the state to maintain its grip on power? Perhaps. But as a governable space, the Wooden Drum Square remains more open than Rose's view of state authority would seem to allow. We are left with an unresolvable tension between leisure as active citizenship and leisure as social control.

This tension is perhaps more palpable in the city of Tongren, in north-eastern Guizhou, where an urban redevelopment project based explicitly on returning this riverside city to a former "life of ease" (*youxian shenghuo*) has resulted in six new public squares, only one of which—a new square in front of the railway station—has been claimed by residents as a new space of leisure. There, amid large and prominent signs explicitly prohibiting disorderly conduct, as well as any kind of soliciting, hawking, or otherwise disturbing the peace within 50 meters of the square, dozens of people can be found doing just that. (Fig. 4) Each evening the square transforms into an informal market for cheap clothing, toys, CDs and electronics, fake iPhones, watches, and used books. The usual sand boxes, fishing ponds, and bouncy castles are there for the kids, and a cacophony of blaring dance music deafens the ears. Qigong charlatans push herbal packets on unsuspecting men (as I personally discovered), promising everything from harder erections to slower hair loss. The scene is not exactly one of complete chaos, but it is close to that, and it certainly does not conform to any norms of self-improvement that one might expect from China's elite leisure ethic. Yet residents praise the city government for its newfound commitment to scattering leisure spaces throughout the city, even though many of them remain relatively deserted. A new greenbelt of parks and gathering places along the river has, however, become popular for exercise, afternoon cards and mahjong, dancing, and even relatively discreet informal markets in antiques, books, and herbal medicines.

Both Danjiang and Tongren have followed explicit principles and models—many with genealogies that connect to nineteenth-century Euro-American movements like the Rational Recreation Movement mentioned earlier, Ebenezer Howard's "Garden City," or the City Beautiful Movement. The Garden City idea, in particular, has been influential throughout China, in part because of its ostentatious adoption in the 1970s by Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew, as well as Bo Xilai's more recent embrace of it in his urban

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75 Rojek, *Leisure Theory*, 2.



Figure 4: Informal evening clothing market, Railroad Station Square, Tongren.

redevelopment plans while mayor of Dalian<sup>76</sup> and Chongqing.<sup>77</sup> These models have been adopted as technologies of governable space, promising a government by community that speaks to the priorities of social harmony currently promoted at all levels by the Party-state: Ebenezer Howard was explicit, for instance, that “garden-city dwellers would perceive themselves as members of a cohesive community, bound together by shared moral and social values.”<sup>78</sup> In Singapore, the greening of the city and construction of recreational spaces was understood “as an antidote to living in high-rise, high-density apartments” and as “a mechanism of community development.”<sup>79</sup>

The “garden city” (*yuanlin chengshi*) is in fact a national certification campaign through which cities like Danjiang and Tongren compete for recognition, awards, and funding. Other campaigns that also play a significant role in shaping urban planning objectives and strategies include the “sanitary city” (*weisheng chengshi*) campaign, the “exemplary city” (*mofan xianjin chengshi*), and the “green, low-carbon, smart city” (*lüse ditan zhihui chengshi*) campaign. Beyond the specifics of leisure space, Chinese urban planning has more broadly engaged with transcultural models aimed at

76 Hoffman, “Urban Modeling,” 60.

77 Carolyn Cartier and Luigi Tomba. “Symbolic Cities and the ‘Cake Debate,’” in *Red Rising, Red Eclipse: The China Story Yearbook 2012*, ed. Geremie Barmé, 2012, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.thechinastory.org/yearbooks/yearbook-2012/chapter-2-symbolic-cities-and-the-cake-debate/>.

78 Stanley Buder, *Visionaries and Planners: The Garden City Movement and the Modern Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 208.

79 Hoffman, “Urban Modeling,” 67.

producing certain kinds of new citizen-subjectivities. In particular, transcultural models of the “creative city” and the “cultural city” have been embraced by urban authorities throughout China.<sup>80</sup> Miao has noted how China’s new public spaces are vaguely modeled on the European idea of a central town plaza.<sup>81</sup> A vast library of scholarship has emerged in recent years on these transcultural dimensions of urban planning in China.<sup>82</sup>

While indicative of the adoption of transcultural ideas relating to global norms of good governance in urban settings, the efforts of Danjiang and Tongren planners have also sought to explicitly reject the global generic city model in which China’s towns and cities tend to all start looking modern and civilized in the same way.<sup>83</sup> Rather, symbolic ethnic theming—more prominent in Danjiang than in Tongren—has been pursued in order to “humanize” (*renxinghua*) the city, rejecting the cold rational modernism of the earlier socialist built environment. In Danjiang, planners talk of using the value of traditional Miao culture to create a more civilized city. They note, for instance, that in the past, town residents went to nearby villages for leisure activities because Miao villages (unlike their Han counterparts) tend to have a central open space for rituals and ceremonies. These have become popular for hosting tourist-oriented performances, but also for more spontaneous leisure practices among nearby urban residents. “This is something that Miao culture can offer city people,” said one town planner. “So we want the public space in town to remind people of a Miao village.” This “villagizing” plan is part of a broader “style regulation” (*feng-mao zhengzhi*) for Danjiang, which has sought to replace the chaotic landscape of the socialist past with a more uniform, but rural-looking, style of building. For example, the plan calls for limiting the height of buildings so that the town more resembles a village, while at the same time requiring some variation in height, to break up the modernist monotony of the older buildings. This has resulted in facades of varying height being added to buildings, along with additional rooftop structures to add visual diversity to the skyline.

Ironically, perhaps, one of the most noticeable aspects observed each evening at the Wooden Drum Square is the disconnect between the heavily ethnic symbolism through which Miao culture is rendered visible, and

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80 See Jun Wang, Tim Oakes, and Yang Yang, eds. *Making Cultural Cities in Asia: Mobility, Assemblage, and the Politics of Aspirational Urbanism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015); Yue Zhang, “Governing Arts Districts: State Control and Cultural Production in Contemporary China,” *The China Quarterly* 219 (2014): 827–848; Jeroen de Kloet and Lena Scheen, eds., *Spectacle and the City: Chinese Urbanites in Art and Popular Culture* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2014).

81 Miao, “Brave New City,” 182.

82 Lou et al., *Zhongguo chengshi xiuxian wenhua*; Wei Xiao’an 魏小安 and Li Ying 李莹, “Chengshi xiuxian yu xiuxian chengshi 城市休閒與休閒城市 [Urban leisure and the leisure city],” *Lüyou xuekan 旅遊學刊* 22, no. 10 (2007): 71–76; Jiang Shuzhuo 蔣述卓, “Guangchang wenhua: chengshi wenhua de xin ziyuan 廣場文化: 城市文化的新資源 [Plaza culture: a new resource for urban culture],” *Guangdong shehuikexue* 4 (2003): 151–155.

83 Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau. *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Monacelli, 1995), 1239–1264.

the actual leisure practices of the town's residents (who are, in fact, mostly Miao themselves). While the space of the square seems designed to interpellate a modern yet ethnically costumed leisure subject, the residents are determined to practice their leisure in the most un-ethnic ways possible. Their dancing is Western and Han, and the recreational activities for children are of the same quality one might find at any evening carnival in small-town America. Wooden Drum Square, in practice then, remains a transcultural space of leisure, despite its obvious rendering of local and ethnic Miao culture.

## Conclusion

As China's urban built environment increasingly functions as a space of leisure, it also effects a negotiation over transcultural vs local framings of that space. While new urban spaces are clearly being conceived as governable spaces according to a normative leisure ethic that equates leisure with a global, progressive, post-industrial modernity, their actual production and use (or avoidance altogether) suggest a more complicated set of practices on the part of residents and planners alike. In some cases, as in Danjiang's Wooden Drum Square, there appears to be some convergence between residential claiming of space and broader state goals of social ordering. Yet in other cases, the gap between these remains clearly evident. Such leisure spaces might suggest the grip of state power by their sheer monumentality, but that power is compromised and contingent when viewed from the perspective of the actual users (and thus reproducers) of those spaces.

When considering the transcultural dimensions of state efforts to shape leisure activity, we find that transculturalism plays perhaps its most significant role not so much in providing the inevitable importations of new, possibly subversive leisure practices through which state cultural authority might be challenged, but rather in the transcultural models through which the state itself seeks to enact social ordering through the moral regulation of leisure. Yet these too remain limited as technologies of government, since state actors themselves, and residents engaged in leisure practices, fail to reproduce those models with any consistency.

This chapter has offered some preliminary thoughts on how we might view leisure space as a governance tool in China's broader social transformations of citizenship and subjectivity. In urban China, the development of new leisure spaces appears aimed at turning residents into self-determining and autonomous leisure-citizens whose sophisticated consumption practices represent a new model of consumer citizenship that enables broader state strategies of what Zhang and Ong called "governing from afar." Yet the outcomes of such governmental calculations reveal an ongoing tension between leisure as a new kind of 'active' citizenship and leisure as an instrument of social control on the part of either the state or the corporation (or a combination of these). I have tried to argue that

this tension between Rojek's ideal of leisure as active citizenship and leisure as a governmentalized effect of power is best revealed and explored through the lens of governable space. Viewed through this lens, leisure spaces are anything but straightforward sites for the reproduction of dominant modes of power. That urban leisure spaces are also claimed by urban residents as constitutive of collective urban identities suggests that there is still reason to believe that Rojek's idealism is perhaps not entirely unwarranted.

## Figures

Fig. 1, 3: Photo by author, Danjiang, China, 2013.

Fig. 2: Photo by author, Danjiang, China, 2014.

Fig. 4: Photo by author, Tongren, China, 2013.

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Catherine V. Yeh

# National Pastime as Political Reform: Staging Peking Opera's New Tragic Heroines

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**Abstract** This study addresses interactions between the state and local actors in managing and shaping leisure in the early period of the Republic of China of the 1910s and 20s. It focuses on the Republican state's efforts to harness leisure to further its agenda of "civilizing" the population and its dependency on local elites to do so. In particular, the study points to the emergence of Peking Opera's new tragic heroines—performed by the four famous Republican-period female-impersonator or *dan* actors Mei Lanfang, Cheng Yanqiu, Shang Xiaoyun and Xun Huisheng—as an expression of this "civilizing" cultural policy. It argues that the new operas written by men-of-letters and performed by the top *dan* actors helped to transform a national pastime by featuring the female character on center stage and, through these new female characters, spread a new set of social values and relationships, with freedom in marriage a frequent theme. The most important contribution in terms of drama's "civilizing" mission can be observed, I suggest, in the roles played by these women in the nation's affairs. Seen in the context of Republican politics this new female character took on symbolic meaning. They can be read as standing for society or the people in that, although without political power, they nonetheless represent moral fortitude and embody new social values.

**Keywords** Chinese state and leisure policy, new operas, tragedy in Peking opera, female impersonators, Mei Lanfang

A modern state needed civilized pastimes that would also help civilize the populace. This notion was already accepted by the reform-minded members of China's cultural elite a decade before the founding of the Chinese Republic in 1912.<sup>1</sup> It came with two rather different components, one related to the image of a modern state whose institutions were to reflect its modern identity, the other to the idea that leisure was a sphere of people's lives in which old and unhealthy ideas, values, and forms of behavior might persist, but where new and healthy ones might also be tested and accepted.<sup>2</sup> Given the ever-present anomic aspects of leisure, and shifts in the definition of what was considered healthy, the public and collective nature of leisure for theater audiences made the stage a potentially strategic venue for the battle between the old and the new, because theater could help foster a new citizenry for the new nation state.

The government of the new Republic of China set up specialized ministries for culture and education, headed by people with an international outlook, who immediately set out to use the instruments of state power to foster innovation in these fields. As the Republic descended into warlord factionalism, resulting in a political divide between North and South, its capacity to effectively impose national cultural policies was severely limited. This changed only in 1928 after the Northern Expedition had empowered the nationalist Kuomintang Party to establish a central government in Nanjing.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it was precisely during the years between 1911 and 1927, when the central government was weakest and had virtually no control over large parts of the country, that theater in general, and Peking opera in particular, became an important and popular platform for promoting reformist ideas and ideals through artistic innovation while retaining a critical edge towards the real-life performance of Republican governance. The center of

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- 1 No Chinese term for civilized pastime existed at the time. The aim to propagate such a pastime follows from the widely shared aim of creating a civilized (*wenming*) society to which reforms of popular leisure activities, including the novel, songs, storytelling (*tanci*), and the performing arts, would contribute.
  - 2 This idea was expressed for example in the foreword to the 1919 publication of the widely distributed *Riyong baike quanshu* 日用百科全書 [Everyday cyclopedia] (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1919): "The progress made in learning in our times and the creation of new ideals and new causes every day calls for our people as a collective to hurry forward along the path towards civilization." In particular in the sections on "play/sports" (*youle* 遊樂, 76–79) and on "Games" (*youxi* 遊戲, 1–67), leisure activities are divided into new and old. While still describing the old, this encyclopedia promotes new kinds of sports and games. The work went through many editions and in its thirteenth edition in 1925, the category "leisure" (*yule* 娛樂) appears. See Catherine Yeh, "Helping Our People to Jointly Hurry Along the Path to Civilization." *The Everyday Cyclopaedia, Riyong baike quanshu* 日用百科全書, in *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930). Changing Ways of Thought*, eds. Milena Dolezelova-Velingerova and Rudolf G. Wagner (Berlin: Springer, 2014), 367–397.
  - 3 On these efforts, see Zhou Huimei 周慧梅, *Minzhong jiaoyuguan yu Zhongguo shehui bianqian* 民眾教育館與中國社會變遷 [The Mass Education Office and social change in China] (Taipei: Xiuwei zixun keji gufen youxian gongsi, 2013), 54n19, 284–285, 355, 391.



Figure 1 (left): “Yang Kuei-fei, the Most Artful of China’s Four Greatest Beauties, as Portrayed by Mr. Mei.” The picture shows Mei Lanfang in the role of Yang Guifei in the new opera *The Unofficial Biography of Taizhen* (Yang Guifei) (*Taizhen waizhuan* 太真外傳), 1925–1926.

Figure 2 (right): Cheng Yanqiu as Zhang Huizhu 張慧珠 in *Huangshan lei* 荒山淚 [Barren hill]. Photograph, 1930.

this push was not Shanghai, which up to that time had been the engine of theater reform, but Beijing, where the theater’s artistic taste and political orientation had long been influenced by its close association with the Qing court. This situation was exacerbated by the lack of a newspaper press in the capital due to constant threats of persecution by the court. Making a bold break with the past and benefiting from the early Republican-era leeway in setting up newspapers, Peking opera became a national art form with a strong reform agenda in a period when the capital itself was losing its national political sway.

These agents of Peking opera reform were new and “female,” and they came to center stage from the margins. The figures dominating Peking opera had been the “senior males” (*laosheng* 老生), but they were now tainted by their former association with the court, its “feudal” values, and its traditional aesthetics. They had to cede place to young impersonators of female roles (*dan* 旦), but especially the budding new stars later known as the “four famous *dan*”: Mei Lanfang 梅蘭芳 (1894–1961), Cheng Yanqiu 程硯秋 (艷秋 1904–1958), Shang Xiaoyun 尚小雲 (1900–1976), and Xun Huisheng 荀慧生 (1900–1968) who was also known as Bai Mudan 白牡丹, or White Peony (Figs. 1–4).

The turning point for Peking opera reform came in 1916–1917 with the staging of *The Goddess Spreads Flowers* (*Tiannü sanhua* 天女散花), with the young Mei Lanfang in the “female” lead. This was the beginning of the *dan*



Figure 3 (left): Shang Xiaoyun in the role of Bojidi 鉢吉蒂 in *Modengga nü* 摩登伽女 [The Mātanga girl]. Photograph, 1925. In the plot, Bojidi, a low-caste girl, falls in love with Ānanda, one of the Buddha's senior disciples.

Figure 4 (right): Xun Huisheng in the role of the spider fairy Yuexian xiazi 月仙霞子在 the opera *Pan si dong* 盤絲洞 [Spider cave], 1923.

actors' rise to dominance in Peking opera and to national and even international stardom.<sup>4</sup> They were not performing in "old" plays, but in operas newly written for them—sometimes, like Shang Xiaoyun above, in modern costume. These new operas reflected a new aesthetics as well as the reformist ideas and ideals of the time. Their centering of female characters revolutionized the traditional role hierarchy on stage, and they departed from traditional theater aesthetics by establishing these heroines as tragic figures.<sup>5</sup> During the pivotal first fifteen years of the Republican period, these *dan* actors, with the help of cultural elites and support from powerful politicians, succeeded in guiding Peking opera to its highest artistic achievement and greatest social impact.

Studies of leisure and entertainment during the early Republican period have mostly addressed the efforts of local gentry to promote healthy pastimes and reform local theater. Little attention has been paid to the Republican state's agenda and its halting efforts in this domain on the one hand

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4 In 1916, operas with a *laosheng* in the lead still greatly outnumbered those with a *dan*. See Gu Shuguang 谷曙光, "Minguo wunian Beijing jutan yanchu zhuangkuang fenxi—yi 'yanchang ximu cishu diaochabiao' wei zhongxin" 民國五年北京劇壇演出狀況分析—以“演唱戲目次數調查表”為中心 [A study of the state of theater performances in 1916 Beijing—based on the *Table of the Number of Opera Performances*], *Xiqu yishu* 30, no. 1 (February 2009): 74.

5 As most traditional Peking Opera performances were performed to celebrate auspicious events such as birthdays, a tragic ending would have been unseemly.

and the societal forces pushing Peking opera reform on the other. While the former operated through regulations, promotions, and support of non-governmental organizations, and the latter through the networks supporting and guiding these young *dan* actors, the press, with its new role as a mediator between the world of theater and the public through advertisement, criticism, and debate, and the city as the particular environment to frame and sustain these reforms, were firmly embedded in transcultural exchanges ranging from political institutions of the nation state to the development of a modern citizenry to dance figures. This study will explore the tensions and fortuitous coincidences between these two agents—a weak state and strong social actors<sup>6</sup>—who played a critical role in bringing about Peking opera reform during the early Republican period. It will focus on the pivotal role of the *dan* actors in these developments. It argues that the weakness of the state institutions during these years prevented them from playing a defining role in Peking opera reform beyond being generally supportive. It was this combination of general support and specific weakness that created the environment for a most revolutionary reform of the cast, performance style, organization, and agenda of Peking opera. In a sense, the weak state left to society the responsibility to govern itself and engineer its own renewal. This was made possible by the widely shared understanding among the educated class of the close relationship between theater and social education, which had spread since the late Qing political reform debates. Responding to the continuing weakness and fragmentation of the Republican state, actors, playwrights, journalists, and supporters of the *dan* actors took it upon themselves to push for the country to join the civilized world. At least on stage, civilized values became the silent new normative value system, emblemized by the new female heroines.

## The state and the politicization of theater

With the founding of the Chinese Republic in 1912, reforming the traditional theater became a high priority. While there had been occasional efforts at theater reform during the previous ten to fifteen years, it now became an important topic in public discussion beyond theater circles, with reform-oriented new media, social elites, and government officials all getting involved. Almost from the beginning of the new Republic, members of the reformist elite as well as government officials (many of whom had been recruited from among the former) began publicly proclaiming that traditional Chinese leisure activities and entertainment, especially fiction and theater entertainment, were obstacles to a civilized China but had the still unexplored potential to become soft devices for the modern education of China's backward citizens. The Japanese Meiji modernization drive

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6 This formula alludes to the study of Julia Strauss, *Strong Institutions in Weak Politics. State Building in Republican China, 1927-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), which deals with a similar constellation even after 1928.

offered the model to stabilize the foundations of the Republic through the formation of true citizens with patriotic commitment.<sup>7</sup>

With this purpose in mind, the new Ministry of Education under the reformer Cai Yuanpei 蔡元培 (1868–1940) set up a “Social Education Bureau.” Among its duties was to oversee opera reform so as to enhance its potential to spread new ideas among the lower classes.<sup>8</sup> In 1912, the Bureau founded the semi-governmental and semi-societal Popular Education Research Society, with many local branches, which quickly began to implement its agenda to educate the masses according to modern standards.<sup>9</sup> The tools of this Society were public lectures, the rewriting of old operas, and the creation of vernacular newspapers. As traditional theater was the primary form of popular entertainment during the late Qing and early Republican periods, this society was particularly active in adapting new stories to the traditional opera form. This included foreign stories such as the 1912 Sichuan Opera adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.<sup>10</sup> It also helped set up local opera reform societies.<sup>11</sup>

The Popular Education Research Society, however, soon faltered amidst internal strife among different political factions and parties. It was revived in 1915 through government efforts, financed and managed by the new Ministry of Culture. It now consisted of officials and members, appointed by the government, who represented a selection of active and known cultural figures. Three sub-offices were established to oversee and evaluate the content of fiction, operas, and public lectures, and to set up public libraries for the purpose of popular education.<sup>12</sup> The main task assigned to the Society was to promote “knowledge regarding hygiene, means of

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7 Wu Bochun 伍博純, the founder of the Popular Education Research Society (Tongsu jiaoyu yanjiuhui 通俗教育研究會), based his work on his Chinese translation of a Japanese work on popular education, *Nihon tsūzoku kyōiku kenkyūkai*, ed., *Tongsu jiaoyu shiye sheshifa* 通俗教育事業設法 [Methods for the development of popular education facilities], translated by Wu Da 伍達 (Shanghai: Tongsu jiaoyu yanjiu, 1912). See Shi Keyao 施克燦 and Li Kaiyi 李凱一, “Jianghu yu miaotang: Beiyang zhengfu shiqi shehui jiaoyu de lujing xuanze” 江湖與廟堂：北洋政府時期社會教育的路徑選擇 [The marshes and the court: selections on the path of social education during the Northern Government period], *Qinghua daxue jiaoyu yanjiu*, 33, no. 5 (October 2012): 105.

8 On the Social Education Bureau (Shehui jiaoyu si 社會教育司) see Shi Yantao 石彥陶, “Huang Xing yu guomin jiaoyu lantu” 黃興與民國教育藍圖 [Huang Xing and the blueprint for citizen education for the Republic], *Yiyang shizhuan xuebao* 11, no. 4 (1990): 70–71.

9 On the Popular Education Research Society see Shi Keyao and Li Kaiyi, “Jianghu yu miaotang,” 103–107.

10 Wang Di 王笛, “Chaguan, xiyuan yu tongsu jiaoyu: Wanqing Minguo shiqi Chengdu de yule yu xiuxian zhengzhi” 茶館、戲園與通俗教育：晚清民國時期成都的娛樂與休閒政治 [Teahouses, theaters, and popular education: Entertainment and leisure politics in late-Qing and Republican Chengdu], *Jindaishi yanjiu* 3 (2009): 77–94.

11 The Opera Reform Society (Xiqu gailiang she 戲曲改良社) in Tianjin is an example, see Shi Keyao and Li Kaiyi, “Jianghu yu miaotang,” 105–106.

12 Shi Keyao and Li Kaiyi, “Jianghu yu miaotang,” 104.



livelihood, public morals, and identification with the State.”<sup>13</sup> The office in charge of fiction attempted to influence social ideas and inject new values by monitoring popular novels of the time, offering rewards for those it deemed worthy and censoring those that did not fit the new standards. The office in charge of theater examined all current popular stage performances. According to its charter, the theater section of the organization was to:

One, investigate the status of traditional and new opera and to reform performance practices; two, investigate the status of sales of playbooks on the market and the task of collecting them; three, review plays and storytelling texts; four, select and translate [foreign] studies on theater; five, review moving pictures [film], slide-shows and recordings.<sup>14</sup>

This office further recommended that local governments should set up theater reform societies to collect popular stories, rewrite them into new plays or story-telling texts, and publish them as stories. Most importantly, the office stressed the need to write new operas that reflected the spirit of the time and could educate the common people. The Society received popular support. By 1918, as many as 232 such Societies were established throughout the country, the majority privately funded with only marginal government support.<sup>15</sup>

To place leisure and entertainment under the control of the Ministry of Education and then that of Culture marked a major departure from past practices of local and central governments, when leisure and entertainment had been under the jurisdiction of the Office for Public Safety.<sup>16</sup> The

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13 “Zhuyi weisheng, mousheng, gongzhong daode, guojia guannian” 主意衛生，謀生，公眾道德，國家觀念，see Shi Keyao and Li Kaiyi, “Jianghu yu miaotang,” 105.

14 “Tongsu jiaoyuhui cheng” 通俗教育會程 (Program for the Social Education Bureau), Beiyang zhengfu jiaoyubu dangan 北洋政府教育部檔案 (Files of the Department of Education under the Beiyang government), in *Zhonghua mingguo shi dang'an huibian* 中華民國史檔案資料彙編 [Compilation of archival materials on the history of Republic of China] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1991), 3:102–103.

15 “Jiaoyubu gongbu quanguo gesheng tongsu jiaoyuhui gaikuang 教育部公布全國各省通俗會概況 [Announcement by the Ministry of Education on the general situation of the Popular Education Research Society on the provincial level]” [1918], in *Zhonghua mingguo shi dang'an huibian* 中華民國史檔案資料彙編 [Compilation of archival materials on the history of Republic of China] (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1991), 3:566–567.

16 During the late Qing, theater in Beijing came under the jurisdiction of the Beijing Outer City General Police Office (Jingshi waicheng xunjing zongting 京師外城巡警總廳), under the newly established Police Department (Xunjing bu 巡警部), under the Ministry of Civil Affairs (Minzheng bu 民政部). See Wu Xinmiao 吳新苗, “Qingmo Minchu beifang diqu xiqu gailiang huodong kaoshu (1) 清末民初北方地區戲曲活動考述 (一) [Research report on theater reform activities in northern China in the late Qing and early Republic periods],” *Zhongguo xiqu xueyuan xuebao* 32, no. 8 (August, 2011): 38; Wang Zhizhang 王芷章, *Zhongguo jingju biannian* 中國京劇編年 [Chronology of Chinese Peking opera] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju

Popular Education Research Society was now given the power to censor and promote plays according to their social morals.<sup>17</sup> Through these interventions, the government publicized its attitude and policies concerning theater. The institutional change reflected the Republican leaders' determination to use entertainment for the purpose of state building and thus in effect to politicize theater as well as theater reform.

This politicization allowed state leaders to influence theater reform and redefined the social position of the actor. During the three months when Sun Yat-sen was the first President of the Republic, he issued a number of reform laws. One of them abolished the caste system, which had defined actors as low caste and banned them, for example, from marrying daughters of respectable families. This opened the door for the theater reform efforts of Shanghai actors and even directly encouraged them. Sun saw theater reform as an urgent task. To elevate the status of actors, he personally responded to the call by Shanghai actors to create a union that would reflect their newly-gained social status, and delivered the opening address at their inaugural event.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, he gave the Shanghai actors who had joined the Republican revolution a banner inscribed with the words "The bell to wake up the world" (*Jing shi zhong* 警世鐘), to praise the importance of opera reform. This banner was proudly displayed at the *New Stage Theater* (*Xin wutai* 新舞台). As we shall see, the actual plays then staged went beyond this consensus by taking it upon themselves to engage audiences as a critical public forming judgments on the great issues of the time.

By linking the actors' new social position as dignified citizens of the land with Republican ideals, the new Republican government not only politicized the theater, it also gave the actors a role and a stake in the creation of a new social and political order. This link was made clear in a speech given by Huang Xing 黃興 (1874–1916), a major leader in the Republican Revolution, to the actors at the newly-established Beijing actors' self-administered *Society of Orthodox Music for Social Education* (*Zhengyue yuhua hui* 正樂育化會) in 1912.<sup>19</sup> This Society had replaced the traditional actors' guild, The Loyalty

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chubanshe, 2002), 809. See also Wang Fengxia 王鳳霞, "Wenmingxi yu xiandai zhengdang 文明戲與現代政黨 [The civilized plays and modern political factions]," *Shanghai xiju xueyuan xuebao*, 1 (2010): 29.

17 In fact, it was very difficult for the Society to implement its mandate and it still depended on the Office for Public Safety to do so. See Fu Jin 傅謹, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo xiju shi* 二十世紀中國戲劇史 [A history of twentieth-century Chinese theater] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui chubanshe, 2016), 145–150.

18 *Zhongguo jingju shi* 中國京劇史 [A history of Chinese Peking opera], eds. Beijing shi yishu yanjiusuo and Shanghai yishu yanjiusuo (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1999), 1:244.

19 This new society had been set up already in 1912. All three founders, Tian Jiyun, Yang Guiyun 楊桂雲 (–1914), and Yu Yuqin 余玉琴 (1867–1939), were *dan* actors. Officially registered in 1914 with the "senior male" actor Tan Xinpei 譚鑫培 (1847–1917) as president and Tian Jiyun as his deputy, it was engaged in securing the welfare of actors with funds coming from a charge of one copper coin per seat sold by the different troupes. It also engaged in charity performances for disaster relief in Hubei and other provinces. See Wang Dazheng 王大正, "Zhengyue

Temple (*Jingzhong miao* 精忠廟), established under the Qing. One of the founders of the new society, the *dan* actor Tian Jiyun 田際雲 (1864–1925), was extremely active in promoting new-style Peking opera that dealt with contemporary reform themes.<sup>20</sup> The task at hand, Huang declared, was to sweep away the undesirable social customs among the people that constituted “impediments” to the newly-founded Republic. Huang then called attention to the special powers of the actor. “For the task of changing old social customs, there is no force more qualified than the actor.”<sup>21</sup> The power to change people rested with the actors’ art—“music and song, which can move people at the deepest level [of their emotions].”

Contrasting China with the “civilized countries” (*wenming guo* 文明國) of the West, he also addressed the issue of the low social standing of actors in the past, which had prevented them from playing a positive role in matters of concern to the state. Because of the high standing and respect theater (as well as actors) enjoyed in the West, the plays were written by great writers, who also made use of the stage to educate people and change social customs. Theater, in short, was capable of “inspiring people’s hearts and bringing about social reform. Thus the countries in the West are able to move forward to acquire wealth and power.”

Huang ended his speech by linking the new social status of the actor to the duty that came with it: “Today, our Republic has been established, and all people in it are equal. The past discrimination of actors has been eradicated. You should emulate the examples set by Europe and America, use your advocacy powers to spread civilization in society, and usher in opera reform.”<sup>22</sup> His message was welcomed by the members of the *Society*, the reference to “orthodox music” in its name already indicating their desire to be recognized as offering civilized instead of lowly entertainment.

## The late Qing theater reform legacy: The role of government and actors

The notion that the uncivilized populace was holding Chinese society back, and that the emotional appeal of popular entertainment could be used as a most effective means to change this, go back to the court-sponsored Reform of Governance (*Xinzheng* 新政) policies between 1901 and 1911. Given a prevailing master narrative that emphasizes the radical break

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yuhua’ bainian yihua (shang) ‘正樂育化’百年遺話百年逸話(上) [Anecdotes of the one-hundred-year history of (*The Society of*) *Orthodox Music for Social Education*, pt. 1],” *Zhongguo jingju*, 7 (2012): 42–45.

20 On these efforts, see Wu Xinmiao, “Qingmo Minchu beifang diqu (1),” 37–39.

21 Huang Xing 黃興, “Zai Beijing Zhengyue yuhua hui huanyiing shang de yanjiang” 在北京正樂育化會歡迎上的演講 [Speech at the reception of the *Beijing Society of Orthodox Music for Social Education*], in *Huang Xing ji* 黃興集 [Collected works of Huang Xing], ed. Hunan sheng shehuikexueyuan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 276.

22 Huang Xing, *Huang Xing ji*, 276.

between Imperial China and the Republic, the high degree of continuity in the theater reform efforts between the Reform of Governance period and the early Republic needs to be better understood. This was not just a continuity in the agenda, but in many cases even in the actors. The main themes of the late Qing theater reform, namely patriotism, women's right to an education, and struggle against corruption all already engaged with global trends. The main change coming with the early Republic was an even stronger engagement with world trends.

Opera reform efforts during this period were mostly—and very consciously so—first staged in the treaty ports of Shanghai and Tianjin outside the reach of the court. These two treaty ports came with additional advantages. They had a public that was open to the new and had in many cases moved to these treaty ports for that reason. Of equal importance, these two cities were the places with the highest concentration of newspapers, newspaper writers, and newspaper readers in the country, which made for a good environment for advertisement, theater criticism, and public debate. The reason for this concentration was the same as for localizing theater reform efforts in these cities, namely to be able to operate beyond the purview of the Qing court.<sup>23</sup> Starting out from their secure place in the treaty ports, some of the troupes ventured inland, invited or protected by officials sympathetic to their efforts.

Available scholarship on late Qing opera reform efforts has made substantial contributions exploring the role of localities, above all Tianjin and Shanghai, of individual figures, of the Qing court during the Reform of Governance period, and of the interaction between reformers from the gentry and the state's agenda.<sup>24</sup> The crucial point of the direct involvement of the government and the independence of most of these local gentry actors from direct state interference, however, has not been addressed. It brings up a significant difference with the local actors discussed in the study by Tim Oakes in this volume, as they were ultimately under the direct control of the political center. The contested nature of leisure's time/space discussed in the "Theoretical Essay" concluding this volume includes the option of a silent agreement with one agent independently doing what the other would like to do but cannot.

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23 On the role of the treaty port press in theater reform, see Catherine Yeh, "The Press and the Rise of Peking Opera Singer as National Star: The Case of *Theater Illustrated* (1912-17)," *East Asian History* 28 (2006): 53-86; "Creating Mass Entertainment: Media and the Rise of the Actor as Star during the Early Years of the Republican Period," *Intelligence* (Waseda University) 5 (2004): 25-33; "A Public Love affair or a Nasty Game?—The Chinese Tabloid Newspaper and the Rise of the Opera Singer as Star," *European Journal of Asian Studies* 3 (2003): 13-51; "Shanghai Leisure, Print Entertainment, and the Tabloids, *xiaobao*." In Rudolf G. Wagner (ed.), *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910*, 201-233 (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007).

24 For the case of *Yi su she* 易俗社 [Custom reform society] in Shanxi province as an example of such a private/official interaction, see Fu Jin, *Ershi shiji Zhongguo xiju shi*, 116-124.

One of the aims of the Reform of Governance had been “to enlighten the people” (*kai min zhi* 開民智). Following this agenda, reform-minded Qing officials lent their support to efforts in the treaty ports to write and stage new plays,<sup>25</sup> a connection documented in a fine study by Wu Xinmiao based on reports in the late Qing press.<sup>26</sup> Resembling those of the Republican period, semi-societal and semi-governmental theater reform societies were established in cities such as Tianjin, Canton, and even in far-away Chengdu, which was not a treaty port. The Tianjin Society to Transform Social Customs through Music (*Yi feng yue hui* 移風樂會), for example, was supported by the military leader Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916), who also gave the society its name.<sup>27</sup> Active only in the short period between 1906 and 1907, it staged many new operas with telling titles such as *Smashing Superstition*, *Regretting Past Mistakes*, *Sir Pan Throws Himself into the Sea* (a story based on the late Qing political activist, patriot, and martyr Chen Tianhua),<sup>28</sup> *The Foundation of a Strong People*, *Exemplary Heroes*, (a story about having martial spirit), or *A Story of Marriage to Wake up the World* (about the sad fate of women subjected to foot-binding).<sup>29</sup>

The Qing court played an active—if ambivalent—role, sometimes publicly rewarding local efforts at staging new plays that dealt with pressing social issues. After the huge stage success in Tianjin and Beijing of two new operas centered on the theme of promoting female education, *Biography of Ms. Huixing* (*Huixing nüshi zhuan* 惠興女士傳), and *A Patriotic Woman* (*Nüzi aiguo* 女子愛國), the Police Department honored the troupes performing these operas with silver plaques and awarded them the copyright to the plays.<sup>30</sup> Even the Empress Dowager became actively involved, inviting the troupe that performed *A Patriotic Woman* to perform in court. Between 1901 and 1908, newspapers regularly reported different government

25 Officials of the Qing court such as Wang Yinpei 王蔭培 were impressed with the Japanese development, and Wang emphasized in 1906 that the plays in Japan were written by men-of-letters, were vetted by the censors, were dominated by the virtues of “loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and righteousness,” *zhong, xiao, jie, yi* 忠孝節義, and were spoken drama rather than opera so that women and young people could understand. Quoted in Li Xiaoti 李孝悌, *Qingmo de xiaceg shehui qimeng yundong: 1901–1911* 清末的下層社會啓蒙運動:1901–1911 [The late Qing movement for the enlightenment of the lower classes: 1901–1911] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 184.

26 Wu Xinmiao, “Qingmo Minchu beifang diqu,” 38–40.

27 Shao Lulu 邵璐璐, “Xiqu gailiang yundong yu Qingmo Minchu de shehui bianqian—yi Tianjin wei zhongxin de kaocha 西區改良運動于清末民初的社會變遷—以天津为中心的考察 [The drama reform movement and social change during the late Qing and early Republic—a study with a focus on Tianjin],” *Fujian luntan, renwen shehuikexue ban* 3 (2010): 98.

28 *Pochu mixin* 破除迷信, *Hui qianfei*, 悔前非, *Pangong tou hai* 潘公投海, see “Xinxi chuxian 新戲出現 [New plays make their appearance],” *Dagong bao*, October 9, 1906, 4.

29 *Minqiang ji* 民強基, *Hao nan'er* 好男兒, *Xingshi yinyuan* 醒世姻緣, see “Guangdelou yanchang xinxi” 廣德樓演唱新戲 [New plays performed at the Guangdelou Theater], *Jinghua ribao*, no. 629, 1907, 3.

30 Wu Xinmiao, “Qingmo Minchu beifang diqu,” 38.

measures to encourage gentry and actor participation in writing and staging such new operas.<sup>31</sup>

The actors in their turn took the lead to develop what became known as “theater in modern dress” (*shizhuang xinxi* 時裝新戲). Centered in Shanghai and groups of Chinese students in Tokyo, this form was motivated primarily by ideological commitments critical of the Qing court. In Shanghai, for example, Wang Xiaonong 汪笑儂 (1858–1918) wrote *The Stele of the Believers* (*Dangren bei* 黨人碑), one of the earliest such operas in 1901, and played the lead. It had been written to commemorate and denounce the death of the six reformers executed by the Qing Court after the failed Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898. The opera *The Partition of Poland* (*Guazhong lanyin* 瓜種蘭因), also known as *The Tragedy of Poland’s Demise* (*Bolan wangguo can* 波蘭亡國慘), held up the fate of Poland as a warning to China.<sup>32</sup> Wang Xiaonong went on to create as many as forty new-style Peking opera plays as commentaries on contemporary political and social issues. Several actors who were to actively participate in the Republican revolution in Shanghai were promoting and staging new operas on reform themes on the Shanghai stage prior to the Revolution.<sup>33</sup>

Besides professional opera singers, amateur actors also played an important role in theater reform. Initiated by Chinese students in Japan, amateur spoken drama emerged at this period, with the *Spring Willow Society* (*Chunliu she* 春柳社, founded 1906) being the most famous. Among their performances was a dramatized spoken drama version of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as *A Black Slave’s Cry to Heaven* (*Heinu yutian lu* 黑奴籲天錄) in Tokyo in 1907. Ouyang Yuqian 歐陽予倩 (1889–1962), who later would play an important role in Peking opera reform, was one of the actors in the show. More radical activists at the time went further in their use of theater, promoting not simply social reform but social revolution and Republican ideals. Wang Zhongsheng 王鐘聲 (1874?–1911), with his *Progress Troupe* (*Jinhua tuan* 進化團), was representative of this current.<sup>34</sup> In short, from the last decade of Qing rule to the beginning of the Republican

31 Wu Xinmiao, “Qingmo Minchu beifang diqu,” 38.

32 *Zhongguo xiandai xiju shigao* 中國現代戲劇史稿 [Draft history of modern Chinese theater], eds. Chen Baichen 陳白塵 and Dong Jian 董健 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1989), 39–40; Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 95–97; for a more detailed study of Wang Xiaonong’s efforts, see Zhang Kuo 張曠, *Wang Xiaonong jingju gailiang sixiang yanjiu* 王笑儂京劇改良思想研究 [A study of Wang Xiaonong’s thoughts on Peking opera reform] (MA diss., Zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan, 2012). The partition of Poland has been the subject of a study and translation by Rebecca Karl, “Staging the World in Late-Qing China: Globe, Nation, and Race in a 1904 Beijing Opera,” *Identities* 6, no. 4 (2010): 551–606.

33 Among these were the prominent senior male (*laosheng*) actors Xia Yueshan 夏月珊 (1868–1924) and his brother Xia Yuerun 夏月潤 (1878–1931), as well as Pan Yuejiao 潘月焦, see *Zhongguo jingju shi*, 1:333–350.

34 See Liu Hecheng 柳和城, “‘Xinju taidou’ Wang Zhongsheng ‘新劇泰頭’ 王鐘聲 [Wang Zhongsheng, the ‘Leader of new drama],” *Dang’an yu shixue* 6 (2004): 16–18.

period, both society and forces in the government were actively involved in theater reform, although not always with the same goals in mind.

By the early Republican period, both public opinion supporting the need for opera reform and officially supported theater reform institutions were in place. During the first years of the Republican period, the discussion was not about whether or not theater needed reform, but rather whether the government should not altogether take over the task of organizing it.<sup>35</sup>

Yet the proactive theater reform efforts from the side of the Republican state proved ineffective. After 1913, most amateur theater troupes collapsed and modern costume opera stagnated. With the North/South political divide, there was no unified government structure to oversee reforms. This only changed after the establishment of the KMT government in Nanjing in 1927. Still, these government efforts, which were only fully revived on the Mainland after 1949 and culminated in the development of the model operas just before and during the Cultural Revolution, created the environment in which the most important new development in Peking opera—the rise of the female impersonators between 1911 and 1927, became possible.

The coming of the new Republic involved not just a political transfer of power, but the (still tenuous) establishment of new institutions along the standards of Japan and the West, together with new cultural values that were to be made visible in state, society, and family, as well as, and most important for our discussion, on the stage.

## Reshaping Peking opera for the new epoch: Cities, actors, writers, and power-holders

The biggest change brought by the Republican revolution for the stage was that Beijing rapidly rose to become the center of theater reform. The main reason for this was a public commitment by the authorities to free speech and theater reform combined with a reduction of the state's powers to enforce its agenda within China proper due to the political fragmentation of the early Republic. This led to a vast increase of the number of newspapers in the capital, which in turn offered space for the discussion of opera reform and the development of opera criticism. What had once been the privileged condition for change held by the treaty ports of Shanghai, Tianjin, and Canton, with their settlement governments and liberal regulation of the press and the theater, was now briefly characteristic of the cultural and political landscape of the nation's capital city. Peking opera's old links with the city through numerous troupes, training sites for actors, and elite patronage came to renewed bloom under these conditions.

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35 Shi Keyao and Li Kaiyi, "Jianghu yu miaotang," 103; Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770–1900* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012).

Beijing became the city to which the educated reform elite congregated. The previously private patronage of *dan* actors by men of letters now translated into a public cooperation for the reform agenda through new plays and another innovation, theater criticism. As this connection was missing in the treaty ports, opera reforms there continued privileging the actors of senior male (*laosheng*) roles and lacked the input from high-status men of letters. In short, by the mid-1910s, the reform agenda was set in Beijing. The new media environment encouraged the entry into the fray of *dan* patrons with strong ties to early Republican governments. These men were willing to go public in Beijing and began to write new operas, which carried the new values and civilizational aspirations of the Republican era.

The particular interests and qualifications of Beijing audiences helped in this shift. Politics, politicians, and policies were for the time being common fare in the capital, so that theater audiences were sensitized to politics and their national importance. This secured local public attention for Peking opera reform. The new operas created by a collaboration between writers and actors were very much understood by the city's audiences in the political context of the time. Between 1913 and 1927–28 when the capital was moved to Nanjing, the large number of politicians and government officials congregating in Beijing also brought about a change in the balance between private and commercial theater performances. During these years, a *dan* actor's income from performing at private parties (*tanghui* 堂會) was four times what he earned in commercial theaters—that is, only one fifth of their total income came from public performances.<sup>36</sup> High officials as well as wealthy and powerful men were important patrons of the new operas.

The new order of things signaled by the rise of the *dan* actors, and the new social and aesthetic values embodied by their on-stage personas, challenged the authoritative role of the “senior male” characters and the viability of the value system represented through them in the Peking opera repertory, which had evolved under the continued patronage of the Qing imperial court. Their repertory had drawn largely on warrior stories in novels such as *Sanguo yanyi* (*Three Kingdoms*) and *Shuihu zhuan* (*Outlaws of the Marsh*), on stories of heroes and gods from the novel *Fengshen yanyi* (*Enfeoffment of the Gods*), and on the acrobatics of Monkey from the *Xiyou ji* (*Journey to the West*). These performances had enthralled the court as well as the common people (only men were allowed in Peking theaters up to 1900), because with their “heat and noise,” as Robert Weller so nicely translated *renao* 熱鬧, they seems to have suited the dominant taste of the city, and because the Emperors and later even the Empress Dowager found resonance with their own roles in the wise, powerful, and martial “senior male” figures. Reflecting the leading position of these figures on stage, the head of Peking opera actors' guild was always an actor playing a “senior

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36 Xie Bing 謝冰, “Ershi shiji chu Zhongguo xiqujie de bianqian 20 世紀初中國戲曲的變遷 [Transformations of Peking opera circles during the early years of the twentieth century],” *Zhongnan minzu daxue xuebao* 23, no. 3 (May 2005): 154.



male" role.<sup>37</sup> He was the face of Peking opera and the authority figure the Qing court dealt with.<sup>38</sup> The *dan* repertoire had remained undeveloped and reduced to supporting roles.

The new Republican order needed public champions to highlight its new values. The survival of Peking opera hinged, in part, on its ability to adapt to the requirements of the new era. To forge such a new direction leading Peking opera into the future, a figure was needed which was not associated with images of dynastic power and glory, but could be associated with the new Republican ideals.<sup>39</sup> This was a chance the *dan* actors sensed and seized. They were not alone in this endeavor, but were helped by men of letters who themselves were moving from a dynastic to a Republican role.

Late Qing and Republican-era politicians and cultural elites alike shared the notion that theater reform was a necessary part of modern nation building. The successful European and Japanese experiences all seemed to support this notion. Given the weak and divided state authority during the early Republican period, societal forces came to play a large share in local reform initiatives. Zhang Jian 張謇 (1853–1926), a successful businessman and reformer, is a prominent example. In his hometown of Nantong, he sponsored the building of a new theater with the programmatic name *Theater to Change Social Customs* (*Gengsu juchang* 更俗劇場), together with a modern theater training school for children and other experimental institutions.<sup>40</sup> Other examples of this societal activism included Qi Rushan 齊如山 (1875–1962) and Luo Yinggong 羅瘿公 (1872–1924), two men of letters who helped shape the new Peking opera art by writing new operas with *dan* actors in the lead. Qi Rushan was also an appointed member of the Education Research Society. These new operas, mostly written between 1916 and 1928 while Peking was the capital, led two of these *dan* actors, Mei Lanfang and Cheng Yanqiu, to national and international stardom.

Mei Lanfang was well-known during the 1910s for staging "new theater in modern costume," with plays that tackled the mistreatment of women

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37 Yan Quanyi already pointed to a shift in the aesthetic orientation of Peking opera between the 19th century, when the *laosheng* were defining its art, and the 20th century, when the art of the *dan* represented by Mei Lanfang reoriented the repertoire. He read this shift as one of general taste from the court-oriented martial spirit represented by the persona of the emperor to that of the common people of the Republican period. Yan Quanyi 顏全毅, *Qingdai jingju wenxue shi* 清代京劇文學史 [A literary history of Peking opera during the Qing] (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2005), 278–288.

38 *Laosheng* actors were aware of this association with the Qing and some of them, such as Tan Xinpei, went to Shanghai after the Republican revolution fearing that their close ties to the Qing court, especially to the Empress Dowager, might bring them harm in Peking.

39 The counter-example is the flourishing late Qing courtesan entertainment. It was unable to overcome its association with the old world order and while its establishments continued to be frequented, they lost their prominent public role.

40 See *Zhang Jian yu Mei Lanfang* 張謇與梅蘭芳 [Zhang Jian and Mei Lanfang], ed. Nantong Bowuyuan 南通博物院 (Nantong: Zhonghua gongshang lianhe chubanshe, 1998).

and the fate of women in society.<sup>41</sup> These newly created operas took on contemporary social reform issues that had been discussed since the late Qing. Their link to Republican nation-building is obvious, as their heroines embodied new social values. These works showed the entire range of what might be defined as a “civilized pastime” at the time.<sup>42</sup> Between 1911 and 1928, Mei Lanfang performed around thirty new operas written for him by Qi Rushan and others. The most intense period of Mei’s new productions, however, was between April 1915 and September 1916, when he came out with no less than eleven new plays,<sup>43</sup> some of them using scenes from much longer, older *laosheng*-centered works.

The common theme reflected in all of them, whether newly written or based on existing librettos, was a social critique of traditional features of Chinese social order from the point of view of women. The heroines of these plays are rebellious characters who defy the powers-that-be and struggle to define their selfhood against the established order. Mei Lanfang’s acting focused on exploring this mindset. Sexual desire and looking for a partner to one’s liking are presented as women’s legitimate pursuits. Their frank articulation by women on stage represented the new spirit of the time. The focus of Mei’s new operas was to explore the heroine’s inner life and desires in a critique of traditional structures that left women without the power to define their social role and live out their emotions.

The goddess spreads flowers (*Tiannü sanhua* 天女散花, 1917) marked a fundamental change. It was an opera based on a scene in a Buddhist *sūtra*, for which Qi Rushan and Mei Lanfang created an entirely new type of Peking opera performance that included Mei dancing, followed by multi-colored stage lights, elaborate stage props and, most importantly, a new performance aesthetics that was psychological in character and permeated by dance.<sup>44</sup> Mei Lanfang and his supporters created many historical

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41 Examples include *Niehai Bolan* 孽海波瀾 [Polish/great waves in the sea of retribution] and *Deng Xia gu* 鄧霞姑 [Miss Deng Xia], which deals with issues of freedom of marriage; *Yilü ma*—縷麻 [A thread of hemp], which addresses the tragic fate of women in arranged marriages.

42 These works also included new operas in traditional costume, such as *Laoyu yuanyang* 牢獄鴛鴦 [The imprisoned mandarin ducks]; recreated classical costume operas including *Change ben yue* 嫦娥奔月 [Chang’e escapes to the moon], *Daiyu zang hua* 黛玉葬花 [Daiyu burying the fallen petals], *Qingwen si shan* 晴雯撕扇 [Qingwen tearing the fan]. The first of these was based on a Chinese legend and the other two on the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Finally, it included four Kunqu pieces, namely *Nigu si fan* 尼姑思凡 [A nun’s longing for worldly life], and *Nao xue* 鬧學 [School room] from the late Ming opera *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 [*Peony Pavilion*], *Jiaqi* 佳期 [The nuptials] and *Kao Hong* 拷紅 [Interrogating Hongnian] from the Yuan play *Xi xiang ji* 西廂記 [Romance of the Western Chamber], and *Fengzheng wu* 風箏誤 [The kite and the mistaken message], which was based on the opera of the same name by Li Yu 李漁 (1610–1680).

43 See Wang Changfa 王長發 and Liu Hua 劉華, *Mei Lanfang nianpu* 梅蘭芳年譜 [Mei Lanfang chronicle]. (Nanjing: Hehai daxue chubanshe, 1994), 60.

44 See Catherine V. Yeh, “Creating Indigenous Roots for Modern Dance in China: Dance and Transcultural Innovation in Peking Opera, 1910s–1920s” in *Corporeal Politics: Dancing East Asia*, edited by Katherine Mezur and Emily Wilcox. (In press: Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2020).

and myth-based plays in the new vein.<sup>45</sup> In these plays, the central power-holders are emperors, kings, and generals, which intensified social critique and reflection through dialogue and confrontation between the powerholder and his subject. In a well-established routine that goes back many centuries, these plays opened an avenue for the indirect discussion of the present.

Luo Yinggong was crucial in promoting Cheng Yanqiu. From 1922, when Cheng Yanqiu was just eighteen years of age, until Luo's death in 1924, Luo wrote a total of twelve new operas for Cheng (seven in 1923 alone). After Luo's death, Cheng was helped by Jin Zhongsun 金仲孫 (1879–1944), one of Luo's close friends. Out of the ten or so new operas Jin wrote for Cheng, eight were written between 1925 and 1927, which gives a total of twenty new operas for Cheng between 1922 and 1928.<sup>46</sup> Continuing in Luo Yinggong's vein, Jin kept to the tragic but heroic female character in the lead. Set in the past and performed in traditional costume, most of his lead characters were close to power, emperors' consorts or the wives or daughters of high officials or men of letters. They were nonetheless victims of misfortune, injustice, and the corruption of power. Through these tragic characters, Cheng refined a subtle and introspective style that excelled in portraying the inner conflicts and emotional life of his heroines in their struggle against insurmountable adversity.

Shang Xiaoyun began performing new operas written for him only in 1923, when he was already twenty-three years old. He was primarily spurred on by the fierce competition coming from Mei Lanfang, but also by Cheng Yanqiu's stellar rise through his performance of new operas. The main writers for Shang Xiaoyun in these early years were Xun Shuchang 洵疏廠, of whom little is known, and Qingyi jushi 清逸居士 (or Aixin Jueluo Puxu 愛新覺羅 溥緒, of the Manchu imperial Aisin Gioro clan, 1882–1933). Shang Xiaoyun and Xun Huisheng are two *dan* actors who continued to perform new operas written for them after 1928 and well into the 1930s. After playing in ten newly written operas between 1923 and 1928, Shang continued in the female-centered new opera tradition created by Mei Lanfang, with three new operas written between 1929 and 1933. However,

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45 These included *Bawang bieji* 霸王別姬 [Hegemon King bids farewell to his concubine], *Xixue congkao* 10 (1926): 1–12; *Xishi* 西施 [The patriotic beauty Xishi], in *Xidian* 戲典 [Drama texts], Second Collection (Shanghai: Shanghai zhongyang shudian, 1937), 1–37, the song lyrics were already published as “Xishi juci 西施劇詞 [Xishi song lyrics],” in Zhuang Zhujiu 莊鑄九 et al., *Mei Lanfang* 梅蘭芳 (Shanghai: Private printing, 1926), 8–9; Hongxian dao he 紅線盜盒 [Hongxian steals the box], in Qi Rushan, *Qi Rushan juben* 齊如山劇本 [Qi Rushan play texts], in *Qi Rushan wenji* 齊如山文集 [Collected writings of Qi Rushan], ed. Liang Yan 梁燕 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2010), 13:150–160; *Guifei zuijiu* 貴妃醉酒 [Guifei intoxicated with wine], *Xixue congkao* 10 (1926): 1–18; *Zhen e ci hu* 貞娥刺虎 [Killing the Tiger General], in Wang Changfa and Liu Hua, *Mei Lanfang nianpu*, 111; and *Yuzhou Feng* 宇宙鋒 [The precious sword named Yuzhou Feng], *Xixue congkao* 7 (1926): 1–7.

46 See Hu Jinzhao 胡金兆, *Cheng Yanqiu* 程硯秋 (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1987), 39–56, 58–66.

because Shang excelled in martial roles and had a passionate and quick temper, his heroines were all martial in spirit and unyielding in nature. Through his new plays, Sheng established the role of the rebellious heroine as his special calling.<sup>47</sup>

Born in the same year as Shang Xiaoyun, Xun Huishang performed in the same troupe with him at one point, and the two remained close throughout their lives. Xun's first encounter with new opera was rather unique. In 1911, Wang Zhongsheng, of the *Progress Troupe* mentioned above, invited him to join his troupe, which was at the time performing in Tianjin. The first opera in which Xun performed with this troupe was the 1907 spoken drama adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. After a first visit to Shanghai in 1919, Xun settled in this city for four more years until 1924, putting on eight new operas with the help of different writers. Starting in 1925, he began performing in new works written for him by Chen Moxiang 陳墨香 (1884–1942). By 1928, they had produced nine such works. Unlike the three other *dan* actors, who had been trained in the morally upright female role, *qingyi* 青衣, Xun was trained in the sexy *dan* variant, *huadan* 花旦. Yet the new operas allowed him to develop as broad a range of techniques for character portrayal as the other *dan* did in their specialty. His characters mainly belonged to the lower ranks of society, daughters of common folk, maids, servants, or courtesans. They are decent, upright, and true to their feelings. In comparison, the men to whom they have devoted their love are heartless, selfish, and even evil.<sup>48</sup>

Early Republican members of the elite such as Feng Youwei 馮幼偉 (1880–1966), the head of the Central Bank, and Li Shikan 李釋戡 (1888–1961), Yuan Shikai's chief military officer, offered political backing, protection, and support to the budding *dan* actors. These were men of consequence in the early Republican period, and they already had been involved in the late Qing reform drive. Although their attitudes concerning the politicization of theater as a tool to educate the people varied, they were committed to the Republican state's modernization project and were personally involved in reforming Peking opera. Due to their traditional cultural and personal ties to the *dan* actors and in view of the virtually untapped artistic potential of the *dan* role, these men of letters focused their theater reform efforts on this figure. The *dan* actors enjoyed unprecedented political, financial, and intellectual support and protection during the early Republican period, a support that was exclusive to them and virtually inaccessible to actors of other roles.<sup>49</sup>

47 See Li Lingling 李伶伶, *Shang Xiaoyun quanzhuan* 尚小雲全傳 [Complete biography of Shang Xiaoyun] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2009).

48 Li Lingling 李伶伶, *Xun Huisheng quanzhuan* 荀慧生全傳 [A complete biography of Xun Huisheng] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2010).

49 For a discussion on the historical ties between *dan* actors and literati, see Ye Kaidi 葉凱蒂 (Catherine V. Yeh), "Cong hu hua ren dao zhiyin: Qingmo Minchu Beijing wenren de wenhua huodong yu danjiao de mingxing hua 從護花人到知音: 清末民初北京文人的文化活動與旦角的明星化 [From 'protector of the flower' to cultural adviser: The rise of Peking opera singer to national stardom and the transformation of the patronage culture in Beijing (1890s–1920s)]," in *Beijing*:

The support from powerful men with a literati background enjoyed by the *dan* actors was also very public. Throughout the early Republican period, many such men of letters moved from private writings about the *dan* they supported and admired to writing for the newspapers. They published poems of praise but also began focusing their comments on the stage performance and the relative artistic merits of the different *dan* actors in an early form of Chinese theater criticism.<sup>50</sup> As Xun Huisheng later recalled, “new” being the fashion of the time, there was a huge demand for new operas from theater critics<sup>51</sup> as well as the general public.<sup>52</sup> Theater criticisms published in the newspapers secured public attention for these performances. As women had become part of opera audiences since the Allied invasion against the Boxers in 1900, audience sensibilities had greatly changed and the four top *dan* actors competed to put on new plays to satisfy them, at times even using the same basic story with different interpretations and emphasis.<sup>53</sup>

The rise of the *dan* and their new female heroines reflected the spirit and the needs of the time in yet another sense. Women’s issues such as female education, abolishing footbinding, and preparing women for vocations outside of the home had already been among the major late Qing reform items, as the position of women in society had become the marker in international discussions of whether or not a society was to be considered civilized.<sup>54</sup> The inclusion of a new role for women into the “standard of civilization” was widely supported by reformers in the transition period from the late Qing to the Republic. Giving a voice to the powerless became one of the main driving forces in the development of new Peking operas with female impersonators in the lead. In the stage confrontation between the powerless but virtuous female figure and the corrupt state representative, the men of letters who wrote these new pieces also idealized their own new situation.

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*Dushi xiangxiang yu wenhua jiyi* 北京：都市想像與文化記憶 [Beijing: Urban culture and historical memory], eds. Chen Pingyuan 陳平原 and Wang Dewei 王德威, 121–135 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2005).

- 50 Kiyasarin V. Ie キヤサリV. イエ (Catherine V. Yeh), “Taishū goraku no sōsei - 1910-nendai minkoku shoki ni okeru medeia to sutā haiyū no taitō” 大衆娛樂の創生-1910年代民国初期におけるメディアとスター俳優の台頭 [Creating mass entertainment: Media and the rise of the actor as star during the early years of the Republican period], translated by Shimizu Ryōtarō 清水亮太郎, *Intelligence* (Waseda University), 5 (2005): 25–33.
- 51 Li Ying 李瑩, “Qingmo xiqu gailiang yundong zhong de xin juben yanjiu 清末戲曲改良運動中的新劇本研究 [Study on the new opera texts produced in the late Qing theater reform movement]” (MA diss., Tianjin shifan daxue, 2012), 14.
- 52 Li Lingling, *Xun Huisheng quanzhuan*, 339.
- 53 Tan Zhixiang 譚志湘, *Xun Huisheng zhuan* 荀慧生傳 [Biography of Xun Huisheng] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), 201–203.
- 54 See Rudolf Wagner, “Women in Shenbaoguan publications 1872–1890,” in *Different Worlds of Discourse. Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, eds. Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith, 253–255 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

## Representing the new order: The *dan*-centered new operas

Of the ninety-seven new operas written between 1911 and 1928, only three were written for *laosheng* in the lead; the remaining ninety-four were for *dan*. Of these, seventy-seven were written for and performed by the four leading *dan* actors, with the remaining seventeen works assigned to others, including seven written and performed by Ouyang Yuqian alone.<sup>55</sup> Performing new operas was the foundation of these four actors' stardom, with each developing his own brand or school of acting.

With these new works, the *dan* role moved to center-stage in Peking opera. The shift to the dominant female role was revolutionary. These new operas covered a broad range of styles, including plays staged in modern and historical costumes as well as plays based on myth or *Kunqu* (Southern Opera). The leading characters included consorts of kings and emperors, legendary beauties, daughters of commoners, fairies, maids, and female knights-errant, portraying strong-willed, morally upright, but powerless heroines confronting powerful male figures. Common also to these new operas was the theme of the lone female heroine fighting injustices inflicted upon her and her family by brutal and corrupt power holders. In this confrontation, the female figures, although without power, represent moral courage and fight injustice and oppression by strategy, which mostly entails sacrificing their own life in order to be victorious in a development that might be characterized as the coming of tragedy to the Peking opera repertoire. The new *dan* operas confront the traditional and familiar ideal of the virtuous female who obeys orders from the male authorities, and bring forth a new type of female character, who adheres to her own "modern" will and inner values while challenging authority figures representing the old system. The careers of the four *dan* actors bear out these common features.

Other elements were shared by the new works written for these actors. Their stories are mostly set in the past with the powerholder being either the emperor himself or corrupt officials representing him. Through the just struggle of the idealized female character, the traditional authority figure is shown in a negative light, the legitimacy of his power is called into question, and the audience is prompted to identify with the female figure.

This is a new type of female figure on stage, as it contrasts with the normative female values of "three obediences and four virtues."<sup>56</sup> She now stands for the spirit of the new order—the right to self-determination

55 These numbers are based in part on the list of new operas given in *Zhongguo jingju shi*, 2:53–59, supplemented from the biographies of the four leading *dan* actors written by Li Lingling, *Xun Huisheng quanzhuan*, *Shang Xiaoyun quanzhuan*, *Mei Lanfang quanzhuan* 梅蘭芳全傳 [Complete biography of Mei Lanfang] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2001), and *Cheng Yanqiu quanzhuan* 程硯秋全傳 [Complete biography of Cheng Yanqiu] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2007).

56 "San cong si de" 三從四德, obedience to the father as daughter, the husband as wife, the sons as widow, wifely virtue, speech, manner, and work.

(*zizhuquan* 自主權)—and evokes the image of the once powerless people rising against unjust authorities. The plays show the process of her self-realization through the expression of her will, ambition, or purpose (*zhi* 志), in place of the normative love (*qing* 情) assigned to the *dan* role. The struggle is an old one—fighting against unjust power—but in these Republican operas the agent is new, a woman with an individual will. This in itself is a challenge to the patriarchal social order. This challenge is brought forth through the agency of the female figure fighting for autonomy and selfhood. Her values might not be so different from the traditional Confucian values, but now they are hers and as an expression of her self-determination they re-emerge as internal values in tune with those of the citizens of civilized nations. In a sense, the traditional values were used to justify her rebellion and her claim to female agency that signals the modern.

These women are not granted a utopian environment or a happy end on stage. On the contrary, the entire action is focused on the conflict between their self-realization agenda and the tradition-bound social forces they confront. Having a woman with the symbolic attribute of “weakness” bring forth this challenge foreshadows the result. She cannot win, but she will not retreat. As these heroines will not return to their traditional women’s roles, their fate is at best an unresolved continuation of their free roaming, at worst a tragic death.

These dark and often tragic endings mark a fundamental shift in the aesthetics of Peking opera. This genre had originally been developed for birthday and holidays celebrations at the Qing court. From there it had entered urban entertainment. In both arenas, the dominant aesthetics pointed towards a happy end. Aesthetically, the new tragic plots were a reflection of the operas’ social ideas. The form carried its message. The rise of tragedy itself was part of the nation-building agenda, as tragedy was regarded as a sign of a “civilized” and “cultured” nation, a discussion that had already started during the late Qing period.<sup>57</sup> These dark and tragic ends thus also catered to an educated elite that appreciated tragedies not just as a reflection of the conflicts of the times, but also as a sign of China’s emerging modernity according to their notion of Western drama with its background in the Greek tradition.

Together with the development of these new plot features came the creation of a new type role for female impersonators, the “flower gown” (*huashan* 花衫). This role is a combination of the upright female *qingyi*, the sexy/coquettish *huadan*, and the martial *wudan* 武旦 or *diaomadan* 刀馬旦,

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57 For a study on the historical Chinese discussion on tragedies, see Natascha Gentz, “Fate, Freedom, and Will in European and Chinese Discourses on Chinese Tragedies,” in *Reading the Signs: Philology, History, Prognostication. Festschrift for Michael Lackner*, eds. Iwo Amelung and Joachim Kurtz, 571–592 (Munich: iudicium, 2018); see also Liu Dong 劉東, *Beiju de wenhua jixi. Cong gudai Xila dao xianzai Zhongguo* 悲劇的文化解析: 從古代希臘到現在中國 [A cultural analysis of tragedy, from ancient Greece to modern China] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2017).

*dan* roles that enabled the actor to represent complex non-linear modern female characters.<sup>58</sup> The creation of this type made it possible to introduce dance in Peking opera, which highlights the aesthetic transformation of Peking opera as a performing art.<sup>59</sup>

The new operas thus opened an artistic space for these *dan* actors to explore acting techniques that probed the psychology of the new heroines and responded to the contemporary political situation by creating characters and dilemmas that resonated with contemporary social agendas and concerns. The new operas, some of which became signature pieces associated with a particular *dan* actor, played a decisive role in reshaping the Peking opera repertoire and the public image and stage persona of the female impersonator. As the new operas often took materials from existing works, their transformation of the originally supporting female character into the main character enabled actors to directly confront the familiar traditional image of the female. This was in direct contrast to the affirmative tone in traditional operas concerning social roles. Through their plots, characters, and struggles, they were able to embody new social values without open confrontation. This, together with artistic innovations like including music, made these new plays hugely popular with urban audiences in Republican times, as shown in the box office receipts of the commercial theaters and the public acclaim for the four great *dan*.

## Centering the female character: Republican ideals, power-holders, and the people

In her study of the rise of leisure in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe, Nicole Samuel has suggested that leisure has the potential to act as a social force that can bring about new ways of thinking and instigate social change; it is, she writes, the "origin of many transformations of social processes and produces new values."<sup>60</sup> As the rise of the *dan*, together with its soft-power spreading of new social messages, appears to have resonated with early Republican audiences, we ask what was the aesthetic and social coding of this female-centered new opera that

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58 In the history of Peking opera, Wang Yaoqing 王瑤卿 was credited with experimenting with this new role. However, when we examine his acting style, the existing plays restricted his experimentation. For a detailed study on the huashan role, see Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 123–129.

59 For a discussion on dance entering Peking opera see, Catherine Yeh, "Experimenting with Dance Drama: Peking Opera Modernity, Kabuki Theater Reform and the Denishawn's Tour of the Far East," *Journal of Global Theatre History* 1, no. 2 (2016): 28–37.

60 Nicole Samuel, "The Prehistory and History of Leisure Research in France," in *Leisure Research in Europe: Methods and Traditions*, edited by H. Mommaas, H. van der Poel, P. Bramhan, and I.P. Henry, 12 (Wallingford, UK: CAB International, 1996).



connected with contemporary audiences? How might this figure be read within the social and cultural context of the time?

Two aspects of this new female figure in Peking opera suggest strong correlations within well-established narrative traditions. The first is the historical context in which this figure emerged, which might be characterized as a time of national crisis and dynastic renewal/regime change. The second is the tragic nature of her story in the context of this national crisis. As Wai-yee Li has shown in great detail, women as literary figures with a literary voice (with male voices appropriating female diction and female voices appropriating male diction) had become a well-established literary trope by the Qing period. Writers used it to articulate issues involving the nation, to deal with national trauma, and to reestablish a sense of cultural identity.<sup>61</sup> Yu Huai's 余懷 (1616–1696) *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記 (Miscellaneous records of the plank bridge, 1697), consolidated this tradition.<sup>62</sup> Written during the early years of the Manchu conquest of the Ming Empire, it deals with the theme of the fallen dynasty through the stories of the great courtesans of the late Ming. The nostalgia/lamentation for these past beauties has been read as a lament for the fallen dynasty.<sup>63</sup> There is thus a long and well-developed tradition of reading the fate of female figures during times of national crisis and transition as a representation of the moral fortitude of the nation or of society coupled with powerlessness. To understand the potential power of this new female heroine that came to dominate the Peking opera stage, I will analyze the new *dan* operas within this cultural tradition.

The female figure at the center of the new plays, who confronts men of power, wealth, and prestige, as I stated earlier, was not a new motif on stage, but the ideological framework of this confrontation, as well as the tragic ending for the heroine, were. The relationship between these new female characters and their male counterparts now has a public rather than private character, because the male characters inevitably come with the accouterments of state power. The *dan* roles are thus cast for a particular critique of and/or a dialogue with the state, in particular with the rulers

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61 Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014).

62 Wai-yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature*, 295–307; see also Patricia Sieber's comments on the fascination felt by seventeenth-century literati, both before and after the fall of the Ming, in her "Getting at It in a Single Genuine Invocation: Tang Anthologies, Buddhist Rhetorical Practices, and Jin Shengtan's (1608–1661) Conception of Poetry," *Monumenta Serica* 49 (2001): 33–56.

63 Ye Kaidi 葉凱蒂 (Catherine V. Yeh), "Wenhua jiyi de fudan – Wan Qing Shanghai wenren dui wan Ming lixiang de jian'gou" 文化記憶的負擔—晚清上海文人對晚明理想的建構 [The burden of cultural memory—The construction of the late Ming ideal by late Qing Shanghai men-of-letters], in *Wan Ming yu wan Qing: Lishi chuancheng yu wenhua chuangxin* 晚明與晚清：歷史的傳承與文化創新 [The late Ming and the late Qing: Historical dynamics and cultural innovation], edited by Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, Wang Dewei (David Wang) 王德威, and Shang Wei 商偉 (Wuhan: Hubei xiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), 53–63.

of the state. This constellation lends itself to a symbolic reading. Given the association of female characters in traditional Peking opera as the subordinate figure rather than a holder of power, and the clear identification of their counterparts as mostly men representing state authority, the conflict between the two in the plays would suggest that the *dan* represent “society” or “the common people.”

However, while Peking opera’s new dramas take up and use female figures of older plays, the discussion this time is not about the past but about the future of the nation; they help articulate anxieties and hopes for the new Republic. When analyzing these new plays, we must also take into account the Republican revolution whose new social and political structures made possible a power shift in the hierarchy of actors as well as the ascendancy of a female-centered repertory and with it the rise of the *dan*. The new ideals represented in the new female characters accorded with a state agenda of “healthy entertainment.” When we read these new performances as a form of dialogue involving male writers, *dan* actors, theatergoers, and the powerful officials who patronized these *dan*, what does this new female figure tell us about early Republican ideal pastimes, political alliances and dilemmas, social critiques, and the outlook for the nation’s future?

As most of the *dan* actor’s new dramas were set in the historical past, the most immediate surface meaning would read the plays as a critique of the old régime and a social system which the new Republic fought to overthrow. In this layer of reading, the young heroine not only represents the common people but the spirit and ideals of the Republic, including the new officials themselves. The tragic ending of the heroines, however, opened the window for a twofold reading: it could point at the overwhelming repressiveness of the old system, and the impossibility of the heroine’s returning to the fold as she pursues self-realization, and at the same time could reflect the still unfulfilled aspirations of the people at present. Both readings could accommodate the prevalent notion that made the existence of tragedies on stage the marker of “civilized” theater.<sup>64</sup> Thus the new drama can also be understood as a new aesthetic embodiment of the social, a new world outlook.

The link between the creation of new operas and the Republican state was more than a mere reflection of the new ideas of the modern state in the plays. According to Qi Rushan, the themes for some of the new plays he created for Mei Lanfang had actually been suggested by the Ministry of Education. He mentions *Mulan congjun* 木蘭從軍 (Mulan, the disguised warrior maiden, 1912), *Xishi* 西施 (The patriotic beauty Xishi, 1923), *Yuzhou feng* 宇宙鋒 (The precious sword named Yuzhou Feng, 1919), and *Qie fu*

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64 The argument is made explicitly by Jiang Guanyun (1866–1929), one of Liang Qichao’s collaborators, see [Jiang] Guanyun [蔣]觀雲, “Zhongguo zhi yanjujie 中國之演劇界 [China’s stage performance circles],” *Xinmin congbao*, 17 (1905): 95–98.

*qiu Zhao* 窃符救趙 (Stealing the *fu* to save the kingdom of Zhao, 1910s?).<sup>65</sup> Starting in 1911, he wrote, the Ministry wanted new operas to be created that reflected “international understanding” and new plays were created by actors and their supporters to reflect the needs and demands of the state. Thus, the state’s direct involvement in the creation of new plays strengthens the case for understanding these new plays as a form of dialogue between the state, the stage, and the audience.

To explore the potential of this social, aesthetic, and political reading of the new plays and decode the social message they carry, I will analyze in detail some of the most popular plays, which served as signature pieces for the lead *dan* actors. These plays were all written between 1911 and 1927.

### Rebellious female figures assure their support for the young republic while fighting despotic rulers: *The Precious Sword Named Yuzhou Feng*

Starting in 1919, Qi Rushan began to rewrite a scene from a rarely performed old drama, *The Precious Sword Named Yuzhou Feng*. This play originally had a male lead. Set during the reign of the Second (and last) Emperor of the Qin dynasty (ruled 210–207 BCE), it tells of a conflict between two important court ministers, Zhao Gao and Kuang Hong, who were related through the marriage of their children. However, Kuang Hong criticized Zhao Gao’s autocratic ways. In revenge, Zhao Gao stole a precious sword named Yuzhou Feng from Kuang, used it in an attempt to assassinate the Second Emperor, and then blamed the attempt on Kuang. The Second Emperor ordered Kuang’s entire family to be killed, but Kuang’s son Fu managed to escape. The main focus of the play revolves around this political struggle. Finally, the truth is revealed, Kuang Hong is saved, and Zhao Gao punished.

The new opera is based on a scene from this opera. It begins when Zhao Yanrong, who is Kuang Fu’s wife and Zhao Gao’s daughter, returns home to the Zhao estate after the calamity that has befallen the Kuang family. She hates her father for his treachery in falsely accusing Kuang, and at the same time hates the Second Emperor for his dissolute lifestyle and lack of governing principles. When visiting the Zhao residence, the Second Emperor is struck by Yanrong’s beauty and asks Zhao to let him have Zhao Yanrong as consort. Calculating that this will open his way to the highest military position in the land, Zhao agrees, delighted. In self-defense, Zhao Yanrong accepts her deaf-mute maid’s suggestion and pretends to have lost her wits. This disguise of madness gives Yanrong the opening to voice her real opinions about the depraved nature of the two central power holders, cursing her father as well as the emperor, quite

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65 Qi Rushan, *Qi Rushan huiyilu*, 121–22.

apart from giving Mei Lanfang the stage for a stunning performance of feigned madness.

The open criticism of a foolish, ignorant, and corrupt emperor is a well-established trope in Chinese theater, but to articulate such criticism was the role of loyal (male) ministers. Here, this role is given to a young woman. Going a step further, Zhao Yanrong also denounces her father. This plot device of pretended madness offers the play and its protagonist a unique opportunity to stage an open and direct political critique. When her father tries to force her to accept the marriage proposal, Yanrong cozies up to her father and suggests that the two of them should be husband and wife, implying that the demands of the emperor and her father are equally outrageous and morally corrupt. Further pressed by her father, Zhao Yanrong takes action by pulling at the patriarch's beard (Fig. 5). When Yanrong is brought to the court, she does not kneel down. "When you are in front of the emperor, why are you not down on your knees?" the emperor asks her. "Why, you are not on your knees!" she answers. When he laughs and pronounces her mad, she also laughs. "Why are you laughing at me?" "I laugh at you being a stupid ruler who lacks the *dao* of good governance 無道昏君 [. . .] I believe that this world belongs to everyone, not to you alone. As I see it, this land of yours will not last long."<sup>66</sup> Although the confrontation with the emperor is the most dramatic part of the play, the scene between the daughter and father is far more subversive. It challenges the very core of Chinese social hierarchy and authority structure.

Through a woman's "mad" words, which the audience knows to be her real opinion as well as the truth, society expresses its Republican claim that the state is not the property of the power-holder but of everybody, and that a power-holder who behaves as if it was his property, is "stupid and lacking in the *dao* of good governance." The denunciations of the emperor and the father can be understood as targeting warlord rule while asserting the rights of the people under Republican ideals. The most provocative aspect of this newly written play is again the agency exerted by the heroine. Although the confrontation obviously challenges the old social order, it goes further by showing a woman rebelling against that order in a way that does not show rigorous adherence to civilized internal values in a corrupt world. It exhibits a female self-identity that dares to confront the prevailing order without showing any of the formal markers of civilized ideals or Confucian norms of womanly behavior, although ultimately Zhao Yanrong is driven by a patriotic devotion to the state's welfare and her own commitment to her husband. Fighting the Emperor as the representative of feudal rule can be read as a direct justification of the Republican revolution in 1911.

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66 "我笑你無道昏君[... ]我想這天下乃人人之天下,並非你一人之天下。我看你這江山未必能長久了。"



Figure 5: Mei Lanfang as Zhao Yanrong in *Yuzhou feng* 宇宙鋒 [The precious sword named Yuzhou Feng]. Photograph, 1950s.

### A heroine makes history: *The Story of Hongfu*

Among Cheng Yanqiu's plays, *The Story of Hongfu*,<sup>67</sup> *The Tang Emperor's Consort Meifei*,<sup>68</sup> and *Wenji's Return to China*<sup>69</sup> have been regarded as his early signature pieces. *The Story of Hongfu* was written for Cheng by Luo Yinggong in 1923 in part as a response to Mei Lanfang's *Hongxian Steals the Seal of Power* (Fig. 6). Hongfu, a dancing girl in the service of the Prime Minister during the last year of Sui dynasty (581–618), falls in love with a visitor, Li Jing 李靖, who is known to history as one of the most capable military commanders of the time ("Prince Li," 571–649 CE). She elopes with him to join the rebellion which eventually establishes the Tang dynasty in 618 CE.

The opera is based on the Tang-period fantastic story of the *chuanqi* type by Du Guangting, *Biography of the Bearded Sojourner*.<sup>70</sup> In the original story, the main character is neither Hongfu nor Li Jing, but an outlaw rebel with the sobriquet "the bearded sojourner." He befriends the two and upon recognizing the outstanding character of Hongfu and the potential greatness of Li Jing, he gives up his ambition of himself becoming China's new

67 *Hongfu zhuan* 紅拂傳, (1923) in *Xidian* 戲典, Collection 11 (Shanghai: Shanghai Zhongyang shudian ), 1948. *Cheng Yanqiu yanchu juban xuanji* 程硯秋演出劇本選集 [Selection of plays performed by Cheng Yanqiu], ed. Zhongguo xiqu yanjiuyuan (Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 1958), 1–38.

68 *Meifei* 梅妃, (1925) in *Cheng Yanqiu yanchu juban xuanji*, 213–248.

69 *Wenji gui Han* 文姬歸漢, (1926), see Hu Jinzhao, *Cheng Yanqiu*, 61.

70 Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933), *Qiuran ke zhuan* 虬髯客傳, in *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小說 [Tang stories], edited by Wang Pijiang 汪辟疆 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 178–184.



Figure 6: Cheng Yanqiu in the role of Hongfu. Photograph, 1923.

ruler and leaves them his amassed wealth to aid their own endeavor. Like in most Tang tales, the original story is about the extraordinary actions of these three knights-errant at a time of national upheaval, with the mysterious bearded man as the main driving force. While the new opera kept the plot of the story largely intact, Hongfu was made into the lead character, and her actions drive the drama. Moving away from the story's focus on the three outlaws, the opera focuses on the central theme: in a time of national crisis, truly extraordinary action is needed for the nation's survival, and it is for the people to recognize the heroes of their time and aid them in restoring justice and peace to the land. As it is the heroine who recognizes the hero, the agency of the play resides with her.

The context echoes that of the end of Qing China and the struggle for the Republic. The opera opens with the country in crisis due to the Sui ruler's descent into debauchery and subsequent neglect of government; there are uprisings throughout the country, with outlaws roaming the lands and heroes vying to control the future of China. Li Jing, a young man famous for his skills as a medical doctor, is restless and in search of a just and rightful cause to which to devote himself when, during a visit to the prime minister, he by chance meets Hongfu. The opera opens with his assessment of the state of the country and his own desire to participate in shaping its future:

I see confusion arising in the four seas, and the central plain (China)  
in uproar/I was born with extraordinary talent and I have great  
ambitions/This Emperor of Sui has lost the way of good govern-  
ance, leaving the people angry and in hope for better times/This

is why all around there are violent uprisings and in many places kings have been proclaimed/I am a great hero with great talent and broad knowledge/I ought to achieve great deeds and have my name spread throughout the four seas.<sup>71</sup>

These opening lines echo the common adage that heroes are made by times of crisis. They furthermore lay the moral foundation for the righteous cause of the outlaws.

Hongfu is the daughter of a well-to-do family that has fallen into ruin. Gifted in literary matters and an outstanding sword maiden, she comes on stage lamenting her fate as a bond-servant in the Prime Minister's residence. Restless like Li Jing in these times of national upheaval, she loathes her captivity and yearns to put her lofty ideals into action. When she meets Li Jing, she instantly recognizes him as a hero who will play an important part in their time and decides to align herself with him.<sup>72</sup>

That very night, she escapes from the Prime Minister's residence dressed up as a military official after having stolen the office pass that allows her to get out, and heads for Li Jing's lodging. In the meantime, Li Jing has been thinking about this girl he saw at the Prime Minister's and is overjoyed to discover Hongfu when the visiting "military official" lifts her hood. He exclaims that he has finally found "the one who recognizes me" (*zhiyin* 知音). Their union is thus based on their equal status and on recognition of each other's value.

The rest of the story unfolds when the "bearded sojourner" by chance meets Hongfu. He is struck by her beauty and her unusually straightforward character, while Hongfu also quickly recognizes that he is someone of consequence. She quickly establishes a friendship with him through a knight-errant ritual and also helps Li Jing to win the bearded sojourner's trust. The opera ends with the bearded man leaving them his wealth and wishing them success in their quest for the establishment of a new order for China.

The opera echoes a well-established literary trope of the beauty who recognizes the hero who will make a difference in the affairs of the nation. However, it also transforms the trope. Hongfu is not a mere beauty but herself a knight-errant with vision and the courage to take action to insure her own future as well as that of the country. It is she who brings the two other heroes together, and this inadvertently provides the financial base for their later bid for power. In this opera, the female character—as in *Hegemon King*—is actively involved in national affairs and her action highlights female agency in pursuing free love. Seen in the context of the early Republican political setting, the character of Hongfu—like that of

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71 “看四海亂紛紛中原動蕩，天生我奇才士立志非常；那隋帝無道君萬民怨望，因此上起刀兵到處稱王。我本是大英雄才高識廣，必須要立奇功四海名揚，” *Cheng Yanqiu yanchu juben xuanji*, 3.

72 *Cheng Yanqiu yanchu juben xuanji*, 12.

Lady Yu—can again be read as standing for the people. The future of the Republic depends on the people having a martial spirit, being able to find the right leaders and supporting them in the struggle to establish a unified new China against the warlords. This image of Hongfu joining the fight is more forceful than of Lady Yu's sacrifice, as Hongfu plays a decidedly more active role in defining and deciding China's future.

The message of this play is uplifting. With the heroine (representing the common people) supporting the hero, a unity is achieved that will secure the fate of the nation. At the same time, by shifting the story to center on Hongfu, the play also stresses that a truly new beginning hinges on the active involvement of society as a whole.

### A woman going to battle: Shang Xiaoyun's *Qin Liangyu*

*Qin Liangyu* 秦良玉 (1924), which became Shang Xiaoyun's signature piece (Fig. 7), was the first play to be written for him by Puxu 溥緒, the playwright of the former Qing imperial clan.<sup>73</sup> It is based on the eighteenth-century fantastic play of the *chuanqi* type, *The Tale of the Flower-Patterned Shrine*.<sup>74</sup> Set during the last years of the Ming dynasty, when the Chongzhen Emperor (r. 1627–1644) was faced with government failures, rampant official corruption, factional fighting, peasant uprisings from inside the country, and the external threat of a Manchu invasion from the North, the opera centers on the female general Qin Liangyu. The emperor asks her to quell a rebellion in her home province of Sichuan, a fine allusion to the dispersal of government control in Republican China among regional warlords. For her service to the empire in the past and in recognition of her present assignment, the Emperor rewards her with a famous Sichuan-woven red silk warrior robe that is embroidered with the imperial dragon motif. He sings her praises while lamenting that because the male generals are too frightened to fight, he must now rely on a woman warrior. With her superior martial skills and her intelligence, as well as her experience as a military leader, Qin leads her army to victory, and decapitates the enemy general on stage.

The challenge, however, comes after her victory when an official sent by the emperor with the rewards for her and her army tries to sexually assault her. Shocked, insulted, enraged, and hurt to the core, she angrily confronts the man: "What do you think you are doing! I now have to cut off my arm to maintain my chastity" since that arm had been touched by the official. When her female attendants stop her from harming herself, she instead curses the official and in a dramatic gesture cuts off the sleeve of the robe given to her by the emperor, singing:

73 Li Lingling, *Shang Xiaoyun quanzhuan*, 157.

74 Deng Tao 鄧濤 and Liu Liwen 劉立文, *Zhongguo gudai xiju wenxueshi* 中國古代戲劇文學史 [History of premodern Chinese drama literature] (Beijing: Beijing guangbo xueyuan chubanshe, 1994), 163.





Figure 7: Shang Xiaoyun in the role of Qin Liangyu. Photograph, 1924.

Although I have fought many wars on the battlefield, I am after all still not dead yet; how dare you be so insulting to me? Here I am fighting for the dynasty, and I would not dare to harm my body, but this robe I cannot keep intact; what a pity that this robe which was given to me by the emperor is now ruined by you!<sup>75</sup>

As she cuts off the sleeve, she slices through the dragon pattern, signaling a violent break with the state.

The play ends with Qin Liangyu lamenting being a woman warrior. Since her loyalty to the emperor and her female chastity and virtue seem incompatible with the behavior of corrupt officials who represent the emperor, she decides to take her women warriors and return home. In the context of the time when it was written and performed, the cutting of the sleeve with the dragon emblem symbolized the heroine's (common people's) disillusionment with the state. This is verbalized in the outcry of one of her generals—why should they fight for a dynasty that used such

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75 The best historical edition of *Qin Liangyu* 秦良玉 is the manuscript held by Zhao Tongshan 趙桐珊, a close associate of Shang Xiaoyun. This early version was published in *Jingju huibian* [Beijing Opera (play text) Compilation] 京劇匯編, ed. Beijingshi xiqu biandao weiyuanhui 北京市戲曲編導委員會 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1957) 23:105. See Nie Shuping 聶樹平 and Tao Yongli 陶永莉, "Fushi xiangzheng lilun shiye xia de beiqing Qin Liangyu —Zhao zangben Qin Liangyu jingju juben nüxingzhuyi yanjiu 服飾象徵理論視野下的悲情秦良玉—趙藏本《秦良玉》京劇劇本的女性主義研究 [The tragedy of Qin Liangyu seen from the perspective of clothing symbol theory—A feminist understanding of the Zhao [Tongshan] manuscript of Peking opera Jin Liangyu]," *Chongqing Jiaoyu Xueyuan xuebao* 23. 1 (2010): 109–112.

corrupt officials? Qin tries to evade the question and answers that if the state appears in the shape of corrupt officials, the only thing that remains is to go home, so that at least one can hold on to one's own integrity.

Written and performed in 1924, this opera registers society's fatigue and disillusionment with the incessant infighting among the warlords and the rampant corruption and abuses of state power. The woman warrior, representing the people, works to establish and secure a new society and is deeply insulted and demoralized by corrupt power-holders who put their own crude interests before the good of the country, and thus squander the trust of the people. The opera shows the high devotion shown by the people to fight the enemies of the state (=Republic)—only to be let down and robbed of the fruit of their victory and their trust in the political process. Yet Qin Liangyu does not denounce the legitimacy of the state, in this case the ideals of the new Republic. While she turns away from the state, she does not turn against it, which leaves room for reconciliation.

## The sacrifice of a great hero

The tension between the Republican ideals, the different political and military factions, and society was further played out in Xun Huisheng's 1925 opera *The Great Valiant Heroes*,<sup>76</sup> which was based on an older play that was taught to him by the famous *dan* actor Hou Junshan, who specialized in clapper opera (*bangzi xi*). It became one of the signature pieces of Xun Huisheng, who continued to rewrite it as he performed it, well into the 1960s (Figs. 8a and 8b).<sup>77</sup> In terms of operatic genre, it is a comedy. The story involves the corrupt official Shi Shilong and his rakish son, who tries to force a beautiful young woman, Chen Yueying, into marriage. When she refuses, Shi tries to seize her but he is fought off by Yueying and her mother, both of whom are skilled in martial arts. They are also helped by a young man. Yueying falls for and marries this upright and worthy youth, with his superb martial skills. The rake's father thereupon banishes this young man and his old father to a distant border region. The young man's name signals a critique of the powers-that-be: he is called Kuang Zhong 匡忠, meaning "loyal without requite" (I read *kuang* as *wang* 枉, meaning "in vain"). Disguised as men, Yueying and her mother fight their way through to find Kuang Zhong, and in the end the couple is united.

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76 *Daying jielie* 大英傑烈, alternative title *Datie gong yuan* 大鐵弓緣 [Fate (determined) by the great iron bow], *Xikao* 15 (1925). A version that has been altered after 1949 is included in Xun Huisheng 荀慧生, *Xun Huisheng yanchu juban xuan* 荀慧生演出劇本選 [Works performed by Xu Huisheng, a selection] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1982), 1–64.

77 Li Lingling, *Xun Huisheng quanzhuan*, 104–109.



Figure 8a (left): Xun Huisheng in the role of Chen Xiuying 陳秀英 in *Daying jielie* 大英傑烈 [Great valiant heroes]. Photograph, 1925.

Figure 8b (right): Xun Huisheng in the role of Chen Xiuying 陳秀英 in *Daying jielie* 大英傑烈 [Great valiant heroes]. Photograph, 1925.

The opera is a comedy that makes full use of mistaken identities as the two women at times are dressed in men's clothing. The theme of self-determination and fighting against unjust officials is at the center of the drama. Again, like Zhao Yanrong, Hongfu, or Qin Liangyu, the heroine here plays an active role in determining her own future, and in so doing, she defines her relationship to the power-holder. Although in this opera, a man committed to justice comes to the aid of the heroine, the message of the play is still rather stark. Corrupt officials are in control of large parts of the country, and upright youths, whose loyalty to the state is disregarded, only find peace in far-off lands. Read in the context of the early Republic, the hope for the realization of Republican ideals and the unity of the country lies in young people's willingness to fight for it.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

The use of leisure and entertainment to spread new social values and create public opinions was first advocated in late Qing reform debates. Theater, together with fiction and popular songs, had already then been considered to be one of the main "soft" means to create public understanding of the

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<sup>78</sup> In the 1958 edition of the play, the young woman, there called Chen Xiuying, kills Shi's son while defending herself against yet another attack; in the final battle at the end of the play she also kills the father.

big issues facing the country. In Meiji Japan, the state authorities set up the Imperial Theater to infuse the public with Western notions of modernity and civilized cultural values. In China, the center was too fragmented until the late 1920s to play a similar role and theater reform was largely left to reform-minded elite members. They brought Peking Opera up to the present by recasting its focus to deal with the actual struggles for the identity of the new nation state, of its political and cultural elite as well as of its people. The theater became the platform on which new ideas, ideals, and aspirations as well as old frustrations appeared translated into fictional characters and plot constellations in performances with many layers of meaning and attraction. Civilized social values moved center stage in the figure of the *dan*. Through her, the voice of society/the people was articulated, but her fate also reflects the strength of the forces she confronted.

On the state side, the early Republican efforts to bring about a theater reform that would help civilize and educate the people was ineffective since the political state itself was barely surviving. While setting up its own institutional framework, the state side was most effective by supporting decentralized social organizations that were active in the reform of popular customs and entertainment in ways actually approved by the government. Through its efforts to politicize the stage and by offering actors a role in the process, the Republic contributed to setting the course for Peking opera reform. All the new operas performed by the *dan* offered the public "healthy" entertainment through dramatic stories, artistic innovations, and dazzling newly costumes while dealing with the social and political issues of the time.

As revolutionary as these reforms were, there was no public outcry. The confrontations in these performances with the old flaws of the present order were subversive and symbolical rather than upfront and polemical. They came in concrete situations that were laden with emotions, were performed with sublime artistry, and were never crude advocacy. The main players on stage were a man of power and a woman of uprightness. This constellation offered a concrete form to discuss state/society interactions during these challenging times.

The new operas written by men-of-letters and performed by the top *dan* actors helped transform a national pastime by featuring the female character on center stage and spreading through this character a new set of social values and relationships, freedom in marriage being one of the frequent themes. However, the most important contribution in terms of drama's "civilizing" mission was in the roles played by women in the nation's affairs. Seen in the context of Republican politics, they took on symbolic meaning with the female heroine in her combination of weakness in power and strength in values standing for society or the people.

The new operas with their *dan* actors in the lead helped push Peking opera reform by centering on female roles with rich symbolic meaning. The modernity of this new female character is highlighted by the absence of a male character in equal stature as in traditional *Kunqu* opera. She



Figure 9: Mei Lanfang as Hongniang (left), Cheng Yanqiu as Cui Yingying (middle) and Shang Xiaoyun as Zhang Sheng (right) in *The Western Chamber*, a traditional Kunqu opera. Photograph, 1930s.

stands alone and fights for love and moral principle. The competition with the traditional male centered Peking operas was played out quite openly with most of the new plays written for *dan* leads. This was not only simply because there originally had been so few Peking opera plays with female leads, but because there was a new environment with which Peking opera had to engage. By articulating and taking on issues resonating with the experiences of contemporary audiences and offering society a stage presence through the female leads, the new plays became relevant for their time. Perhaps not surprisingly, theatergoers responded enthusiastically.

The rise of the *dan* was directly linked to the new plays and the drama created by the competition between them, and later performing together. (Fig. 9) Their success was in large part reflected at the box office and in the frequent and lucrative private performances for wealthy patrons. The fact that women began to enter the theater in cities other than the treaty ports also contributed to the *dan's* success. Women responded to the story of the female heroines on stage and were a major force in transforming audience responses.

The main protagonists are in a tense relation, which unfolds through the plot. The man of power shows neglect (*Drunken Beauty*), callousness and ruthlessness (*Yuzhou Feng*), or male chauvinism (*Qin Liangyu*) etc. towards the female lead. Some of the plays were based on myths; *Goddess Spreads Flowers* still shows an early stage of this symbolic encounter. The Goddess is only sending down the flowers which will show the difference between a man who has a stultified bureaucratic understanding of the new

faith (*Sāriputra*) and those really engaged in “saving all sentient beings” as the Republic was supposed to do (Maitreya and the other bodhisattvas), but she is not yet society directly and emotionally engaged. Only with the plays *The Goddess of the River Luo* (*Luoshen* 洛神), *Xishi* (*Xishi* 西施) and the *Beauty in the Fish Net* (*Lian jin feng* 廉錦楓) these two principal forces confronted each other fully formed. As these plays are repeating the same constellation, they engage in a discussion with each other.

Taking a stand at center stage came with a price. These women might gain their point, but the roles and the actual power associated with them are irreversible because those of state and society are. These women remain symbolically “weak,” never gain state power and mostly end tragically. This end is also inevitable for the emancipated female figure—she cannot go “back.” However, her uprightness will constantly challenge the powers-that-be and gain the empathy of audiences, because they find their concerns and viewpoint articulated on stage by these stunningly beautiful performers of women, while the male counterparts with all their power are helpless at best and villains at worst.

The advantage of recasting old plays to have *dan* actors in the lead was that these plays already had been engaging with the state and its authority. The new plays did not invent this focus, but they could very economically shift the dynamics and the valuation by changing the lead. In most cases, the state is represented by a court official with negative characteristics while the representative of the powerless common people on stage is always morally superior. The ideal of a just society lives in the heroines’ belief in that ideal. She struggles for it, aware of the potentially dire consequences. These heroines stand both as the reminder to the young Republic of its responsibility to live up to its own ideals and as an affirmation of society’s commitment to these ideals and its willingness to struggle for the Republic’s survival even as it is aware that it lacks the hard power to force the issue.

Among the different literary arts, theater has been one of the most sensitive means to register the pulse of the nation in times of peace as well as of national crisis. Being a highly public form of art, and a space where literati and popular culture come together, theater, more than any other art form, has a close relationship with politics, ideology, and social values. As an artistic form experienced as a collective event, it cuts across class and even gender barriers. Through the development from ritual performance to popular drama, it has also become an established space of coded and sometimes esoteric communication between state and society. Through the new opera, one might say that society talked back to the state, and reaffirmed its own moral superiority. The low opinion the early reformers and then the Republican state held of society as being in need of a thorough reeducation is soundly rebuffed in these new works. According to this reading, the uncivilized element in Chinese society is the corrupt state rather than the people.

After 1927 came a drop in new plays. Most of the *dan* actors appear to have gone back to singing the seemingly feminine characters from the “traditional” repertoire. However, as there were very few traditional operas written for *dan* as lead, most *dan* operas were new, even those taken from traditional opera and enlarged into stand-alone works. The audience, furthermore, knew the original operas, thus any rewrite became all the more visible and provocative in terms of its social and even political message concerning the relationship between society and the state. Knowing the long version of the opera served as a context to understand the storyline and significance of the few acts chosen as the bases for the new works.

In a “silent” manner without manifesto or declaration, Peking opera helped transform twentieth century leisure culture by establishing the female character with her rich symbolic load at the center of the Chinese stage. The new works helped sever the ties to the old social order where men of state power had been dominating the action in the world as well as on stage. The image of the female on center stage was emotionally charged: although without power, she stands tall because of the steadfastness in her sense of justice and moral convictions. Republican audiences loved this figure in part because it was relevant for their own understanding of the times they lived in and the role they themselves were playing. The self-assertive female figure represented by the *dan* became the moral compass of Chinese society during the first half of the twentieth century.

## Figures

- Fig. 1: *Mei Lanfang; Foremost Actor of China*, edited by Liang She-Ch'ien (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1929), 6.
- Fig. 2: *Jingju dashi Cheng Yanqiu* 京劇大師程硯秋 [Orig. Engl. title *Peking Opera Master Cheng Yanqiu*], edited by Wang Wenzhang 王文章 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2003), 20.
- Fig. 3: *Jingju dashi Shang Xiaoyun* 京劇大師尚小雲 [The master of Peking opera Shang Xiaoyun], edited by Yang Zhong 楊忠 and Zhang Weipin 張偉品 (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2003), 1.
- Fig. 4: *Xun Huisheng* 荀慧生 [Xun Huisheng], edited by Wang Jiayi 王家熙 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe and Beijing meishu sheying chubanshe, 2007), 125.
- Fig. 5: William Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama* (London: Elek, 1976).
- Fig. 6: *Jingju dashi Cheng Yanqiu* 京劇大師程硯秋 [Orig. English title: *Peking Opera Master Cheng Yanqiu*], edited by Wang Wenzhang 王文章 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2003), 83.
- Fig. 7: *Jingju dashi Shang Xiaoyun* 京劇大師尚小雲 [The master of Peking opera Shang Xiaoyun], edited by Yang Zhong 楊忠 and Zhang Weipin 張偉品 (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2003), 8.
- Fig. 8 a: *Xun Huisheng* 荀慧生 [Xun Huisheng]. Edited by Wang Jiayi 王家熙 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, and Beijing meishu sheying chubanshe, 2007), 115.

Fig. 8 b: He Baotang 和寶堂, *Huashuo jingju* 話說京劇 [Illustrated introduction to Peking opera] rev. version (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2013), 73.

Fig. 9: *Mei Lanfang, Daxing hua zhuan* 梅蘭芳, 大型畫傳 [Mei Lanfang, A pictorial biography], edited by Mei Shaowu 梅紹武 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997), 99.

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PART II

# The Margins of Leisure

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Robert P. Weller

## Leisure, Ritual, and Choice in Modern Chinese Societies

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**Abstract** Leisure in China before the twentieth century differed significantly from ritual. By the late twentieth century, however, much Chinese religiosity has increasingly come to resemble leisure—maintaining its separate subjunctive worlds with their different spaces, times, and rules, but approaching leisure much more closely in the new predominance of personal and voluntary motivations. It is not so much that religion has become a kind of leisure in people’s minds, but rather that both frames have been subject to the broad changes of the twentieth century that have caused them to develop in similar directions. Specifically, the increasingly influential trope of modernity, which certainly included the introduction of a globalizing leisure frame, has led to the new convergence between ritual and leisure. Much of the resulting similarity, I will suggest, stems from a reconceptualization of the ritual sphere as something voluntary and thus increasingly like leisure.

**Keywords** ritual, China, framing, gift-giving, gender, voluntary choice

This essay begins from the fundamental idea, expressed in the “Theoretical Essay” at the end of this volume, that leisure is a general frame rather than a part of any specific activity. My primary concern is with a problem that puzzled me from the very beginning of the joint project on leisure that this book represents. Leisure and ritual defined in the abstract seem very much alike in important ways, at least in Chinese societies, as I will discuss. Nevertheless, few people would accept the idea that they are fundamentally the same. This essay is an attempt to understand just how ritual and leisure are different and similar, and how their relationship has changed over the past century.

I will not be arguing for any underlying identity between the two fields. Instead, I will suggest that the forms of framing of both ritual and leisure themselves have changed and converged over the course of the twentieth century. This has been part of the increasingly influential trope of modernity, which certainly included the introduction of a globalizing leisure frame, and which has led to the new convergence between ritual and leisure. Much of the resulting similarity, I will suggest, stems from a reconceptualization of the ritual sphere as something voluntary and thus increasingly like leisure.

## Leisure as a frame

The concept of leisure is not inherent in any specific form of activity—not playing the cello or watching a football game or doing calligraphy.<sup>1</sup> Such things can be framed as jobs (professional musician, sports reporter, scribe) as easily as we can frame them as leisure. Or both frames can seem irrelevant, as for my brother-in-law, who turns beautiful wooden bowls on a lathe in his basement. He does this for fun, but it has also turned into a major source of income for him, to the point where he has quit a more standard job. He sells the bowls at craft fairs, but refuses to advertise or to set up any kind of internet presence. It is not that he opposes advertising or the web. Instead, he fears that success in those media would increase his market and thus force him into a form of production that really would become “work.” For him, the work/leisure distinction is not one he is willing to make. He rejects the frames. And indeed there is no reason why those particular categories should be universal in human space and time. No activities are inherently leisurely, but “leisure” is instead historically and situationally constructed.

What makes certain activities count as leisure is that “leisure” exists as a plausible frame, at least for some people at some times—including us, now—and that we choose to understand an activity within that frame. Leisure is thus one of a large set of what we might call “subjunctive worlds.”<sup>2</sup> Such worlds work like grammatical subjunctives, which posit a universe

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1 This point is also addressed in the “Theoretical Essay.”

2 This concept is developed in Adam B. Seligman et al., *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

that is set apart and temporary—different from the indicative world. The subjunctive describes a world “as if” it were real, even though it is not (yet) real. Subjunctive worlds, the way I will use the term here, exist apart from the ordinary flow of existence, forming alternate but always temporary realities. Examples include children’s imaginary play (as if we were princesses and dragons), ritual (as if the ancestors were actually present, in Confucius’s famous phrase, *Analects* 3.12), and leisure activities.

Here let me draw on (but simplify) part of the theoretical framework offered in this volume’s concluding essay to sketch some of the basic characteristics of framing any subjunctive world.<sup>3</sup>

- *Heterotopia*. Such worlds take shape in a separate space. These spaces can be dedicated, like a cathedral, a garden, or a football field, or they can be temporary, marked by things like putting up music stands in the living room.
- *Heterochronia*. They also have their own times. The weekend is the most obvious modern example for leisure, but so is the Sabbath or any calendrical observance for ritual, or Sunday afternoon for American football. In a sense, these marked-off periods create our understanding of the regular ticking of time, rather than the other way around.
- *Heteronomia (Alternate rules)*. These alternate space-times typically also have special rules of their own (liturgies, the rules of poker), which may sometimes vary significantly from the rules of other spheres (e.g., it is permitted to ridicule the king at Carnival).
- *Frame-marking*. The moments of entry and exit are usually clearly marked: the bang of the judge’s gavel, the applause at the beginning and end of a classical symphonic performance, putting on and removing uniforms or markedly casual clothing, and so on.

China, probably like every place, has a long tradition of various kinds of subjunctive worlds. Certainly Chinese have distinguished a world of “ritual” and a world of “play” for millennia. Ritual (*li* 禮) has been theorized by Chinese thinkers since ancient times, most famously by Confucius and his followers. Proper performance of ritual by the Emperor and officials kept the cosmos and the empire running properly. Proper performance of ritual between individuals (*limao* 禮貌, courtesy) created social harmony. A true sage could appropriately innovate in new contexts, but the rest of us required the constructed orders of ritual. There were arguments over the centuries about how this ritual frame should be construed and enacted, but the frame itself remained important throughout.

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3 Note that the literature on play provides an important precursor to this approach, especially the classic Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Beacon Press, 1980), originally published in 1938 in Dutch.

“Play,” on the other hand, did not have the solemnity, the necessity, or the crucial social consequences of ritual. There is no single word that can translate “play,” but *wan* 玩 indicates a particularly unritualized kind of play, not strongly bound by rules. It includes both childlike play and things like splashing around in the water (*wan shui*). Other things we call play—the ones usually characterized by more strongly rule-bound action—had quite different specific verbs to describe them, like “hitting” in ball games (*da qiu*) or “putting down” board game pieces (*xia qi*).

While the complex history of the concept of leisure in Europe and North America is well beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that the ideas of “leisure” and “work” evolved in tandem. The industrial revolution was particularly important in shaping the tight orchestration of the work day, with its need to coordinate labor through the tyranny of time. By the twentieth century this had led to workers clocking in and out, having their tasks monitored to the second in time-motion studies, and counting the days until the weekend. As work became regimented into its own strict time, non-work also became much more sharply defined. All of these same pressures moved into China as well, so that a flexible and changing agricultural slack period (*xianshi*) eventually evolved into clearly demarcated vacations and weekends, which could then be devoted to a new idea of leisure.<sup>4</sup> Others in this volume discuss changes in Chinese “leisure” from the late Qing on; here I am especially interested in how those transformations relate to the ritual frame, which evolved just as significantly over the same period.

Does religious activity count as leisure? As the discussion of subjunctive worlds indicates, there is certainly a great deal in common. Both religious ritual and leisure share characteristics of heterotopia, heterochronia, heteronomia, and frame marking. Nevertheless, on the eve of the twentieth century, people in China surely had a clear separation between the frames of ritual and leisure. Quite unlike leisure or idleness, ritual was required and crucial. Failing to do it endangered people both socially and cosmologically. This was a fundamental difference between the two.

Still, for anyone who has seen Chinese temple religion in action, it looks a lot like leisure. What survives today of late imperial Confucian-style ritual is extremely slow, solemn, and orderly. It can be seen reconstructed at some Confucian temples, and sometimes occurs as well in ordinary temples. The basic structure is that a leader slowly intones instructions (“Bow the first time!” “Bow the second time!”) and some uniformly dressed group follows slowly along. Nevertheless, that kind of ritual is certainly the exception in the lives of most people. The great majority of temple rituals are *fun*. An important festival features one or more opera troupes, endless

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4 At least for the very particular Shanghai environment, this distinction became marked at the end of the nineteenth century. See Catherine Yeh, “Shanghai Leisure, Print Entertainment, and the Tabloids, Xiaobao 小報,” in *Joining the Global Public. Word, Image and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910*, ed. Rudolf Wagner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 201–205.

stalls selling snacks and items for worship, priests performing colorful rituals, the thunder of firecrackers, and massive crowds of people and clouds of incense smoke. This is the aesthetic people call hot and noisy (*renao*) or red-hot (*honghuo*).<sup>5</sup> Best is if everything is happening at once—three operas at the same time, each next to the other, as priests intone texts in front of the temple, vendors shout out their wares, and people bustle back and forth with food offerings and incense. And, of course, there is always extensive feasting and drinking. This is the sort of ritual life that seems to overlap so strongly with “leisure” activities like drinking, eating, or listening to music.

On the eve of the twentieth-century changes I will discuss, it was not simply that leisure-like activities took advantage of the ritual event, but remained outside its basic frame, like the ubiquitous food vendors at such an event. When priests at a Chinese funeral escort the soul through the dangers of the underworld by turning somersaults and eating fire, the entertainment value is inseparable from the ritual function. At really large rituals like rites of cosmic renewal (*jiao* 醮), the entire town becomes the ritual sphere, with temporary altars set up in many neighborhoods and food offerings placed in front of each doorway. Perhaps the clearest example is opera performance, which is always said to be for the gods to watch, and which involves its own altars and deities. At some rituals opera actors themselves take over some important ritual roles, for example in purifying the temple area of malevolent spirits after the ghost festival, while dressed as the demon-queller Zhong Kui. None of this, however, prevents the opera from being enormously entertaining for the crowds who gather around to watch it. A hot and noisy event is a sure sign of an efficacious temple deity, just as a powerful deity fosters heat and noise; they are part of a single image of efficacy.

Nevertheless, even this kind of popular ritual was never only entertainment. One crucial difference from leisure is that much village ritual activity was required for everyone. Such a rule seems very unlike leisure, which always has at least a pretense of being voluntary. One of the greatest sources of conflict between Catholics and other villagers in late imperial times, for instance, was the Catholic refusal to pay the household tax that funded local temple rituals.<sup>6</sup> Ritual needs could not be avoided simply because someone had a different belief system. In the same way, in many villages, households rotated responsibility for burning incense at small Earth God shrines, and one could not easily refuse to do this.

Some ritual participation was thus not voluntary, although much could also be decided individually. For instance, no one was required to go on a pilgrimage, or to offer incense at any temple they passed while traveling,

5 Robert P. Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); Adam Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

6 Henrietta Harrison, *The Missionary's Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

although many people chose to do these things. Nevertheless, total withdrawal from the ritual life of a village was not a real possibility for most people at the end of the nineteenth century. Even though people had a high degree of control over the quantity and quality of their ritual activities, there was always something involuntary about taking part in basic village rituals.

In spite of the similarities, then, much Chinese ritual behavior differs significantly from an intuitive definition of leisure. More importantly, while a fun aesthetic was certainly part of much ritual, I see no evidence that anyone framed these activities as leisure. That is, even if we agree that various elite activities like playing chess or painting bamboo count in some sense as leisure (or at least as cultivation), those activities still left far more space for individual choice than ritual. Much of ritual life—both rural “hot and noisy” worship and slow, solemn Confucian ritual—differed fundamentally from a frame of leisure or cultivation especially in its compulsory nature.

By the early twentieth century “leisure” as a frame had clearly globalized along with the related idea that individuals could make “voluntary” decisions. The work discipline based on factories and clocks, which became so stark during and after the industrial revolution, did much to create a separate world of “work” that could be opposed to leisure. As this separation became increasingly important, along with the seven-day week and what would eventually feature as a two-day weekend, leisure was marked off clearly from a work world that could be temporarily left behind. As others have documented in this volume, the effects of this were already clear in the Republican period in China.

By the 1980s, when I first began attending to such things through work on environmental tourism, Taiwan already had a flourishing leisure industry, easily seen through magazines that called themselves things like *Travel & Leisure*<sup>7</sup> or *Leisure Life Monthly*,<sup>8</sup> or through resorts that marketed themselves specifically by appealing to a concept of leisure. The Chinese mainland took a little longer to develop these attitudes, but was not far behind. That is, at least in the last few decades, the frame of leisure undoubtedly exists.<sup>9</sup>

As this frame has developed over the past century, has it altered the way ritual has been thought about in relation to leisure? I will explore this briefly by expanding on three broader ideas about how leisure works, primarily drawn from the “Theoretical Essay” concluding this volume: that leisure functions primarily as a gift economy, that leisure spaces tend to be feminized, and that leisure is never coerced. For the gift economy and

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7 *Xiang lü* 鄉旅 [Sunny travel & leisure] (Taipei shi: Qunyou wenhua gongsi, 1992).

8 *Xiuxian shenghuo zazhi* 休閒生活雜誌 (Taipei shi: Xiuxian shenghuo zazhi she, 1989–1995).

9 Leisure has become a matter of government concern on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. Its role in urban planning in the PRC has been explored by Timothy Oakes in this volume. Official surveys of leisure behavior have been conducted in Taiwan and the People’s Republic, see the “Introduction” in this volume, note 6.

feminization ideas, I will suggest that the introduction and consolidation of a leisure frame that contrasted with work, along with other factors over the course of the twentieth century, has fostered a new convergence, at least on the surface, between ritual and leisure. This led to an increase in the gift economy and the feminine sides of ritual. Nevertheless, I do not see this as a direct effect of a merger between ritual and leisure, or even as a flow from the new leisure frame into the older ritual frame. Instead, I will argue that the partial convergence stems from a third factor: the rapid increase in the twentieth century of a new kind of subjectivity that prioritizes an autonomous individual making choices based on personal preference. This “choosing self” is a core aspect of the suggestion that leisure is never coerced, a point also discussed in the “Theoretical Essay.” The rise of leisure as a frame has coincided with the idea that such activities are voluntary chosen. The same forces that led to this have encouraged a great increase in the voluntary aspects of ritual life, leading the fields of ritual and of leisure to resemble each other more now than ever in the past.

### A gift economy?

The “Theoretical Essay” has suggested that leisure operates with a gift economy among participants, contrasting it with the market economy that applies elsewhere. That is, as Huizinga said long ago about play, leisure is not done for profit, at least not in the financial sense.<sup>10</sup> This is true even though leisure activities rely on the surplus value of work (as the editors also point out). That is, at least in modern times, leisure needs the resources of the market but maintains a separate subjunctive world in which market rules do not apply, and in which the market origins of the leisure goods and gifts are hidden. In a sense my brother-in-law’s implied rejection of a work/leisure distinction for his bowls reflects a broader refusal to accept the purely utilitarian logic of the market while still profiting from it.

Without trying to defend the general utility of this idea, it seems to me that it is at least roughly true. Because the frame of leisure contrasts with the frame of work, it seems highly likely that their fundamental economic postures would also differ, even though each may depend on the other. This is why even commercialized leisure, like a meal at a restaurant with friends in China, usually involves someone sneaking off to the cashier to pay while no one else is watching. It is not acceptable to split the bill as if this were simply about paying money for food. The meal is a gift, to be reciprocated on other occasions by someone else’s gift.

Assuming that the idea that gift economies characterize leisure is at least roughly true, what might it tell us about ritual? Of course, it is clear that ritual worlds depend on financing generated from other worlds—they require money to orchestrate, just like leisure activities. Does ritual’s

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10 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 13.

subjunctive world work through a gift economy? How much does the market economy infiltrate? Are there other economic logics at play? I will suggest that we need to add at least one more economic logic beyond gifts and markets—the logic of the coercive economic power to tax, which again differentiates the ritual and leisure worlds.

The anthropological literature on gift economies is long and argumentative, but maybe it is enough here to note that we have moved significantly away from assuming that gift-giving necessarily implies an egalitarian reciprocity. Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* was particularly important in emphasizing how a sense of timing in the giving of gifts and counter-gifts could completely redefine a social relationship.<sup>11</sup> And studies of the gift economy in China make clear that it constantly interacts with and actively constructs systems of hierarchy.<sup>12</sup> Gifts create social ties, but there is nothing egalitarian about the process. Nevertheless, this is not the market hierarchy of who has the most money.

Money and other forms of goods show up in two main forms for Chinese ritual practice. One is the transfer of secular money between participants and ritual practitioners or temple managements, which eventually goes both to pay for ritual goods and performances and to contribute to the incomes of those people. The other is the transfer of “spirit money” between people and gods, ancestors, and ghosts. What kinds of economies are these? Are they gift economies like leisure? The answer is not simple.

Major community rituals and the temples that house their gods were often funded by something like an unofficial household tax, where everyone was expected to give the temple a set amount, and they might receive a “receipt” in the form of a printed charm (*fu* 符). This was certainly not a market transaction, but neither was it a gift economy, because it was required. It was instead the economy of politics, of required payments that are the duty of every resident—the ritual equivalent of taxation. As with politics, people in return expected provision of public goods, in this case community rituals and spiritual protection.

Temples in some cases also owned property (agricultural land or urban buildings) that generated market-based income for them, but of course, this is just the way all ritual and leisure activity relies on money generated elsewhere. More important here is the source of such property—almost always the voluntary donation of a local wealthy family. That is, here we do in fact see a kind of gift economy at work. And we can also see it on much smaller scales when people come to a temple to burn incense and ask the god for a favor. On leaving, such people will very often leave a donation and this too is conceptualized as something like a gift economy since there

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11 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

12 See especially Yunxiang Yan, *The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Village* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).





Figure 1: Paper money for sale, Nanjing 2014.

is no set amount, nor is there any sanction (except perhaps from the god) against people who choose to pay nothing.

The second use of money and goods appears in transactions between people and spirits. Any major interaction with a spirit involves “spirit money.” This is usually cheap, coarse paper printed to resemble currency, which will be burned to transfer it to the spirit world.<sup>13</sup> Its details vary enormously, but in some places it can be just a square of paper with a scrap of gold or silver foil on it, or paper folded into the shape of an ingot and colored to look like gold or silver, or elaborate bills printed to look much like modern currency, like the “Bank of Hell” (in English) notes that are popular in Hong Kong (see Fig. 1). At first glance this may appear to be a market transaction—money in exchange for some kind of supernatural service. Or it could be seen as the dark side of the economy of politics—necessary bribes paid to corrupt officials. It is also worth remembering, however, that money is a perfectly acceptable gift in Chinese society. Most wedding and funeral gifts are cash, for example, and a cash gift to a child bears none of the opprobrium of an American cash gift, which is seen as the most thoughtless possible present.

The use of cash thus does not in itself tell us what kind of economy we have; cash can work in China in the gift, commodity, or taxation economies. Instead, we need to hear from informants, but unfortunately we do not have a lot of information, especially historically. Wagner argues that

13 Hou Ching-Lang, *Monnaies d'offrande et la notion de trésorerie dans la religion chinoise* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des hautes études chinoises, 1975); Rudolf G. Wagner, “Fate’s Gift Economy: The Chinese Case of Coping with the Asymmetry between Man and Fate,” in *Money as God? The Monetization of the Market and Its Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics*, eds. Jürgen von Hagen and Michael Welker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 184–218.

paper money (and the various grave goods that preceded it) were indeed gifts, but only within a highly asymmetrical relationship that is quite different from what we would expect from the gift economy of leisure.<sup>14</sup> This may overestimate the egalitarian reciprocity normally involved in gifts, but the asymmetry is still especially obvious in ritual situations. This is more similar to the gift one gives to a high official in the desperate hope of gaining his help than to buying dinner for an old friend. While it is a gift and not a tax, it still seems to imply some of the same political mechanisms. Both ritual and entertainment may involve reciprocity, but the mechanisms are not entirely the same.

For recent decades, when we can hear from informants directly, people favor the gift economy explanation. This is consistent with the fact that most people do not feel there is a required amount for payment. In addition, the asymmetry may not be as stark as Wagner implies for earlier eras. For example, people sometimes say that gods do not respond because they have been paid; instead, they are more like parents who want to take care of you. They will help even if you cannot afford the gift.<sup>15</sup> This is asymmetry, of course, but of a different sort, with far less political inequality, and something more like what we might see in a leisure economy.

For temple income, the older forms of required tax-like income generation have greatly decreased in both China and Taiwan, and have been replaced by voluntary donations. This again appears consistent with a decline in the compulsory, political side of ritual economy. Why? In part this is because government policies (both Nationalist and Communist) were relatively unfriendly to religion. This made it more difficult to collect something that looked like a tax and it undercut the coercive power of temples. At the same time, land reforms (again under both regimes) removed a very important source of income from large temples, and forced them to seek funds in other ways. Many donations now are anonymous, consisting simply of cash dropped into a donation box, and thus truly voluntary since there is no way of knowing who has contributed. (The god knows, of course.) Others are payments promised for wishes fulfilled. While this too is voluntary, in the sense that the only coercive consequences for failure to pay are divine, it is the closest to a kind of market-based, fee-for-service transaction. Finally, larger donations are made directly to a temple office, and the largest will often be recorded on large sheets of paper hung in front of the temple or even carved on stone steles. These are voluntary gifts, but their public nature also makes them transfer very easily into other forms of social capital. These have been especially vital to temples today as replacements to the lost income from landholding. In general, then, there has been a strong move toward various forms of voluntary payment, rather than taxation or rents. In brief, the decline of political and

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14 Wagner, "Fate's Gift Economy," 197–198.

15 Emily Martin Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 99–100.

(direct) market sources of funds, and the rise of voluntary donations over the course of the twentieth century and beyond has made the ritual field resemble the leisure field more closely.

One other factor also plays into this change—the weakening of local social communities, especially through migration. This has been very clear for rural villages, which generally relied more on their temples' abilities to tax the entire community than did large urban temples. Such communities are emptying out, or in some cases in eastern China, receiving rapid influxes of new migrants. None of the old social mechanisms are working very well under these new demographic conditions. This also means that temples in many areas are turning away from their earlier concentration on providing community services (like annual *jiao* rituals) and focusing more on providing personal services, because they now rely on individuals rather than depleted communities for funding.

As Robert Hymes has suggested, Chinese religion long had both communal and personal aspects.<sup>16</sup> This basic situation has not changed, but it has been rebalanced so that the personal side increasingly outweighs the communal side. Recent studies thus suggest that the communal and involuntary aspect of local religion is declining in favor of the personal and voluntary aspect in both Taiwan and the mainland.<sup>17</sup> This has been especially true on the mainland, where much of the religious infrastructure (both physical and social) was destroyed. Even though many temples have now been rebuilt, the communal basis of religion has changed in most parts of China. For example, in 2013 I visited Gaochun, which is the area of southern Jiangsu said to have best preserved its communal religious life, known for its hot and noisy celebrations featuring masked performers. Even the central temples of this cult, however, are now padlocked most of the time, opening only on the lunar first and fifteenth of each month. Communal religious structures are even weaker elsewhere in the region. Instead, we have an increase in religion that speaks to people's individual and family needs, like the healing that has made Christianity spread so quickly in much of rural China, or the moral guidance people seek from Buddhist groups, or the miraculous efficacy that makes some temples so popular. That is, the personal and voluntary aspects of religion remain quite important, but the ritual necessities of the communal side of religion are shrinking in broad portions of the country.

While this change relates to a broad set of twentieth-century developments, it also leads ritual to look a lot more like leisure because it is becoming increasingly voluntary and personal. This is not a shift of frame from the market economy of daily life to a gift economy—a gift economy

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16 Robert P. Hymes, *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

17 Yanfei Sun, "Popular Religion in Zhejiang: Feminization, Bifurcation and Buddhification," *Modern China* 40, no. 5 (2014): 455–487; Lin Wei-ping, *Materializing Magic Power: Chinese Popular Religion in Villages and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

had always been relevant for ritual.<sup>18</sup> Instead, it involves a shift from an involuntary economy of politics and communal responsibility to emphasize almost entirely the gift economy of free choice and open options in creating a personal social relationship—features that we might also associate with a leisure economy. At the same time, temples (but not necessarily religious specialists for hire) have also moved even farther away from direct involvement in the cash economy as they usually no longer directly control resources like property rents or required taxes but rely instead on the gift economy, including gifts from wealthy individual donors. Temple ritual activity, in brief, now seems to resemble leisure more clearly than it did before, not necessarily because the nature of the gift is the same in both contexts, but because both have increasingly become expressions of a choosing self. Ritual has lost much of its coercive and political aspect in favor of something more like a gift economy.

### A feminized space?

The second major form of change I want to touch on is gender. As the “Theoretical Essay” suggests, leisure’s time and space is often clearly gendered in ways that differ from gender relations framed in other ways. Where both genders take part, women often have more prominent roles than in other spaces and times. If we accept this (and, like the gift economy hypothesis, it deserves much more discussion), does Chinese temple worship look like leisure or not?

As with money, the answer is not straightforward because religion implicates several different kinds of gender relations. Men certainly largely still dominate the large communal rituals sponsored by village and town temples, just as they did at the beginning of the twentieth century. The committees that control temples are usually entirely male, whether they are chosen in the traditional way by divination or by popular election, which often happens now in Taiwan. The major ritual actors are usually also men, including both religious specialists hired for the occasion and the official representatives of the community who usually appear in the rituals holding incense while the priests intone their texts. While I have not been discussing ancestor worship here, the public rituals of China’s large lineages also featured almost exclusively men.

Nevertheless, women played (and play) crucial roles. They almost always conducted the daily rituals of burning incense at family altars to gods and ancestors, although men might take over on important occasions like the lunar New Year. They took part in pilgrimages. They would

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18 Certain ritual actions do, however, resemble fee-for-service transactions, like payments made to ghost temples. All of these have some implication of immorality, but this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this essay. See Robert P. Weller, *Resistance, Chaos, and Control in China: Taiping Rebels, Taiwanese Ghosts, and Tiananmen* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

often be the ones going to temples for special requests—to give birth to a son, to cure an ill family member, to help a child to do well in school. That is, while women were sidelined from many of the most public and communal rituals, they were often the most important players in the private ritual context of the family and in the more personal aspect of religion.

Once we get to the major changes of the twentieth century, it is not hard to see how gender intersects with the story of the economic changes I have been suggesting. As Sun Yanfei suggests, the general trend of Chinese religion over the last century, and particularly over the past few decades, has been a strengthening of the personal and voluntary side of worship and a weakening of the communal side. Just as this has enhanced the gift economy within temple finances, it has enhanced the role of women in temple activities.<sup>19</sup> That is, ritual activities have begun to resemble leisure in this gendered sense as well.

We can see this most clearly in the People's Republic, where the decades-long hiatus in public ritual performance finally ended in the 1980s, followed by a rapid increase in temple activities. Even though men had dominated nearly all temples in late imperial times, much of the revived activity relied on women. They became active as spirit mediums, raised money for temple construction, and took more public religious roles than ever before.<sup>20</sup> In Suzhou, for example, rural connections to Daoist masters are now organized almost entirely by women, in great contrast to the earlier pattern.<sup>21</sup> While in some cases men were able to reassert control, this has by no means always been true. Furthermore, as Sun Yanfei has documented for a county in Zhejiang, many of the old communal temples are reworking themselves—both ritually and iconographically—to appeal far more to the personal side of religion. At least in this area, that reworking usually takes the form of a move toward Buddhism.

As another example, dragon dance performances in many areas are now performed primarily by women. In earlier times, such performances were almost always the province of young men, very often affiliated with martial arts schools. At a large ritual I saw celebrating the goddess Mazu's birthday in Nanjing in 2014, for instance, there were two dragon dancing groups, each of which had one man, with the other performers all middle-aged women. Later that year, the performers in a competition among village-based dragon dance teams in Suzhou were again all

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19 Sun, "Popular Religion in Zhejiang," 456, 469.

20 I discuss this more fully in other work, particularly Robert P. Weller, *Alternate Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999). I have also been inspired by Sun Yanfei's article, "Popular Religion in Zhejiang."

21 See Tao Jin 陶金 and Gao Wanseng 高萬桑 (Vincent Goossaert), "Daojiao yu Suzhou difang shehui 道教與蘇州地方社會 [Daoist religion and Suzhou regional society]," in *Jiangnan diqu de zongjiao yu gonggong shenghuo* 江南地區的宗教與公共生活 [Religion and communal life in the Jiangnan region], ed. Wei Lebo 魏樂博 (Robert P. Weller) and Fan Lizhu 范麗珠 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanche, 2015), 107.



Figure 2: Dragon Dance Team in Suzhou, 2014.

women (see Fig. 2). This now appears to be the pattern, at least in this part of China.

There have still been remarkably few studies of gender and Chinese religion, and not nearly enough on the history of local temple finance. Still, there does appear to be enough evidence to suggest that the weakening of the communal side of religion over the past several decades has had important effects on gender. In particular, the decline of the communal and political function of temples has opened up much more space for women. It has not led to a decline in religiosity, but to a reportioning where the personal side now outweighs the communal side. As a result, religion—even public ritual—has become a more feminized sphere than ever before.

The relative feminization of religious activity, however, does not necessarily make religion into something more like leisure. The tendency to feminize religion is the result of broadly changing gender roles in China in recent decades, and especially of the decline of the communal side of religion, which had been dominated by men. Women had always been more important in the voluntary side, and that has now become relatively more important. Women's leisure, on the other hand, has long been a way for some to enrich their lives. Instead, it is the new predominance of personal and voluntary issues—traditionally the religious realm of women—that is making religion look more like leisure. This closely parallels the economic change, where a political economy of taxation has given way almost entirely to a voluntary economy of the gift.

## Voluntary choice, religion, and leisure

We should not think of late imperial village religion as “leisure” even though it has many of the characteristics we would usually use to describe leisure activity—a different time and space, an aesthetic of fun, and so forth. Nevertheless, there was nothing optional about participation, and that is a fundamental difference. Even the idea of voluntary participation, which seems central to the idea of leisure as the non-work world, cannot be taken for granted if applied to China before the twentieth century. The very concept of voluntary choice assumes a subjectivity based around an autonomous individual who makes free choices. This is the individual of modern market consumption, but quite different from the self embedded in layers of social networks that Fei Xiaotong described for China as a “differential mode of association.”<sup>22</sup> This self-who-chooses has become far more important since the nineteenth century in China, and especially in the past few decades.<sup>23</sup>

Choice lies at the heart of the rise of the leisure frame and of the increase in the voluntary side of religion. A frame of leisure as opposed to work thus now exists in all Chinese societies. And over roughly the same period, religion began to look more like leisure, particularly in the move away from its coercive, political aspect and more toward being an activity of free choice. At the same time, it has taken on even more of the characteristics that may typify leisure, in particular the new predominance of the gift economy and the reworking of gender roles within its space.

Is this because the new frame of leisure somehow affected religion? A better explanation would be to say that both the religious and leisure frames reacted to the many crucial economic and political changes of the twentieth century—the increased valorization of the individual and the idea of choice, the great weakening of the social arrangements that united villages and towns, the increased domination of a market economy, and so on. Yet once religion appears as something voluntary, and once a frame of leisure actually exists to make sense of it, it seems increasingly likely that ritual and leisure might evolve in similar directions. Note that the exact role of the gift economy and of women may not be identical in leisure activities and in religion. Those have grown more similar, but the most important underlying cause is the increase in voluntary choice, combined with the decline in earlier communal constraints on religion.

Do people now in fact think of religion as a kind of leisure activity? This needs study, but the answer probably varies according to the context. Much of the personal side of Chinese religion is strongly votive. That is, it attempts to accomplish some important goal (healing an illness,

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22 Xiaotong Fei, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, trans. Gary G. Hamilton and Wang Zheng (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 60–70. The term he uses in the Chinese edition is *chaxu geju* 差序格局.

23 On the rise of the individual in China, see for example Yunxiang Yan, *Private Life under Socialism: Love, Intimacy, and Family Change in a Chinese Village, 1949–1999* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

for instance) that extends beyond the ritual frame itself. Many stories of temples and gods, even today, focus on their spiritual efficacy (*ling* 靈), emphasizing the concrete consequences of worship for the rest of life. It seems unlikely that people would think of that as leisure. On the other hand, the more fun sides of religion might easily be taken as leisure once their coercive power has been removed. These include temple festivals with their operas, colorful rituals, dragon dances, and lavish feasts, and they may well include activities like pilgrimage, which is now typically combined with other forms of tourism. Going to listen to a monk preach on the lunar fifteenth of the month is not so different from playing tennis on Saturdays—it is done out of interest, and in these cases because it is good for you.

At the very least, there seems to have been an increased convergence of religion and leisure, especially in the last half-century. Both have always been subjunctive worlds as long as their frames have existed, but not all subjunctive worlds are the same. Whatever leisure may have been in China before the twentieth century, it seems to have differed significantly from ritual. By the late twentieth century, however, much Chinese religiosity has increasingly come to resemble leisure—maintaining its separate subjunctive worlds with their different spaces, times, and rules, but approaching leisure much more closely in the new predominance of personal and voluntary motivations. It is not so much that religion has become a kind of leisure in people's minds, but rather that both frames have been subject to the broad changes of the twentieth century that have caused them to develop in similar directions.

## Figures

Fig. 1: Photo by author, Nanjing, China, 2014.

Fig. 2: Photo by author, Suzhou, China, 2014.

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Eugenio Menegon

## ***Quid pro quo*: Leisure, Europeans, and their “Skill Capital” in Eighteenth-Century Beijing**

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**Abstract** In the eighteenth century around thirty European Catholic missionaries lived in Beijing, partly employed in technical and artistic services at the imperial palace and at the Directorate of Astronomy, and partly engaged in religious work. Starting in 1724, however, the Yongzheng Emperor forbade Christianity in the provinces. Yet the foreigners, with semi-official permission, continued missionizing in the capital and its environs, employed Chinese personnel, purchased residences and other real estate, and built churches in the Imperial City, the “Tartar City,” and the Haidian suburb.

The emperor and the Qing court (Manchu nobles, eunuchs, and other officials) allowed these Europeans to remain in Beijing and tolerated their religious activities in exchange for their exotic commodities and their services. The missionaries, on the other hand, used their skills and a relentless gift-giving strategy to create a network of support in the capital and beyond.

Using documents in Chinese and European archives, this chapter explores as a case study the figure of the missionary and clockmaker Sigismondo Meinardi, and his *quid pro quo* artisanal activities at the Qianlong court.

Technical skills, luxury articles and commodities became currencies of negotiation between divergent interests, contributing to weaken Qing imperial prohibitions, and to create *ad hoc* arrangements, tolerated by the emperor and benefiting the palace personnel, the missionaries, and their communities. Thus, spaces and objects of ‘leisure’ became grounds to rebalance traditionally asymmetrical relations of power, and shape social relations.

**Keywords** Qing dynasty, Qianlong emperor, clocks, Jesuits, Propaganda Fide

## The prime minister's clocks<sup>1</sup>

In his miscellaneous jottings on administrative matters and life in the imperial capital, poet, historian, and former Grand Council secretary Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814) included gossipy commentary on Western luxury items circulating in Beijing. In an entry simply titled “clocks and watches,” Zhao praised the high precision of Western time machines, and also Western astronomical methods. In his estimation, these methods were far superior to their Chinese counterparts, showing that talent and innovation could emerge outside China:

[T]he imperial astronomers nowadays [. . .] all employ Westerners [. . .] and the Westerners' calculations may be said to be finer than the old methods used in China [. . .]. As the Westerners' lands are more than ten thousand [Chinese] miles away from us, but as their methods are superior, we can know that in this vast world no matter where you go, there are sages who come up with innovations, and there definitely were not only a Fuxi, Yellow Emperor, Youchao, and Sui [. . .].<sup>2</sup>

This high praise of European techniques, however, was immediately tempered and in fact reversed by a humorous reflection on the limits of foreign technology and the negative consequences for those who relied too much on exotic machines:

Clocks and watches often must be repaired. Otherwise the gold thread inside will break, or they go a little too fast or too slow. Therefore, among the court officials, those who own watches time and

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1 My gratitude goes to my co-conspirators, Catherine V. Yeh and Robert P. Weller, and our indefatigable “editor-in-chief” Rudolf G. Wagner, as well as all other members of the Leisure Project for their camaraderie and insights. I also would like to thank the Boston University Humanities Center, the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe” at Heidelberg University, and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, for their support of our project. The CCK Foundation also funded part of my sabbatical in 2014–2015, and so did the School of Historical Studies at the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, and the Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies at Boston College. While at IAS, I presented my work to the congenial crowd of the East Asia Seminar led by Nicola di Cosmo, and I worked remotely with Luca Gabbiani (EFEO/EHESS) and Guan Xiaojing 閔笑晶 (Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, Manchu Studies Institute) on a preliminary Chinese version of this essay, published as Eugenio Menegon (Mei Oujin 梅歐金), “Shei zai liyong shei? Qingdai Beijing de Ouzhouren, zhuiqiu yule he zhengzhixing kuizeng 誰在利用誰? 清代北京的歐洲人、追求娛樂和政治性饋贈,” eds. Luca Gabbiani (Lu Kang 陸康) and Zhang Wei 張巍, *Faguo Hanxue* 法國漢學 [Sinologie française] (thematic issue: *Quanli yu zhanbu* 權力與占卜 [Divination et pouvoir]) 17 (December 2016): 117–139. Allison Rottmann helped with editing. Thanks to all!

2 All four are mythical cultural heroes of Chinese antiquity, credited with inventions and improvements in human life. Quoted from Zhao Yi, *Yanpu zaji* 簷曝雜記 [Notes from the sunny awning], ce 29, j. 2, 15a–b, in Zhao Yi, *Oubei quanji* 甌北全集 [Oubei collected works] (Diannan Tang shi, 1877).

again are late for court audiences while all those who are on time do not own watches . . . [Grand Councilor] Fu Wenzhong's [Fuheng 傅恒 1720–1770] house was full of clocks and watches, so much so that there was none among his servants who did not have one hanging on his body. As they could compare to check the time, they never should have been off the mark.

One day, at the time of a formal imperial audience, Fu's watch did not indicate that the time had come and when he leisurely strolled in to wait on the emperor, the emperor had already been seated for some time. Beyond himself with alarm, he then kowtowed at the foot of the throne and for days on end, he could not get over this shock.<sup>3</sup>

Zhao Yi's bemused attitude towards court officials like this Manchu Senior Grand Councilor, with his fumbling late arrival at the imperial audience, was based on Zhao's realization that these fashionable gentlemen with their latest Western gadgets—true symbolic markers of sophistication, wealth, and luxury—were in fact held hostage by the vagaries of their clocks (Figs. 1 and 2). Moreover, as he seems to observe in jest while referring to Fuheng's household, these high ministers were in fact also at the mercy of their own servants and secretaries checking the passing of time for them. These household personnel were in charge of winding the clocks but could not repair them. Those enamored with their timepieces became dependent on technicians who knew how to handle the mechanisms. In Qing Beijing, these technicians were European court missionaries.

These amusing jottings uncover the nexus between Western luxury commodities, the elite patrons who had the means and desire to acquire them or the status to receive them as gifts, and the non-elite agents—household servants and European technicians—who managed them on behalf of their masters. For Fuheng, having all his servants sporting watches was a way to show his own wealth and power to his guests and acquaintances, projecting his prestige at court and flaunting his far-flung contacts both outside and inside his household, while also rewarding his personnel with costly marks of distinction.

Zhao Yi's jottings are no exception. The famous mid-eighteenth-century novel *Honglou meng* [*Dream of the Red Chamber*], for example, mentions many Western objects and commodities as indicators of distinction and sophistication for Qing elites: imported handkerchiefs, towels, cloth, furs, a great quantity of clocks and watches, silver scissors, glassware, lenses, mirrors, automata, illusionistic paintings, enamels, snuff tobacco, and

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3 Ibid.; the passage is also discussed in Beatrice Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers. The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China, 1723–1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 209–210; and Catherine Pagani, *Eastern Magnificence and European Ingenuity: Clocks of Late Imperial China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 94.

皇朝禮器圖式 卷三

一七一—五一五

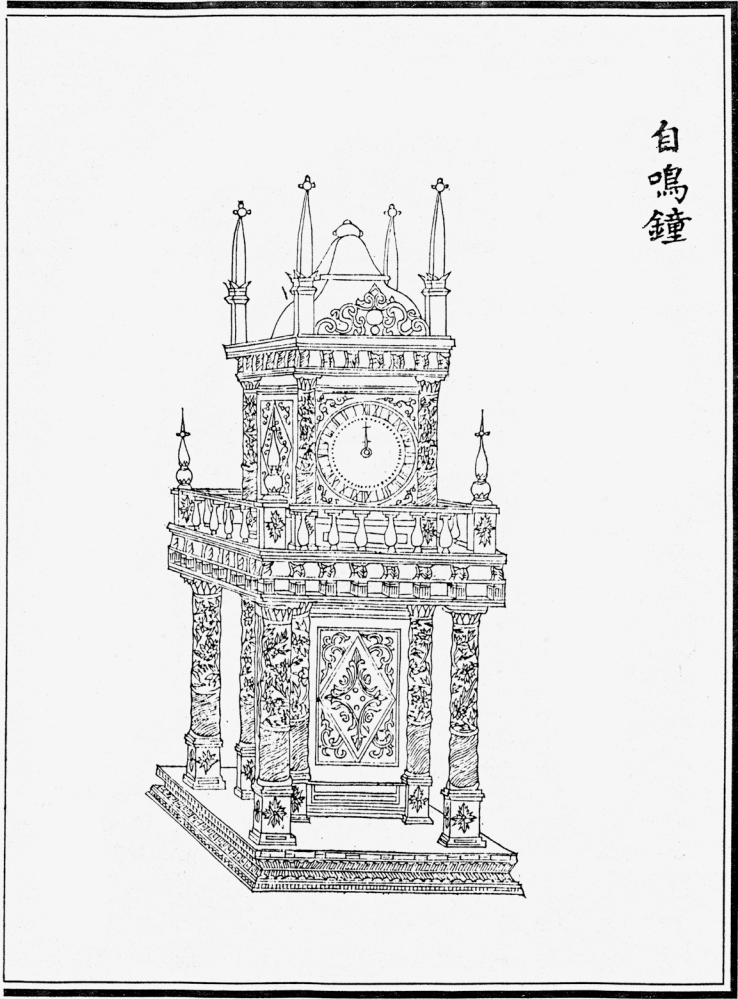


Figure 1: Zhao Yi mentioned two categories of timepieces coming from the West that were fashionable in his day. The first was called 自鳴鐘 *zimingzhong* (self-chiming clock). This is a woodblock print rendering of the famous *Da zimingzhong* 大自鳴鐘 still preserved in the Jiaotaidian 交泰殿 in the Palace Museum 故宮博物院 in Beijing.



Figure 2: The second type of timepiece mentioned by Zhao Yi is called 時辰表 *shízhēnbiao* (hourly watch). Several of these pocket watches dating from the Qianlong reign are still preserved at the Palace Museum.

European medicines and balms.<sup>4</sup> Watches, in particular, might also have had a “scientific” appeal, as miniature astronomical bureaus to master time in one’s pocket. Zhao Yi, indeed, praised the accuracy of Western watches and clocks, only lampooning Fuheng’s inability to properly manage these foreign devices.

Zhao Yi’s tone, however, also seemed to imply a critique of the inappropriate use of wealth and craving for luxury by Fuheng and his peers. A generation later, especially after the death of the Qianlong Emperor in 1799, we will find explicit moral critiques of clocks as wasteful markers of distinction and dissipated leisure. In the 1820s Prince Zhaolian (1780–1833), for example, denounced self-chiming clocks made in the West and imported via Canton as “producing crafty treachery,”<sup>5</sup> which literati still vied to buy as “toys” for their families, for obvious non-utilitarian and leisurely use. He even suggested that the Qianlong Emperor had loathed their “wicked craft” (*yinqiao* 淫巧), and had forbidden their importation as tribute, but that up to his own days it had proven impossible to fully implement this ban.<sup>6</sup> This claim is amazing given the well-known pursuit of the latest and trendiest European timepieces by this emperor. Zhaolian’s voice reflects the less affluent and more troubled times of Qianlong’s successor, the Jiaqing Emperor, which were characterized by social crises and economic decline, but also the stance of a new generation of Manchu elites, which was highly critical of the corruption of the late years of the Qianlong reign.<sup>7</sup> By this time, what the “Theoretical Essay” concluding this volume refers to as the “anomic” potential of leisure and its products had become a

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4 See [Maurus] Fang Hao 方豪, “Cong *Honglou meng* suoji Xiyang wupin kao gushi de Beijing 從《紅樓夢》所記西洋物品考故事的背景 [An analysis of the background of the story of the *Honglou meng* based on analysis of Western objects referred to in this novel],” in *Fang Hao liushi ziding gao* 方豪六十自定稿 [The Collected Works of Maurus Fang Hao, revised and edited by the author on his sixtieth birthday], 413–496 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1969); for references to European objects in Qing literature, see also Wilt Idema, “Cannon, Clocks and Clever Monkeys: Europeana, Europeans and Europe in some early Ch’ing Novels,” in *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, ed. Eduard Vermeer, 459–488 (Leiden: Brill, 1990). On Western or “Westernizing” objects as symbols of prestige among Chinese elites in the Qianlong period, see most recently Kristina Kleutghen, “Chinese Occidenterie: The Diversity of ‘Western’ Objects in Eighteenth-Century China,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 47, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 117–135; on architectural Western exotica, see Ellen Uitzinger, “For the Man Who Has Everything: Western-Style Exotica in Birthday Celebrations at the Court of Ch’ien-Lung,” in *Conflict and Accommodation in Early Modern East Asia*, eds. Leonard Blussé and Harriet T. Zurndorfer, 216–239 (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

5 *Zhizao qixie* 製造奇邪.

6 Zhaolian 昭槿, *Xiaoting xulu* 嘯亭續錄 [Miscellaneous notes from the Whistling Bamboo Pavilion, sequel], Qing manuscript copy (text originally compiled in 1817–1826) (Beijing: Beijing Airusheng shuzihua jishu yanjiu zhongxin – Erudition Digital Research Center, 2009), *juan* 3, unpaginated. This entry was written after Qianlong’s death in 1799 as Zhao uses the late emperor’s posthumous name, i.e. *Chun Huangdi* (純皇帝).

7 On Zhaolian’s political views, see Kent R. Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 141–142.



concern, while Zhao Yi's words still mirror the splendor and self-assurance of the Qianlong reign and the fascination that era had for clocks.

Zhao Yi's jottings offer a window into the complexity of power relations during the High Qing period between elite owners/consumers and those who provided, maintained, and serviced their foreign leisure objects. In general, luxury objects were made of special and rare materials and required hard-to-find technical knowledge and skilled labor to produce and service. Possessing such objects, especially for the most powerful elites like the emperor, imperial princes, and members of the Grand Council, often meant privileged access to the best artisans on the market.

Court missionary artisans and Western artifacts were components in an elite luxury market that had been developing in China since the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Discussions on frugality and luxury had often occupied literati after Lu Ji 陸楫 (1515–1552) criticized plans to ban luxury production.<sup>8</sup> Lu had advocated state support of luxury industries and consumption as an engine to sustain the commercialization of the economy and to increase employment.

The fall of the Ming had provoked a rethinking of these issues, and important figures like Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695), Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682), and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) blamed the end of the Ming dynasty on commercialization and corruption, and accused merchants of having allied themselves with the "barbarian" Manchus who then set up the Qing dynasty to exploit the population and enrich themselves. Not all early Qing thinkers agreed, though. Tang Zhen 唐甄 (1630–1704), for example, thought that, while agriculture should remain the basis of the economy, luxury production and commerce were positive elements that generated wealth and jobs.

Frugality was a moral obligation for the ruler and the government, but when it came to society, a luxury market was a natural part of the economy. The Qianlong emperor himself, who embraced the Confucian moral high ground of frugality in theory, if not in practice, agreed with Tang Zhen's position when it came to "societal" luxury. No decree banning luxury consumption was ever issued by him, and in 1768 the emperor chastised the "empty notions of frugality" (*jian zhi xuming* 儉之虛名) of a commissioner inspecting the Lower Yangzi region, who had suggested anti-luxury measures against local salt merchants. The government should rather follow the principle of "using what is plentiful to supply for what is scarce," and refrain from any anti-luxury measures, especially in Jiangnan, where luxury goods were one of the backbones of the local economy.<sup>9</sup> This position was reflected in Qianlong's personal relationship with the southern salt

8 Lu Ji 陸楫, *Jianjiatang gao* 蒹葭堂稿 [Drafts from the Reed Hall], in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 [Continuation to the *Siku quanshu*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–1999), vol. 1354.

9 A recent summary of scholarly literature in Chinese and English about luxury and frugality in Ming-Qing China is Margherita Zanasi, "Frugality and Luxury: Morality, Market, and Consumption in Late Imperial China," *Frontiers of History*

merchants, and the massive employment of resources from across the imperial domains and beyond for the court's luxury consumption, accompanied by the emergence of new cosmopolitan tastes connected to imperial expansion in Inner Asia and to global commercial relations. All of this occurred in spite of the dominant rhetoric of frugality among contemporary economic thinkers. Rich merchants provided skilled labor and funding to the court, gaining influence with the emperor and his entourage while patronizing and promoting individual artists and artisans. These found employment in the imperial workshops after having proven their worthiness in the art market of Jiangnan. European missionaries were also participants in similar dynamics.<sup>10</sup>

Western luxury objects had the added cachet of exoticism, and could be sought for pleasure, enjoyment with others (the household's women or male friends), and as miniature scientific miracles or artistic marvels that could be privately owned. They were both physical objects and symbolic signifiers. Clocks, for example, as Zhao Yi mentioned, were symbols of precision and of an imported form of knowledge that he saw as equal or even superior to Chinese inventions. These Western luxury goods became part of already existing leisurely times, spaces, and tastes, but also represented a novelty in those spheres, thanks to their foreign pedigree. Moreover, because of their rarity, cost, and association with imperial taste, they were tangible expressions of wealth and status for the elites who purchased or commissioned them, exchanged them among themselves, or bestowed them on dependents.

At the same time, they were also bargaining chips in the hands of the artisans and technicians producing and maintaining them, and of the intermediaries in the circle of production and maintenance. They were not just commodities exchanged for their economic value—and these objects were indeed expensive to procure or produce—but actually acted as foci within multi-directional webs of influence. The final owner might have desired an object as status symbol and wished to use it to display his aesthetic refinement, enhance his social prestige, and impress his peers and subordinates. Given the complexity of the transaction dictated by the rarity of the objects and their need for maintenance, however, the producers and

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*in China* 10.3 (2015): 457–485; on Qianlong's pronouncements about luxury, see 473–474.

10 For new scholarship exploring luxury in the early and mid-Qing, see Dorothy Ko, *The Social Life of Inkstones. Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016); and Yulian Wu, *Luxurious Networks: Salt Merchants, Status, and Statecraft in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017). On Inner Asia's luxury products and the High Qing political economy, see Kwangmin Kim, *Borderland Capitalism: Turkestan Produce, Qing Silver, and the Birth of an Eastern Market* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Jonathan Schlesinger, *A World Trimmed with Fur: Wild Things, Pristine Places, and the Natural Fringes of Qing Rule* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016). For the impact of Qianlong's southern tours on material culture, see Michael G. Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring and the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680–1785* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

managers of the object could obtain not only immediate material rewards or cash in exchange for their unique and irreplaceable labor and skills, but, more importantly, long-term access and patronage, which were not quantifiable in commercial terms but provided other sizeable benefits. Only very few specialized missionary artists and technicians could produce the very best Western-style paintings, or repair and maintain mechanical clocks and watches. The missionaries, however, provided leisure goods and services not to attain financial gain, as is common among regular providers of leisure content, but to secure religious toleration within the dynamics of a gift economy.

## On clocks, missionaries, and leisure

The emperor and his court acted as arbiters of taste and as the supreme sources of commissions of luxury objects within courtly circles. Especially during the Qianlong reign (1736–1795), imperial appreciation of such objects offered a benchmark against which Beijing's elites measured their own desires and projected their prestige. In particular, as Catherine Pagani has observed, European clocks and watches were regarded by these elites "as status symbols, as decorative pieces, and as personal adornments, but not as timepieces."<sup>11</sup> While perceptive, this characterization is perhaps too categorical. Even as decorative objects, clocks and watches still had to function properly as timepieces to justify their existence, and this presupposed availability of maintenance staff, mainly European artisans and technicians.

The enjoyment of the luxury products the Europeans provided was reserved for leisure hours and took place in spaces specifically dedicated to leisure. The missionaries' role, however, differed from that of other entertainment providers in several respects. They did not offer performances in leisure spaces and times, but rather the pleasure derived from the rarity of their objects and the skills needed to make them; they did not engage with these clients through the money economy, but through the gift economy; and they did so with the aim to advance their missionary work elsewhere rather than to secure their livelihood. However, while other providers of entertainment did not object to entertainment and considered this their livelihood, the missionaries engaged in a field—leisure—which they considered highly objectionable so as to be able to do the work of saving souls for which they actually had come.

What was the nature of the Europeans' standing at court? The older, Eurocentric assumption was that the missionaries rose from their subordinate roles by gaining "influence" in China and on the imperial throne through the introduction of superior technical knowledge. Recent scholarly work, however, has highlighted how Qing emperors, while the prime

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11 Pagani, *Eastern Magnificence*, 6.

addressees of the missionaries' display of knowledge and artistic skills, shrewdly and autocratically controlled the labor of those engaged at court.<sup>12</sup> Still, during the Kangxi era, especially between 1670 and 1700, the Jesuits gained an unprecedented level of protection for their missionary enterprise by being on intimate terms with the emperor. A dramatic change occurred in 1724, when the Yongzheng Emperor decided to ban Christianity in the provinces, allowing only a handful of missionaries to reside as technicians and artists in Beijing, and to discreetly keep their churches in the capital open to local Christians.

While continuing this restrictive policy, his son, the Qianlong Emperor, became more appreciative of the artistic and technical services of the missionaries than his father had been, and therefore was much less antagonistic towards them.<sup>13</sup> However, imperial patronage under Qianlong remained ambiguous and relations never became as familiar as they had been under Kangxi. Due to their uncertain and weaker standing, the missionaries increasingly used personal connections in the Inner Court bureaucracy to support their material and spiritual operations. They leveraged imperial praise for their artistic and technical contributions, as well as personal gift relationships between Europeans and members of the court, to create technically illegal but perfectly functional arrangements. This situation in fact protected underground missionaries in the provinces while facilitating the open continuation of religious activities in the capital and its environs.<sup>14</sup> Such a complex relationship between providers of leisure and those engaged in its pursuits is not unusual, as the studies of Nancy Smith-Hefner, Sarah Frederick, and Rudolf Wagner in this volume show.

The European artisans and technicians considered here are a very small number of individuals, probably no more than five or six out of around thirty European residents in the capital at any time. I am not arguing for their importance in the political culture of the time. Rather I am interested in exploring the dynamics of the power relations that allowed them to rise from their subordinate position through their involvement in the economy of leisure. Manuscript records in European archives about their daily

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12 See Han Qi, "Patronage scientifique et carrière politique: Li Guangdi entre Kangxi et Mei Wending," *Études Chinoises* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 7-37; Catherine Jami, "Imperial Control and Western Learning: The Kangxi Emperor's Performance," *Late Imperial China* 23, no. 1 (June 2002): 28-49; Catherine Jami, *The Emperor's New Mathematics: Western Learning and Imperial Authority during the Kangxi Reign (1662-1722)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

13 On Yongzheng's attitude towards the court missionaries see Eugenio Menegon, "Yongzheng's Conundrum. The Emperor on Christianity, Religions, and Heterodoxy," in *Rooted in Hope. China - Religion - Christianity. Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Prof. Roman Malek SVD*, eds. Zbigniew Wesolowski, Barbara Hoster, and Dirk Kuhlman, 1:311-335 (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

14 On anti-Christian policies in the mid-Qing period, see Menegon, "Yongzheng's Conundrum," 318-320; Pierre-Emmanuel Roux, "La trinité antichrétienne: essai sur la proscription du catholicisme en Chine, en Corée et au Japon (XVIIe-XIXe siècles)" (Doctorat Histoire et Civilisations, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2013), 192-237.

interactions with the court and the capital city offer a level of detail rarely available in institutional Qing sources, and in the following pages I will make use of these materials for a case study.

## Daily life, luxury consumption, and networks of power in Beijing: The case of Sigismondo Meinardi

Most scholars in China and the West have concentrated their attention on well-known court Jesuits residing in Beijing, such as the astronomers Adam Schall von Bell (Tang Ruowang 湯若望, 1592–1666) and Ferdinand Verbiest (Nan Huairen 南懷仁, 1623–1688), or the painter Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shining 郎世寧, 1688–1766). In recent years, Italian scholars have also published primary sources and biographical materials on the secular priest and artist Matteo Ripa (Ma Guoxian 馬國賢, 1682–1746) and his companion, the Lazarist priest and musician Teodorico Pedrini (De Lige 德理格, 1671–1746). Both were sent to the Qing court by the papal Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (*Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*), commonly referred to as "Propaganda," one of the central dicasteries (ministries) of the government of the Holy See, the Roman Curia.<sup>15</sup> Propaganda also sent a handful of other missionaries to Beijing in the course of the eighteenth century. They belonged to several orders and congregations, including the Discalced Carmelites and the Discalced Augustinians.

Inspired by the successful Jesuit use of technical skills to win favor, and following the advice given by its own missionaries in China, Propaganda selected its men based on their manual skills, "to easily obtain introduction to Court, and thereafter, reopen the way for our [Propaganda] missionaries to attend the imperial audiences as well, [like the Jesuits,] so as to better establish our mission there."<sup>16</sup> These words illustrate that Rome's ecclesiastical authorities and the missionaries themselves realized from the very beginning the importance of a presence at court. Some worked at the palace as artisans, others engaged in religious work in Beijing even if they might have arrived in the capital presenting themselves as craftsmen. Testimonies of their lives and interactions with Qing elites have so far been ignored by historians of China and are virtually unknown even to specialists in the history of Christianity in China. The Propaganda materials offer tantalizing glimpses of professional tensions among the Europeans (including those between different national groups of Jesuits), who were competing

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15 Details on Ripa and Pedrini's activities in Beijing in Michele Fatica ed., *Matteo Ripa. Giornale (1711–1716)*, vol. 2 (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1996); and Teodorico Pedrini, *Son mandato à Cina, à Cina vado – Lettere dalla missione, 1702–1744*, eds. Fabio G. Galeffi and Gabriele Tarsetti (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018).

16 Fortunato Margiotti, "Il P. Sigismondo Meinardi e la messa in cinese nel sec. XVIII," *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 22 (1966): 33, note 5, quoting the Procurator Arcangelo Miralta to Teodorico Pedrini.

for imperial and elite patronage by peddling their skills in luxury production and technical assistance, and by offering gifts of imported luxury goods.

I focus here on one individual court missionary as an exemplar of the type of skilled European artisans who, I would argue, fit within the emerging eighteenth-century luxury production system described above. This was the Italian Discalced Augustinian Sigismondo Meinardi (also spelled as Meynardi and Mainardi), better known under his religious name of Sigismondo da San Nicola and the Chinese name of Xi Chengyuan 席澄源 (元). He worked in Beijing from 1738 to his death in 1767—around the time described by Zhao Yi in his jottings—as a musical instrument maker, horologist, and automaton maker, both at court and among capital-based elites. Sigismondo's testimony clearly highlights the importance of luxury commodity production in structuring power relationships at the level of the individual artist-artisan, beyond the networks of affluent aristocratic and mercantile patronage associated with the imperial house.<sup>17</sup>

Sigismondo was born on February 21, 1713 in Turin, then capital of the Dukedom of Savoy, in what is today Piedmont, Italy. Given that his father was a physician and his brother would later become a lawyer, we can socially place him as belonging to the city's bourgeoisie. At age 16, he officially entered the order of the Discalced Augustinians, receiving the religious name of Sigismondo da San Nicola.<sup>18</sup>

The Discalced Augustinians were a reformed branch of the older Augustinian order. Established in 1592, the order developed quickly, especially in Italy, attracting many to an austere life of begging and popular missions among the poor and illiterate. Detachment from the world was signaled by the adoption of a religious name, inspired by a saint (in this case, San Nicola), and abandonment of the original family surname. The missionary spirit of the order soon led to the creations of missions outside Europe, including one in northern Vietnam.<sup>19</sup>

Sigismondo went on to study in Turin in the Convent of San Carlo Borromeo, and in November 1735, two months before becoming a priest, sent a request to Cardinal Vincenzo Petra (1662–1747), Prefect of Propaganda Fide in Rome, to be assigned to the missions of the Discalced Augustinians in Eastern Tonkin.<sup>20</sup> He left for Rome on February 15, 1736,

17 On Sigismondo's life, see Margiotti, "Il P. Sigismondo"; Sigismondo Meinardi da S. Nicola OAD, *Epistolario. Parte prima. Lettere originali inviate a Torino*, (Roma: Edizioni di *Vinculum*, 1964); on his work as a horologist, see Guo Fuxiang 郭福祥, "Qing gong zaobanchu li de Xiyang zhongbiao jiangshi" 清宮造班處裏的西洋鐘錶匠師 [Western clockmakers in the Qing imperial workshops], *Gugong xuekan* 故宮學刊 1 (2012): 187–190; and Guo Fuxiang, *Shijian de lishi yingxiang: Zhongguo zhongbiao shi lunji* 時間的歷史映像: 中國鐘錶史論集 [Historical images of time: essays on the history of Chinese clocks] (Beijing: Gugong chubanshe, 2013), 215–218.

18 Margiotti, "Il P. Sigismondo," 32–33.

19 Marcella Campanelli, *Gli agostiniani scalzi* (Napoli: La Città del Sole, 2001), especially 21–60, on the Order's Province of Genua, where Sigismondo was educated.

20 Archivio Storico della Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o *de Propaganda Fide* (hereafter APF), *Scritture riferite nei Congressi (SC), Indie Orientali e Cina*, 21:1733–1736, f. 705r, n.d.

to await his dispatch to the Asian missions in the Convent of Gesù e Maria al Corso. The Beijing missionary Teodorico Pedrini, however, through the Procurator of Propaganda in Macao, had recently asked the Congregation to send two missionaries to the Chinese capital to work at the court as artisans and artists, with the purpose both of strengthening papal influence within the Qing government, and of continued protection for missionary undercover activities. In response, the Congregation had issued an order to find appropriate candidates.

Soon, the Procurator for the Missions of the Discalced Augustinians, Ildelfonso da Santa Maria, responded by proposing Sigismondo together with three other confrères for the Chinese missions. He accompanied this with a glowing introduction of the young priest: "Fr. Sigismondo da San Nicola, Piedmontese, priest, around twenty-four years old, excellent in letters, and trained in making keyboard instruments, maps, clocks, and skilled in any manual work, be it [painted] miniatures or enameled [objects]."<sup>21</sup> Together with an older confrère, the Milanese Serafino da San Giovanni Battista (Zhang Chunyi 張純一 or Zhongyi 張中一, 1692–1742), Sigismondo spent around six months training in mechanical and decorative arts in Rome.

At the time, the city was still among the great centers of European art, and the papal court and the religious orders sustained a large community of artisans, producing a great variety of artifacts for the numerous ecclesiastical establishments, the diplomatic corps, and the rich members of the pontifical nobility and government. This accelerated preparation may not have yielded accomplished professionals, but it laid the foundations for Sigismondo's artisanal career in China and turned out to be sufficient to gain admittance at the Qing court. Once in Macao, Sigismondo received imperial authorization to proceed to the capital as an organ-maker (*zuo fengqin* 作風琴), traveling with Serafino (accepted as a painter) and the Jesuits Felix da Rocha (astronomer) and Giacomo Antonini (physician). The party reached the capital on April 8, 1738, where Sigismondo would spend the rest of his life, dying there on December 29, 1767 at age 54.<sup>22</sup>

Sigismondo's experience has been consigned to obscurity, but his testimony is well worth examining for its quality and the intimacy he developed with court circles during three decades of the Qianlong reign. In his Italian-language letters to family members and his religious superiors in

21 APF, SC, *Indie Orientali e Cina*, vol. 21 (1733–1736), f. 675r; cf. Margiotti, "Il P. Sigismondo": 33.

22 On Sigismondo's Roman sojourn and his journey to China with Serafino, see Eugenio Menegon, "Desire, Truth, and Propaganda: Lay and Ecclesiastical Travelers from Europe to China in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Illusion and Disillusionment: Travel Writing in the Modern Age*, ed. Roberta Micallef, 20–23 (Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2018); on the initial employment of Sigismondo, see *Qing zhong qianqi Xiyang Tianzhujiao zai Hua huodong dang'an shiliao* 清中前期西洋天主教在华活动档案史料 [Historical materials on Catholic activities in China in the early Qing], ed. Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'anguan 中國第一歷史檔案館, 4:150 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003).

Turin and Rome, Sigismondo related how his workmanship secured him court patronage. Eight Chinese-language entries from the registers of the Imperial Workshops record commands to the “Westerner” Sigismondo to collaborate in making automata, fixing clocks, and preparing sketches between 1748 and 1768 at the Palace of Fulfilment, *Ruyiguan* 如意館, in the old imperial summer park, Yuanmingyuan.<sup>23</sup>

A standard collection of missionary letters from the time contains a lone direct reference to Sigismondo in a 1754 report penned by his friend, the Jesuit Jean Joseph Marie Amiot (Qian Deming 錢德明, 1718–1793) to a confrère in France:

To capture the favor [of the Qianlong Emperor], the Reverend Father Sigismond, missionary of Propaganda, has started manufacturing [. . .] an automaton that is to be in the shape of a man and has to walk in the ordinary human manner. If the reverend Father is going to succeed, as is to be expected given his skills and talent for this kind of thing, it is very likely that the emperor will order him to endow his automaton with other live faculties: “You made him walk, he is going to tell him, now make him talk!”<sup>24</sup>

This joke by Amiot only refers to Sigismondo’s professional persona at the Qing court. But the role of the weary and abused clockmaker was only one aspect of Sigismondo’s daily routine. He was also the economic administrator of the northern missionary stations in Shandong, Shanxi, Shaanxi, and Gansu, technically all illegal according to imperial laws. He was the Beijing liaison and intelligence officer of Propaganda Fide, keeping correspondence with the general economic procurator in Macao, and directly with Rome. He was, of course, a Catholic priest as well, shuttling to confess local Christians and celebrate masses between his chapel in Haidian village near the Summer Palace and the one near the Xizhi Gate in the Beijing walled city, as well as in rural villages in the hinterland of the capital, one- or two-day travel away. Sigismondo was also a housekeeper and a builder, improvising as an architect, a mason, and a mechanic. To support all these roles, he nurtured a network of extensive contacts in Beijing, Canton, and across Asia and Europe. While Manchu princes, officials, and eunuchs in Beijing engaged with him at the palace in his official capacity as an imperial craftsman, Christians and other commoners, both in the capital and its hinterland, assisted him in the mundane and religious parts of his life. In a letter to his brother in 1763, Sigismondo offered an ironic sketch of the different jobs he performed in rapid succession:

23 See *Qing zhong qianqi Xiyang Tianzhujiào*, 4:150 (year 1748), 195 (1753), 203 (1754), 296 (1762), 321 (1765), 325 (1766), 332 (1767), and 335 (1768).

24 “Lettre du Père Amiot au Père de la Tour,” Peking October 17, 1754, in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses concernant l’Asie, l’Afrique et l’Amérique, avec quelques relations nouvelles des missions, et des notes géographiques et historiques*, ed. Louis Aimé-Martin (Paris: Société du Panthéon Littéraire, 1843), 4:56.



I am occupied in the usual activities, that is, engaged in a continuous theater play. First I take up the role of missionary, and then I am at the palace serving the emperor. Once I leave the palace, the act changes again, and I have to attend to and confess Christians, and administer the sacraments to the sick. New act: dealing with gentiles, refuting their doctrines, explaining to them our doctrine. In sum, time goes by so fast, and often I have to wait until evening to eat something. Thus, I eat only once a day as I have been doing for many years, and sometimes my belly is empty for forty or more hours, but this does not bother me, since in this fashion I employ my time always to some good end, or at least some hope of a spiritual good end.<sup>25</sup>

This busy life eventually took its toll. "Producing leisure goods" was in fact no leisure at all, but an extremely time-consuming and stressful activity, continuously monitored by the emperor in person, who often ordered changes and added new demands to ongoing work. Jesuit Brother Jean Denis Attiret (Wang Zhicheng 王致誠, 1702–1768) revealed in a 1743 letter the ambivalent attitude of missionaries towards the emperor, tinted by resentment for the long hours of work, but also by pride in having access to all parts of the imperial precincts:

I have not a moment to spare; and am forced to borrow time in which I now write to you, from my hours of rest . . . There is but one man here; and that is the Emperor. All pleasures are made for him alone. This charming place [i.e. the Imperial Summer Park] is scarce[ly] ever seen by anybody but himself, his women, and his eunuchs. The princes, and other chief men of the country, are rarely admitted any farther than the audience-chambers. Of all the Europeans that are here, none ever enter'd this inclosure, except the clock-makers and painters; whose employments make it necessary that they should be admitted everywhere. The place usually assign'd us to paint in, is in one of those little palaces above-mentioned; where the Emperor comes to see us work, almost every day: so that we can never be absent. [. . .] I have gone through, and seen, all this beautiful garden; and enter'd into all the apartments.<sup>26</sup>

Missionary clockmakers and painters often complained about being overworked. But besides exploitation, there were other reasons to feel

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25 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter LXI, July 26, 1763, 87; see also similar language in *ibid.*, letter LXX, September 29, 1765, 96: "the life I lead is ridiculous, I seem like an actor who changes his role at every scene."

26 Jean Denis Attiret, *A Letter from F. Attiret, a French Missionary, now employ'd by that Emperor to Paint the Apartments in those Gardens, to his Friend at Paris. Translated from the French, by Sir Harry Beaumont (1749)* (London: R. Dodsley in Pallmall, 1752), 46–48.

uneasy. On the one hand, working for the emperor and his officials occupied most of the time that should have been devoted to proselytizing. Missionaries' letters are replete with a sense of psychological anguish and regret for being forced to neglect the spiritual goal, which had been the primary purpose of their coming to China. Following superiors' orders and working for the greater glory of God thus often became the only justifications to make the daily routine at the palace religiously acceptable.

On the other hand, missionaries also felt that there was a morally objectionable aspect intrinsic to the leisure-related objects they produced. Clocks, automata, music boxes, paintings, miniatures, and architectural structures were in fact manufactured for a pagan emperor and his court. Moreover, these products would be used in worldly activities such as social games and receptions, theatricals, and even non-Christian religious rituals (as in the case of Qianlong's Tantric Buddhist portraits, which were partly produced with missionary help).<sup>27</sup> Worse, they were potentially immoral, as they often involved concubines (Fig. 3).

Yet, in spite of frequent complaints about the "profane" activities they had to engage in to please the emperor and the Qing elites, missionaries conceded that they had to be prepared to do anything demanded, and "be ever on . . . guard not to be taken at a disadvantage," as we read in a famous letter by Sigismondo's friend, the Jesuit Amiot:

One has to be in China, and be there for the glory of God, to endure the kind of toil we experience for all the activities we do here. Those of our able artists in Europe who have their whims, who wish to work only in this manner and at that time as it pleases themselves, should come and spend some time here. They would soon be radically cured of all their whims after a few months of a novitiate at the court of Beijing. Since the missionaries were established here, no Emperor has profited more by their services than the present occupant of the throne, [Qianlong]. And there is no one who has more harshly treated them or who has fulminated more crushing decrees against the holy religion they profess. . . . The tastes of this prince vary, so to speak, like the seasons. Before, he has been all for music and for fountains, today he is all for machines and constructions. There is scarcely anything for which his inclination has not changed except for painting. The same whims can come back to him, and we *must be ever on our guard not to be taken at a disadvantage*.<sup>28</sup>

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27 On Castiglione's portraits of Qianlong in Buddhist attire, see Patricia Ann Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 55.

28 "Lettre du Père Amiot au Père de la Tour," 56. The English translation with my modifications follows W. Devine, *The Four Churches of Peking* (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1930), 17–18.



Figure 3: Sigismondo entered the inner apartments of imperial consorts to set up automata and clocks; in this depiction of an idealized consort in the inner chambers, probably dating to the Yongzheng period, notice the clock near the window.

In other words, offering their skills to provide goods for the capricious world of courtly leisure was a necessary middle ground for missionaries, where their religious rules and moral judgment had to be suspended to avoid major “disadvantages” for their mission. Ordinarily, for example, priests were not allowed to attend profane opera and comedies. However, when the emperor invited them, they could not refuse. In 1738, for example, the Jesuit painter Castiglione was recovering from illness and the emperor was so delighted that his beloved painter was feeling better, that he received him in audience and then invited him to an opera performed at court. The Propagandist Pedrini wryly mocked this invitation in front of other Jesuits at the Southern Church, saying “I am delighted that

Castiglione was admitted to an audience by the Emperor and regaled with four hours of theater."<sup>29</sup>

Pedrini, a member of the papal mission and a critic of the Jesuits, was here obliquely commenting on the breach of religious rules Castiglione had to subject himself to on this occasion. Another important issue was the respect for holy days: the Jesuits were often criticized for entering the palace even on Sundays to perform their courtly duties. When Ignaz Sichelbarth (Ai Qimeng 艾啓蒙, 1708–1780) was given an official rank in 1767 after Castiglione's death and took his place as the main European court painter, Sigismondo observed that the Jesuit had offered no "religious resistance" whatsoever to the new dignity and that, unlike the other priests in the workshop, "this Mandarin Father enters the Palace every single day, even on the most holy day of Christmas, a fact that shows that [to him] religious duty is not something that is to be respected to the letter." When asked about this infringement, Sichelbarth allegedly replied that "he must do whatever could please the emperor, to show his gratitude for the benefit of the official rank he received."<sup>30</sup>

This bantering over religious duty had been common not only between Jesuits and missionaries of other orders, but also within the Society of Jesus, and it dated back to the very beginnings of the mission, when the question of "secular" work at court—in particular the employment of superstitious knowledge in calculating the Chinese calendar by Jesuit astronomers—had created tensions among Jesuits notable enough to reach the Superior General in Rome.<sup>31</sup>

Sigismondo remarked that he and the other Beijing priests, for their part, were keeping Sundays as holy days and dedicated them to performing religious duties in their communities. Still, Sigismondo himself never missed an occasion to ingratiate himself with his patrons, as these interactions resulted in important contacts to protect his mission and support its economic workings. To navigate the complexity of daily life in Beijing and meet its economic demands required good linguistic and cultural fluency to make the right connections, and Sigismondo's spoken Chinese was excellent, as he had reached Beijing at age twenty-four and learned it fast. His fluency, in turn, enabled easy communication with different networks

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29 APF, *Scritture originali riferite nella Congregazione Particolare dell'Indie Orientali e Cina* (SOCP), vol. 42 (1739), copy of letter from Serafino to Arcangelo Miralta, September 26, 1738, f. 62r.

30 APF, SOCP, vol. 55 (1765–1769), letter from Sigismondo to Propaganda, Beijing, October 20, 1767, f. 634v.

31 On the conflict between missionary/pastoral roles and scientific roles among the Jesuits in general, see e.g. Antonella Romano, "Multiple Identities, Conflicting Duties and Fragmented Pictures: The Case of the Jesuits," in *Le monde est une peinture: Jesuitische Identität und die Rolle der Bilder*, eds. Elisabeth Oy-Marra, Volker R. Remmert, and Kristin Müller-Bongard 45–69 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2011). A large literature on Schall alone, including seminal pieces by Huang Yi-long and other Chinese historians of science, can be traced through the *Chinese Christian Texts Database (CCT-Database)*, eds. Ad Dudink and Nicolas Standaert, <http://www.arts.kuleuven.be/sinology/cct>.

of support, both within the Christian community of Beijing and with the court and its entourage. But this linguistic advantage was not sufficient to obtain protection for the mission together with economic favors and exemptions, as I will briefly illustrate below. Specialized skills in the production of luxury objects became in fact a crucial currency for missionaries within the imperial court and officialdom.

Sigismondo's case is particularly striking, as he was not a learned Jesuit Father occupying one of the exalted positions in the Directorate of Astronomy, but a rather modest horologist.<sup>32</sup> Within the Jesuit order, in fact, such "mechanical" positions were reserved for Brothers, technically called "Temporal Coadjutors" (*coadiutores temporales*), i.e. members of the Society of Jesus who were not priests but were employed in practical roles and occupied a subordinate position, as they had not pronounced the perpetual vows. Castiglione, for example, was a Brother. Yet, in spite of his subordination within the formal hierarchy of the Jesuit order, Castiglione achieved a remarkable degree of influence at Qianlong's court through his professional skills. In this case, success at providing art for the emperor's entertainment was resetting the hierarchy of power within the Society of Jesus itself. Even if, according to Jesuit rules, Castiglione always remained a relatively muted presence vis-à-vis the central authorities of the order (we have very few letters by the Italian Brother, who usually left communication to his superiors), his close relationship with the emperor made him a key player among the Europeans of Beijing during the Qianlong reign.<sup>33</sup>

32 Hieromonk Feodosii Smorzhevskii, a Russian observer in Beijing in 1745–1755 and an acquaintance of Sigismondo, observed that Jesuit "Mathematicians are in high renown [. . .] Painters are well respected now [. . .] Clockmakers are held in moderate regard"; see Feodosii Smorzhevskii, *Notes on the Jesuits in China*, trans. Gregory Afinogenov (Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, Boston College, 2016), 27.

33 A perceptive assessment of Castiglione's career is Marco Musillo, "Reconciling Two Careers: The Jesuit Memoir of Giuseppe Castiglione Lay Brother and Qing Imperial Painter," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42 (2008): 44–59. Qianlong's high esteem for Castiglione is well-known and reflected, for example, in the bestowal of special signs of imperial grace at his death in 1766, posthumously promoting him to the rank of Vice Minister, and granting for his funeral a higher amount than for any other Jesuit official (300 taels). Both were unusual recognitions for a court artist, and we know of only three other court artists who received official ranking (Zhang Zongcang 張宗蒼, Jin Tingbiao 金廷標, and Jin Kunjie 金昆皆); see Ishida Mikinosuke, "A Biographical Study of Giuseppe Castiglione (Lang Shih-ning), a Jesuit Painter in the Court of Peking under the Ch'ing Dynasty," in *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunkō* 19 (1960): 111; Yang Wanyu 楊婉瑜, "Qing Qianlong gongting huashi—Jin Tingbiao huihua yanjiu 清乾隆宮廷畫師—金廷標繪畫研究 [Research on Jin Tingbiao, court painter in the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty]," *Yiyi fenzi 議藝份子—Art Symposium* 14 (2010): 31. Castiglione's key role in the eyes of the Europeans at court is confirmed by the assessment of his confrère, the astronomer Hallerstein, in 1741: "We hope that the grace that this humble artist and brother found in the eyes of the Emperor, in due course, will favorably influence the general position of our Christian affairs. Perhaps precisely this hope could prompt European artists, especially those from our Society, with their art, which is now almost the only cause of popularity at the Chinese court, to serve God's churches and help Castiglione, who is already somewhat exhausted"; see letter no. 675 in *Der Neue Welt-Bott mit allerhand*

The Jesuit calculations of the most effective line of artistic or scientific specialization to present at court for a new arrival confirms the importance of professional identity for obtaining influence with the emperor and the palace bureaucracy. The Propaganda was no stranger to such calculations. When Sigismondo—an antagonist to the entrenched Jesuits—reached Beijing, he presented himself as an organ-maker and initially refused the job of horologist, as the Jesuits would have preferred based on how that role would have probably complemented, rather than competed, with their own positions within the palace's workshops.<sup>34</sup>

Sigismondo's experience shows how skills in the production of luxury objects could be deployed as cultural capital, or as what I would call "skill capital," in connecting with the emperor, nobles, officials, eunuchs, and even, indirectly, palace women. At least two forms in Pierre Bourdieu's well-known definition of cultural capital are applicable to Sigismondo's case. The skills he acquired through education were *embodied* cultural capital ("Cultural capital can exist [. . .] in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body"). The luxury objects he produced, on the other hand, were *objectified* cultural capital ("Cultural capital can exist [. . .] in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods—pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.—which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.").

Sigismondo did not own this second form of objectified cultural capital, but rather provided it to his clients, and derived patronage from it. His embodied cultural capital was primarily in his skills, or competence. They qualify as capital since they were unequally distributed and offered him exclusive advantages, even if the imperial court still set the parameters within which he could operate. As Bourdieu observed, "the cultural capital of the courtier, [. . .] can yield only ill-defined profits, of fluctuating value, in the market of high-society exchanges."<sup>35</sup> Sigismondo was not a courtier, but his position as court artisan put him squarely within the courtly economy and its capricious constraints. Yet his unique skills also conferred some degree of autonomy. In spite of his low status as a "mechanic," Sigismondo was able to quietly use his technical abilities to create connections that were to the Propaganda mission's advantage, and an analysis of his contacts in Beijing reveals the value of his prized "skill capital."

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*Nachrichten deren Missionarien Soc. Jesu*, eds. Joseph Stöcklein et al. (Augsburg und Grätz: In Verlag Philips, Martins, und Joh. Veith seel. Erben, 1758), 34:41–42, as translated in Mitja Saje, ed., *Augustin Hallerstein—Liu Songling: The Multicultural Legacy of Jesuit Wisdom and Piety at the Qing Dynasty Court* (Maribor: Association for Culture and Education Kibla & Arhiv Republike Slovenije, 2009), 300. Italics mine. The Russian ecclesiastic Smorzhevskii also observed that "[. . .] now [the Jesuits . . .] act through the painter Lang, even though he is just an ordinary monk"; see Smorzhevskii, *Notes on the Jesuits in China*, 45.

34 See APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, Sigismondo to Miralta, June 29, 1738, f. 1r.

35 See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," (1983), in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 243 and 247–248.

## Sigismondo's networks in Beijing and beyond

### THE QIANLONG EMPEROR

The most important contacts in terms of prestige were those with the emperor. While occasions for face-to-face meetings were relatively rare, they offered crucial semi-public expressions of imperial satisfaction towards individual artisans and artists. Sometimes eunuchs or employees and supervisors of the Imperial Household Department's workshops mediated imperial appreciation or desires. They would pass on imperial specifications for production of objects and relate back the level of imperial satisfaction. This was partly done through written documents and designs/diagrams (preserved today in the registers of the Imperial Workshops), but much was transmitted orally and has been lost to us, except for what we find in missionary letters.<sup>36</sup>

Soon after his arrival in Beijing in 1738, Sigismondo was introduced at court, but while his companion Serafino, who specialized in painting miniatures, was officially enrolled in the imperial service, Sigismondo was not. He remained mostly at his Haidian residence, occasionally building or repairing musical instruments for the court. Three years later, the palace requested his direct services on an intermittent basis. In 1742 he was enrolled as an imperial artisan, making all kinds of musical instruments (violins, flutes, clavichords, trumpets); and starting in 1748 he had to work almost daily at the imperial workshops. His job was mainly to superintend the construction and repair of musical instruments and clocks and to build automata and automated musical boxes<sup>37</sup> (Fig. 4). To give a sense of the kind of complex devices Sigismondo produced, I offer here his description of a few items:

[In 1741,] I built a small organ, three palms high and two palms wide, with bellows and a cylinder, all hidden inside a sound box made of Brazilian rare wood and boxwood, so that outside one could not see anything but the sound box and twenty pipes. Inside [the sound box] there were also small bells, which I had also made. [The organ] activated the bellows automatically and made the cylinder rotate, playing three Chinese sonatas. To crown it, with the help of Fr. Serafino, I made a rooster as large as a duck, which, when each sonata ended, would stand up, raise his head, flap his wings, and sing cucùlucu.<sup>38</sup>

36 See for example Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter no. XII, 14 November 1738, 12: "[...] the emperor said that he wanted a clavichord hidden in a small five-palm-long sack that the Tartars use, which should play automatically. I made a design and presented it to the emperor and he liked it, so one of the Chief Eunuchs was deputized to procure all parts needed and laborers."

37 See APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, Sigismondo to Miralta, September 3, 1742, f. 1v; Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XIX, October 19, 1742, 25; *Qing zhong qianqi Xiyang Tianzhujiao*, 4:150, June 5, 1748.

38 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XVIII, November 1, 1741, 23–24.



Figure 4: This clock was produced by the Palace Workshops between 1743 and 1749, at the time of Sigismondo Meinardi's employment at court.



At the end of February 1743, he presented to the Emperor "a vase containing flowers and a branch, with a sort of sonorous plate used by the Chinese hanging off the branch. When a hammer automatically struck it, inside the vase some small bells played two Chinese songs. (Fig. 5) The whole thing was a foot and a half high and less than one inch deep."<sup>39</sup> In 1752 he described several devices he made for the emperor:

[. . .] a small five-foot-tall European theater, with a fountain in the middle, and indications of the twelve hours. [It includes] a wooden duck, as big as a small bird, [that] jumps into the water, starts swimming, and marks the hours with its beak. From the sides of the stage, ten one-palm-tall figurines come out, each carrying in one hand a bell and in the other a small hammer, and they strike each other's [instruments] producing a Chinese sonata each hour.

Another device is a four-foot-tall dressed figure, that through a mechanism in the belly moves its arms and hands and plays four sonatas, two European and two Chinese, striking with small hammers in its hands sixteen bells in two lines of eight each, suspended over a table. It moves its eyes and with its head keeps the rhythm of the music.

In another device there are two small figures playing a game of chess in the European way.

The last device, which I have almost finished, is made up of two roosters [standing] on a stone. When they get close to a pomegranate, it opens up to let you see the current hour and minute. The bigger rooster stands up, raises its head, flaps its wings, opens its mouth, and sings as many times as the hour. The smaller rooster does the same with the number of quarters of an hour.<sup>40</sup>

A year later, Sigismondo described his interactions with Qianlong at the workshops of the Summer Park, using a dismissive tone: "[T]his emperor has gotten into the habit of having me make devices for his pleasure. . . so that every day (except on feasts and Sundays) I have to go inside the Imperial Summer Park, where the artisans, as many as needed, do their work under my direction. [. . .] Almost every day, *once finished with the business of the empire*, [the emperor] immediately comes to the building where I work with three Jesuit painters. The eunuchs announce his arrival, so that the other artisans leave, and only we [Europeans] remain with the eunuchs."<sup>41</sup> The emperor's visit to the workshops was undoubtedly part of his leisure time. Having finished a long morning's work, he then took the time to indulge in his artistic pursuits and, as Sigismondo put it, "enjoy himself, since he owns his personal Paradise

39 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XXII, October 15, 1743, 30–31.

40 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XXXIX, November 24, 1752, 51–52.

41 Italics mine. Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XL, November 10, 1753, 53.



Figure 5: This eighteenth-century automaton with clock was produced by the Imperial Workshops and resembles some of the Beijing-produced automata-clocks described by Sigismondo in his correspondence.

in this world," a reference to the gardens of the Imperial Summer Park, where he would divert himself after inspecting the progress made with the artwork.<sup>42</sup>

Qianlong's schedule was usually packed with official activities from early morning (Qing emperors started work at 5 am) until 3 pm, when he would take his midday lunch. It was after this afternoon meal that the emperor set aside some time to enjoy painting or calligraphy, write poetry, and relish his art collection. The visits to the workshops fit within that routine.<sup>43</sup> We know how proficient the Qianlong emperor was at projecting his image as an art connoisseur and patron, especially on public occasions like his Southern Tours to the Lower Yangzi region, his hunting expeditions north of the Great Wall, or his meetings with tribal leaders in Chengde in Manchuria, for which he commissioned celebratory paintings that were supervised by European painters.

In his visits to the workshops at the end of a day's work, however, we see him truly at play. This is a more private sphere of leisure, where he

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42 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XL, November 10, 1753, 53.

43 On Qianlong's schedule, see e.g. Mark Elliott, *Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World* (New York: Longman, 2009), 23–25.

inspected his commissions with only a few select artist-craftsmen and eunuchs in attendance. Simple laborers, assistants, or apprentices had to leave the room. The intimacy that Sigismondo and other European artists and artisans gained from participation in the creative process personally supervised by the emperor offered them a lever to gain favor directly tied to the monarch's private leisure sphere. By pleasing the emperor, they indirectly obtained imperial tolerance for their religious enterprise and warded off attacks by Chinese officials: "The Chinese, who see the Emperor busy with [us] Europeans, are more reluctant to make accusations [against our Christians]."<sup>44</sup>

Sigismondo's experience confirms that positive feedback from the emperor and the inner imperial circle delivered the desired results for the missions. Occasionally the missionary artisan would learn about the level of his patron's satisfaction from the eunuchs he had befriended: "While the emperor was in Tartary, I completed a four-foot-tall figurine which played two Chinese and two European sonatas with tiny bells on top of a small table. *The emperor enjoyed it very much when he saw it*, and the following day he ordered me to have it transported to the room where he spends the night, so that he could show it to his Queens. I went and had it transported to the place designated by the emperor. *The eunuchs later told me that he amused himself with it until midnight!*"<sup>45</sup> Out of this imperial satisfaction, relayed by the eunuchs, came tolerance, as the missionary observed in 1742: "[T]he emperor does not allow [Christianity], but tolerates [it] because he enjoys very much what we Europeans make for him here in Beijing."<sup>46</sup> A decade later, Sigismondo observed that paintings made by other Europeans, and *bagatelle* (trifles) he manufactured, "somewhat obliged the emperor to dissimulate and permit that we do what we will never renounce doing [= proselytizing], unless they kill us or we are exiled from China."<sup>47</sup>

The direct relationship with the imperial patron was obviously very important: "[S]ince he talks to us every day, the enemies of the Holy Law [of Christianity] don't dare to persecute it, and when some persecution arises, the emperor fails to listen to all accusations hurled at us. *This is the outcome of our efforts, and the five Europeans who work at the Palace help all the others who are only missionaries.*"<sup>48</sup> Sigismondo here most clearly attributed the successful shielding of the entire mission from repression by overzealous officials to the five craftsmen and artists at court and their personal links to the emperor. This did not mean that the emperor was unaware of this

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44 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XXXIX, November 24, 1752, 52.

45 Italics mine. APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Francesco Maria Guglielmi, Beijing, November 12, 1752, f. 1r.

46 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XIX, October 19, 1742, 25.

47 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XXXIX, November 24, 1752, 52.

48 Italics mine. Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XLVI, November 1, 1755, 65. A similar observation can be found in "Lettre du Père Amiot au Père Allart," Peking October 20, 1752, in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, 3:838.

ambiguous situation. Sigismondo recognized that even when cognizant of internal conflicts within the missionary community, Qianlong preferred to dissimulate: “[T]he emperor is informed of everything, but as a great politician he has never shown himself to know anything, either with the Jesuits or me.”<sup>49</sup>

Qianlong was also concerned about the continued flow of European skilled artisans to Beijing, asking both the missionaries and his officials in Guangdong to inform him of the arrival of missionary artists for the court. After the sudden death of Brother Gilles Thebault (Yang Zixin 楊自新, 1706–1766), the French Jesuit maker of automata and clocks, who was poisoned by the fumes of a coal stove at night, Qianlong met Sigismondo at the palace workshops and talked at length with him about the loss of that precious technician, telling him that he, Sigismondo, was now his only clockmaker and mechanic left. The emperor encouraged him to call someone else to the palace, and the priest seized the opportunity to introduce the Discalced Carmelite Father Arcangelo Maria Bellotti di Sant’Anna (Li Hengliang 李衡良, 1729–1784) of the Propaganda mission, even though he was not fully qualified. Qianlong agreed nonetheless, suggesting that under Sigismondo’s training, Arcangelo would learn the needed skills.<sup>50</sup>

The emperor also showed concern for the health of those whose luxury production he enjoyed, Castiglione being a prime example but not the only one. In 1766, for instance, when he heard that Sigismondo was ill at home, he asked several times how the priest was doing, “the greatest honor for a Chinese subject”—Sigismondo dismissively wrote to his brother in Turin—“but not for me, as long as [the emperor] stays quiet and does not molest us in the exercise of our Holy Religion.”<sup>51</sup> Qianlong’s leisurely pursuits thus created a “need” for Western objects, and, in turn, the necessity to maintain a pipeline of skilled European artisans, so specialized that they could not be substituted by locally trained craftsmen. Once the need for certain products and skilled labor had emerged, it could not be easily suppressed as long as the emperor maintained an interest or whim for such imported arts, crafts, and luxury items.

“Leisure” here was clearly an area of exchange where subordinates would acquire particular rights not normally granted as long as the commodities and services furnished were considered highly desirable markers of status, taste, and pleasure. The missionaries accrued from their specialized expertise a certain “skill capital” with the emperor and believed that their standing with him as providers of leisure objects had successfully shielded their missionary enterprise from the imperial rules against Christianity. Conversely, we can speculate that the emperor believed he had created the conditions for their stay with minimal political cost.

49 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter LXI, July 26, 1763, 87.

50 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Emiliano Palladini, June 3, 1766, f. 1v. On Arcangelo, see Fortunato Margiotti, “La Confraternita del Carmine in Cina (1728–1838),” *Ephemerides Carmeliticae* 14, no. 1 (1963): 112, note 65.

51 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter LXXI, October 4, 1766, 98.

For him, this situation was the result of a sober calculation: leaving the churches open in Beijing kept the missionaries under imperial control, while also forcing them to remain at his service with their desired skills. Qianlong retained the upper hand, but within their subordinate positions the Europeans also made good use of the system, as the following example illustrates.

In one instance, Qianlong's benevolence directly helped Sigismondo in a building project. For the occasion of the visit of the Portuguese Ambassador to the court in 1753, Sigismondo engaged in a major project to restore and enlarge the tiny Western Church in Beijing (Fig. 6). The project had not been approved by the authorities and faced Jesuit opposition. The church was located along the imperial processional route to the Imperial Summer Park on the outskirts of old Beijing, and Sigismondo exploited the political opportunity and his own prestige as court artisan, as we read below:

The emperor was happy about the upcoming [Portuguese] embassy and delighted with us Europeans [at court]. In particular, he was satisfied with the objects I had manufactured [for him], and I had the opportunity to talk to him every day if needed. So I mustered the courage to start this building project. Both the other Europeans and the Chinese Christians were surprised that without asking for permission I would start building a church in a public place, where the emperor passes by all the time. However, confiding in God, given the circumstances and the opportunity to talk in case of opposition, I went ahead. As soon as I had started, the emperor returned [from the Park] to Beijing, and passing by, asked [his courtiers] what that construction site was, as he did not know that there had been a church there before. The Grand Ministers in the imperial train told him it was the house of some European. The emperor sent someone to ask who lived there and what was being built. *I had already foreseen that this would happen*, and thus I had stationed two people at the door ready to reply, instructing them on what to say. They told them that I lived in that place, that there was an old church there, and that I was rebuilding it taller since it was rather low and in ruins. This was reported to the emperor, who laughed and said: "He wants to complete it before the arrival of the ambassador, but he will not do it in time." After three days he passed by again, and after seeing the old wooden beams, he said "[I]t is a church in the shape of a cross, with old wooden beams." Thank God, *the church has been completed without any hindrance*, as had instead been experienced with the restoration of the other [Jesuit] churches, and it has been made known to the public.<sup>52</sup>

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52 Italics mine. APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Francesco Maria Guglielmi, August 10, 1753, f. 2r; cf. the same story in Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter no. XL, November 10, 1753, 54.

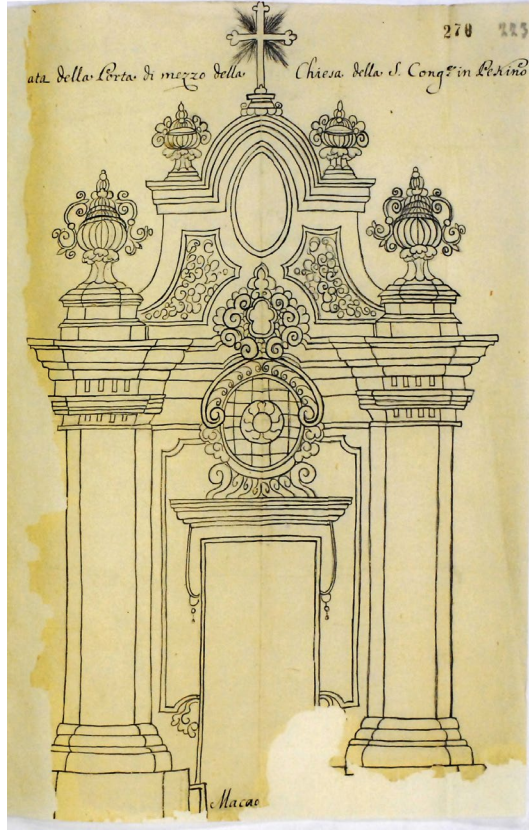


Figure 6: Facade of the Xitang 西堂 Catholic Church, near Xizhimen 西直門 in Beijing, around 1763; Sigismondo Meinardi rebuilt the facade and interior of the pre-existing church in 1753, and continued to improve it in the following decade.

Here the emperor displayed a paternalistic and tolerant attitude toward Sigismondo, a demonstration that intimacy with the monarch (“the opportunity to talk to him every day if needed [. . .] in case of opposition”) and his satisfaction with “the objects [. . .] manufactured for him” created empathy. Sigismondo was shrewd enough to predict an imperial query on his project and to manipulate the communication to his advantage, obtaining a light-hearted nod from the monarch. The imperial smile was enough to show that Sigismondo was under Qianlong’s protection, and it publicly indicated to officials how far they could go in opposing the missionary’s activities. Within a courtly environment, this was a public pronouncement: someone in the imperial train, perhaps a friendly eunuch, might have informed Sigismondo of the imperial words, but many more eyes witnessed the exchange. When the emperor uttered a sentence, or just made a nod, all took notice.

The emperor’s function as arbiter of taste, however, also had another consequence: by making Western luxury objects fashionable through his

collecting and commissioning, he promoted a craze for European exotica that spread to the upper echelons of the court and beyond. This phenomenon would ultimately play into the hands of people like Sigismondo, whose technical skills became sought after beyond the imperial palace, in the mansions of princes and other officials, as illustrated below. By creating aesthetic empathies and desires, leisurely pursuits and objects linked to those pursuits had the power to create patronage links more effectively than other interactions.

## Relations with imperial princes

Sigismondo's companion and superior, Serafino, explicitly commented in 1740 on the crucial importance of cultivating the friendship of imperial princes whenever access to the emperor was difficult: "When it is impossible to have reasonable access to the monarch, we can only try to obtain the affection of persons who are well liked by the emperor, so that at least we will have someone who will talk positively about us and protect us when needed." He continued stating that he had endeavored to ingratiate himself and Sigismondo with the "Fifth Prince, brother of the Emperor" since "all that pertains to us missionaries is assigned [to him] to decide," and that the uncle of the emperor, the Twenty-Third Prince, was also their protector (on both, see below).<sup>53</sup> Sigismondo's correspondence confirms this pattern of patronage, as he reports meeting with several imperial princes, mostly uncles, brothers, and children of the Qianlong emperor. With some he had more continuous relationships, with others only occasional encounters. In 1739, when Sigismondo was living in the Propaganda's Haidian residence, near the Imperial Summer Park, Yinlu 胤祿 (1695–1767), the sixteenth son of the Kangxi emperor and one of the few brothers the Yongzheng Emperor had trusted, visited him twice.<sup>54</sup> Yinlu had studied some mathematics and music under Teodorico Pedrini and had been ordered by Yongzheng to complete the editing of the compilations on music coordinated by his brother, Yinzhi 胤祉 (1677–1732), after the latter had fallen from grace. Sigismondo had arrived in Beijing two years earlier, presenting himself as an organ-maker. Yinlu must have had some interest in Sigismondo's musical skills to visit him, but allegedly spent one of those visits (three hours) in his room, interrogating him about Christianity. Apparently, the prince later became very inimical (*inimicissimo*) to the missionaries and did not

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53 APF, SOCP, vol. 43 (1740–1741), copy of letter by Serafino to Miralta, Beijing, October 18, 1740, f. 556v.

54 Yinlu's biography in Arthur W. Hummel ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), 925–926; Han Qi, "Emperor, Prince and Literati: Role of the Princes in the Organization of Scientific Activities in Early Qing Period," in *Current Perspectives in the History of Science in East Asia*, eds. Yung Sik Kim and Francesca Bray (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1999), 209–216.

play any positive role in protecting them, a sign that arts and crafts did not necessarily open all doors.<sup>55</sup>

More often than not, however, the missionaries' efforts paid off. They frequently engaged with their highest-ranking counterparts in exchanges typical of a gift economy, offering the rarity of their skills and the exquisite quality of their products as beyond financial remuneration. Luxury items were presented in the hope of reciprocity in a different domain—protection for their missionary work. But, being gifted, these products were neither subject to negotiation, nor articulated as a request. Rewards were granted at the patron's discretion, and the missionaries could not retaliate by lowering the quality of their goods, even when denied compensation.

Commodities and gifts are situated along a continuum, rather than being entities governed by different economic principles, but different routines govern different forms of exchange, as discussed in the "Theoretical Essay" concluding this volume. The commodity purchase in a modern state creates a legal obligation between seller and purchaser guaranteed by state laws, while a gift exchange creates a social obligation secured by the social relations encoded in custom.<sup>56</sup>

Several examples in missionary sources confirm these dynamics. Another imperial uncle, the twenty-third son of the Kangxi Emperor, Yinqi 胤祁 (1713–1785), also started visiting the Propaganda Fathers in Haidian, offering gifts (including bolts of silk, a common form of currency) in exchange for paintings by Serafino, that is as partial payment. But, as Sigismondo drily observed, "gifts here in Beijing are in part restitution for what has been given."<sup>57</sup> This sentence clearly implies that the gifts were a form of payment, although they also required reciprocation. Court painters, including both Chinese and Jesuit masters, were regularly paid in silver according to a three-tiered ranking, but also bestowed with gifts of silk, clothing, and fur. Artisans like Sigismondo probably only received this sort of payment in kind, which supplemented the annual stipend missionaries received from Europe. Such commodities did not have a fixed monetary value but could be easily sold at market price, as missionaries often did.<sup>58</sup>

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55 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, Letter no. XV, October 20, 1739, 17–18.

56 Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–63; and Eugenio Menegon, "Amicitia Palatina: The Jesuits and the Politics of Gift-Giving at the Qing Court," in *Il liuto e i libri: Studi in onore di Mario Sabbatini*, eds. Magda Abbiati and Federico Greselin (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2014), 547–561.

57 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Arcangelo Miralta, July 8, 1740, f. 1r.

58 On the court painters' ranking and salaries, see Nie Chongzheng 聶崇正, "Qing-dai gongting huihua zhidu tanwei 清代宮廷繪畫制度探微 [An exploration of the Qing court painting system]," *Meishu guanCha* 美術觀察 4 (2001): 53–55; several entries scattered in the following collection record the salaries of painters: *Qing gong Neiwufu zaobanchu dang'an zonghui* 清宮內務府造辦處檔案總匯 [Archival collection of the Imperial Household Department's workshops in the Qing palace], edited by Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan, Xianggang zhongwen daxue



Yinqi later became a regular acquaintance of Sigismondo and appears several times in his letters. In 1743, for example, the prince gave two bolts of silk to Sigismondo, probably in exchange for some clockwork, and the following year he anxiously asked Sigismondo about several objects that a friend of the Augustinians, Carlo Uslenghi, Pro-Secretary of Propaganda in Rome and member of the famous Accademia dell'Arcadia, had sent for the prince from Italy.<sup>59</sup> In 1744, Yinqi interceded with the Jesuit Visitor and Director of the Imperial Astronomical Directorate Ignaz Kögler (Dai Jinxian 戴進賢, 1680–1746), assuring him that a new Propaganda missionary coming from Macao and recommended by Sigismondo was a legitimate addition to the corps of court artisans. This missionary was the Discalced Carmelite Giuseppe Maria Pruggmayr (Na Yongfu 那永福, 1713–1791), who in fact turned out to be unqualified as a court artist (he only occasionally taught music at court), but spent several decades in Beijing as missionary (1745–1791), simply relying on bureaucratic inertia and on the protection of his confrères who could muster the necessary skills.<sup>60</sup>

Among the brothers of the emperor, Sigismondo had most contact with Hongzhou 弘晝 (1712–1770), fifth son of the Yongzheng Emperor, and one of the wealthiest princes of his day. In 1740, Hongzhou asked Serafino for several European landscape paintings in exchange for bolts of silk, and Sigismondo defined this as the beginning of a fruitful *amicizia* (friendship) with the Propaganda Fathers. The prince later asked Sigismondo to make a "small organ that plays by itself" and sent both workers and materials to assist him.<sup>61</sup> Once the prince saw one of the automated clocks made by Sigismondo for the emperor, in emulation of his august brother he "wanted to have an identical one made for him, which I have finished and given him; but he also sent the workers and materials, and gave me three bolts of damask. But I did not include in that piece the final cuculucù [sound]."<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps the missionary would have gotten in trouble producing an exact replica of a piece made expressly for the emperor. This might indicate that emulation of imperial tastes was the norm among high nobles at court, and that leisure was indeed an area of powerful social demarcation, especially when associated with unusual, rare, and exotic objects and practices. Possibly, the prince intended to show his own prestige within

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wenwuguan 中國第一歷史檔案館、香港中文大學文物館, (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005), 55 volumes (see e.g. vols. 2 and 6 for salaries in the Yongzheng reign).

59 Sigismondo referred to a now-lost list of the objects sent from Italy, in part for this prince, in APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to A. Miralta, May 12, 1744, f. 2r. On Uslenghi, see Josef Metzler, ed., *Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum. 350 Years in the Service of the Missions, 1622–1972*, vol. 2 (Rome: Herder, 1971–1976), 35 and 75; Michel Giuseppe Morei, *Memorie storiche dell'adunanza degli Arcadi* (Roma: Stamperia Rossi, 1761), 97.

60 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to A. Miralta, October 11, 1744, f. 1r; see Margiotti, "La Confraternita del Carmine in Cina," 104, note 47.

61 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to A. Miralta, July 8, 1740, on Serafino; *Epistolario*, letter no. XVII, September 1740, 21, on the small organ.

62 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter XVIII, November 1, 1741, 24.

the imperial clan by commissioning a piece as similar as possible to that manufactured for his brother the emperor, unwittingly revealing a hunger for greater status recognition.

The missionaries were also attentive to ceremonial gifts for the princes: in 1743, Sigismondo gave Hongzhou for his birthday “a grottesco with pedestal, and over the grottesco a rooster with a singing mechanism. The gift was liked, and he gave me back a bolt of damask, whose value, however, is not even half of what I spent. The Jesuits of the three other churches also offered him presents, but they did not receive anything back.”<sup>63</sup> Sigismondo may have hinted at the fact that in this instance his superior manual skills had pleased the prince’s taste more than the wealth of the Jesuits, whose presents, no matter how lavish, had failed to equally impress. He also showed great awareness of the mechanisms of the gift economy in which he was engaged, commenting on the value of commodities, and acknowledging that the prince had in fact reciprocated, even if cheaply.

The mention of another imperial brother in a 1755 letter is in all likelihood a reference to Hongyan 弘瞻, Prince Guo 果 (1733–1765), the sixth son of the Yongzheng Emperor (Fig. 7). Although only twenty-two that year, Hongyan had been supervisor of the Imperial Workshops since 1752, during the main phase of construction of the Western Pavilions (*Xiyang lou* 西洋樓) of the Imperial Summer Park. He apparently enjoyed the exotic look of the European-style architecture prominent there, and besides having himself painted against a Baroque gate in a portrait, he had such gates built for his princely mansion in Beijing. The letter mentions that “the brother of the emperor told me several times that he wished to send two young men to my church to learn something from me.”<sup>64</sup> Hongyan was probably trying to get native youths to learn some of Sigismondo’s skills for use in the imperial workshops. For the missionaries, this was a dangerous move because it would undermine their standing and create local competitors. Given the volume of work requested from them, the Europeans were willing to cede some lower form of knowledge, a fact confirmed by their mention of local “laborers” under their direction. They were, however, reluctant to hand down their core skills in manufacturing complex clocks and automata. Their monopoly, to a large extent, remained unbroken.

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63 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Arcangelo Miralta, December 26, 1742.

64 This probable reference to Hongyan is in Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter no. XLVII, November 1, 1755, 67. See Hongyan’s biographical note in Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period*, 919; his portrait with a European baroque architectural background in the collection of the Sackler Museum is reproduced and discussed in *Worshipping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits*, eds. Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2001), 122; see also Laurie Barnes, *Forever Twenty-One: A Portrait of Yinli, Prince Guo, 1717* (Palm Beach, FL: Norton Museum of Art, 2013), where the portrait of Hongyan (son of Yinli) is also discussed.



Figure 7: Portrait of Prince Hongyan 弘瞻 (1733–1765) with European architectural background, 1750s.

## Relations with capital officials and personnel

If Sigismondo's relationship with imperial princes was mostly friendly, this was not necessarily the case with other officials. The missionaries were supervised by grandees, deputized by the emperor to control them while also managing the production of luxury items for the court. The relationship was symbiotic and fraught with ambiguity, since some of these officials (especially those supervising the Imperial Household Department's workshops) did not wish to be accused of mismanaging and alienating the skilled Europeans, thus antagonizing the emperor. They preferred to avoid serious conflicts, and tried to avert any crisis.

A name that appears frequently in Sigismondo's early correspondence is *Hai Tajin* (= *Hai daren* 海大人) i.e. Grand Official or Grand Minister Hai. This is a reference to the Manchu official Haiwang 海望 (?–1755), a member of the Plain Yellow Banner who hailed from the Uya clan. Haiwang was for many years Supervisor General of the Imperial Household Department, carrying the titles of Grand Minister in the Inner Court and Secretary of the Board of Revenue. He became a member of the Grand Council in the last year of the Yongzheng reign (1735), remaining in that position for the first decade of the Qianlong reign until 1745.<sup>65</sup> Sigismondo knew Haiwang personally, as this official had been managing the production of luxury items for the court in his capacity as head of the Imperial Household Department since 1724. In fact, Haiwang had personally selected Sigismondo as an official imperial clockmaker in 1748.<sup>66</sup>

In the 1740s, when Sigismondo's letters start mentioning his name with some frequency, Haiwang was at the height of his career and a very busy man with considerable influence. He was not a close friend of the missionaries, and was actually trying to control them tightly. He had learned, however, how to manage the foreigners to the advantage of his imperial master and would often receive them, including Sigismondo, to accept their memorials and forward their requests to the emperor, including matters such as palace personnel assignments or diplomatic contacts with European rulers and the pope.

After his power waned, younger Manchu magnates took his place in 1746. That year, however, an anti-Christian incident in the capital region implicating the Beijing missionaries offered Haiwang a last chance to shield the Westerners, while also saving himself from accusations of laxity. At the time of this incident, he first asked to be relieved from his supervisory position over the foreigners, and then informed the emperor that the

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65 See *Faguo guojia tushuguan Ming Qing Tianzhujiào wenxian* 法國國家圖書館明清天主教文獻 [Ming-Qing Chinese Christian texts from the National Library of France], eds. Nicolas Standaert, Ad Dudink, and Nathalie Monnet (Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 2009), 16:432–33; Qian Shifu 錢寶甫, ed. *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao* 清代職官年表 [Chronological tables of Qing officials] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 1:137.

66 Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan, *Qing gong Neiwufu*, 16:269–270.

new favorite ministers would be the best candidates to defuse the crisis. By informing Qianlong in this manner that Chinese subjects had been "bullying" (*qifu* 欺負) the Beijing Christians—his words—he probably hoped to redirect any responsibility for possible troubles onto the new ministers, and also protect the missionaries. And, indeed, the matter was soon put to rest through imperial intervention. These circumstances show the fragility of the missionaries' position, but also the co-dependence that linked Qing officials and Europeans within the court system.<sup>67</sup>

Later on, Sigismondo mentions that the *Primo Ministro Conte Generalissimo* (Prime Minister Count Supreme General) "Ne Cum" (i.e. Ne gong[ye] 訥公[爺]) or "Ne Zinkung" (i.e. Ne-qin gong 訥親公) was chosen by the emperor as supervisor of the missionaries instead of Haiwang. This was Nihuru Necin (Ne-qin 訥親, d. 1749), the presiding senior member of the Grand Council in the 1740s, a man quite hostile to the Europeans, and despised by them in return. Sigismondo drily remarked that "he was called 'the little emperor' by all, but he fell from favor quickly"—a reference to his precipitous fall from grace and public execution following his defeat in the first Jinchuan war campaign in 1748.<sup>68</sup>

In spite of this antagonism, however, an incident in 1747 involving Necin seems to show that Sigismondo's patronage network worked its magic once again. When a European priest was arrested in Jiangxi and revealed to have been a guest of Sigismondo in Beijing at an earlier date, secret memorials reached the Board of Rites, and then Necin himself took over the matter at the Grand Council. Sigismondo quickly learned about it, showing that there was little secrecy if one was sufficiently well-connected. While he feared that he might be called to testify and possibly be implicated in hiding a clandestine priest, he was suddenly drafted for three days to fix a musical organ within the palace, and Necin never got back to him. This sudden call to the palace might have been a way for the emperor or some other well-placed prince to save him from prosecution, although we have no evidence to prove it. Sigismondo's skills might have saved him once again.<sup>69</sup>

A few years later another major political figure of the time appears in Sigismondo's letters. This is someone whom we already met in the opening pages of this essay, i.e. Fuheng, a member of the Fuca clan, superintendent of the Imperial Summer Park in 1742, and chief councilor between 1749 and 1770 (Fig. 8).<sup>70</sup>

67 See for example Sigismondo's letters to A. Miralta in APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, dated October 11, November 3, and November 10, 1744; July 18, 1745; and especially September 21, 1746.

68 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Paolino del Gesù OAD, Beijing, December 18, 1748, f. 1r.

69 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Arcangelo Miralta, Beijing, June 14, 1747, f. 1r.

70 After Necin's disgrace and execution, Fuheng triumphed as a general in the Jinchuan War and became presiding official of the Grand Council; biography in Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 251–252.

Fuheng routinely employed the Europeans: he had the Jesuit painter Brother Ferdinando Bonaventura Moggi (Li Boming 利博明, 1684–1761) go to his palace daily to paint in 1749, and Sigismondo was in fact the very technician who fixed the clocks in his household!<sup>71</sup> The Manchu grandee also frequently solicited and received gifts from Sigismondo, including clocks and high-quality Brazilian tobacco, contradicting the image of incorruptible and aloof Grand Councilors offered by Beatrice Bartlett.<sup>72</sup>

These relationships indeed produced the desired result: Fuheng extended his favor by intervening at court on behalf of the missionaries. In 1762, for example, some newly arrived missionaries were accepted by the emperor in audience through his intercession, something that had not happened before. Sigismondo recognized the importance of this favor but also its price: "It is true that [Fuheng] favors me much, but it is also very true that I have to spend much effort to please him, and the reimbursement for the clocks given to him does not compensate for all my labor and effort."<sup>73</sup> In spite of his complaints, however, gifts to "two Counts and the Generalissimo" helped Sigismondo dodge urban planning regulations once more. As the church and his residence were located along the avenue connecting the imperial palace to the Summer Palace, it had to be renovated like all the house and shop fronts along that road for the decorum of the Empress Dowager's birthday procession. Sigismondo feared that this might cost him up to 10,000 *taels* in repairs. However, he obtained an exemption by donating some clocks to Necin and Fuheng, and dutifully reported the cost of the gifts to Emiliano Palladini, Propaganda's Procurator in Macao, who footed the bill as follows:

- To the Count Generalissimo [Necin], who blocked [for us] the first design of the [new] buildings: a [pocket] watch and tobacco, 82.5 taels;
- To Count Fu, Prime Minister, a table clock [ringing] hours and quarters, and tobacco, 224 taels;
- To the Mandarin of the Count [Prime Minister] who was engaged in this affair, a [pocket] watch, 20 taels.<sup>74</sup>

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71 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to A. Miralta, July 26, 1749.

72 Bartlett, *Monarchs*, 185: "Councilors are reported to have regularly refused to receive gifts, entertain guests, or have any social contact with other officials—even to the point of committing the discourtesy of not returning calls. In this way they kept apart and avoided the slightest appearance of any questionable involvement."

73 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Emiliano Palladini, September 21, 1762, f. 1v.

74 APF, SOCP, vol. 52 (1760–63), f. 666v. Palladini summed up the amount at 326.5 taels, corresponding to ca. 453 Spanish pesos, and asked Sigismondo to get a "written release" from Fuheng to avoid future problems (666r). It is doubtful that Sigismondo would dare to ask for such a document, and even more doubtful that Fuheng would issue it, as it could be used by his enemies as proof of petty corruption.



Figure 8: Portrait of Fuheng (大學士一等忠勇公傅恆) produced by order of Qianlong for display in the Ziguang Ge (Hall of Purple Light) at Zhongnanhai 中南海紫光閣, 1760, jointly painted by Jin Tingbiao 金廷標, Ignaz Sichelbarth SJ (Ai Qimeng 艾啟蒙), and painters from the workshop for the manufacture of enamel.

This precise accounting shows that clocks and tobacco—among the most coveted Western items for Qing elites—were readily used as payment for favors to high officials, and that these amounts were part of the normal costs of “doing business” in Beijing. An investment of a few hundred taels thus saved the mission thousands more in possible expenses. Moreover, this note also shows the importance of lower-level agents, easier to contact for a palace craftsman like Sigismondo. Indeed, the missionary did not approach Fuheng directly, but through the intermediation of a subordinate official in his entourage, possibly a Grand Council clerk, who was duly rewarded with a pocket watch for his “engagement in the affair.”

Sigismondo’s letters mention several other friendly officials from the Hall of Mental Cultivation (Yangxindian 養心殿), which comprised imperial private apartments, treasure houses, painting workshops, some “Regoli” (i.e. Manchu nobles), many eunuchs, some “Governors of Beijing,”<sup>75</sup> a “President of the Supreme Criminal Tribunal” whom he called “*mio amicissimo*,”<sup>76</sup> provincial governors and governor-generals, and the Canton Hoppos.<sup>77</sup> This excerpt from a letter by Sigismondo reveals how such friendships, often started in the imperial workshops, could serve the missionaries for many years:

I was present when the new Hou Pú [= Hoppo], sent by the emperor to Canton, and with whom I have a friendship of sixteen years as he was always with us in the Palace, was selected by the emperor. I immediately congratulated him, and he offered to assist me in Canton if I wished. I told him that I intended to send two [Chinese] men to fetch the stipend [coming from Europe] for me and for my four companions whom he knew, and he proposed that these [two men] go in his company, especially after he heard that they were Agostino and Giacomo Pao, whom he knew. Moreover, so that in the future I would be provided [with assistance], he allowed one of them to remain with him in his Tribunal in Canton, or near Macao, so that [that servant] could live free of expenses and take care of my business, letters and other matters. He also said that [these servants] could travel with the vessels that come to Beijing four times a year, to avoid expenses. Thus, I am sending them in his company, but covering their own [living] expenses.<sup>78</sup>

75 I.e. *Kieu muen ty tu = Jiumen tidu* 九門提督, Captain General of Gendarmerie.

76 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter LV, November 25, 1759, 80. This could be the Manchu Omida (鄂彌達; 1685–1761), who was Secretary of the Board of Punishments (*Xingbu shangshu* 刑部尚書) from 1755 to 1761; see *Ming Qing renwu zhuanji* 明清人物傳記 [Biographical data for Ming and Qing personalities], compiled by the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica (Database, Taiwan, accessed April 24, 2017), <http://archive.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ttscgi/ttsquery?0:0:mctauac:NO%3DN0784>.

77 “Hoppo” was the European abbreviation for the Guangdong Maritime Customs Superintendent, *Yue haiguan jiandu* 粵海關監督.

78 Italics mine. APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Emiliano Palladini, Beijing, summer 1766, f. 1r. This Hoppo, named in 1766, was Meinardi’s long-time friend, Dekui 德魁, an official of the Imperial Household Department



More research is needed to identify all officials found in the correspondence, but a clear pattern is apparent: they were all "friends" of Sigismondo, who often charmed them with gifts and kept in epistolary contact with them. They reciprocated with patronage. We read in a 1764 letter, for example, that several provincial governors, first met by Sigismondo when they were lower officials in Beijing, requested tobacco from him from their far-away posts: "The Viceroy of the province of Huguang, the Viceroy of Shanxi, the Viceroy of Fujian, the Generalissimo of Yunnan and Sichuan [. . .] are all very good friends, and I keep them attached [to us], as they can benefit us much in their government capacity."<sup>79</sup> Sigismondo concludes this same letter by saying: "Not only in China, but also in Europe, and in Rome itself, with empty hands one cannot accomplish anything."<sup>80</sup> The humble and harassed missionary we saw in his early years had grown by the end of his life into a consummate manipulator of social relations and "friendships" at the highest levels.

### Conclusion: "Sotto questa coperta facciamo il fatto nostro"

"Under this cover, we manage our own business" ("Sotto questa coperta facciamo il fatto nostro"): so wrote Sigismondo in 1741 to his brother in Turin.<sup>81</sup> That is, under the cover of mechanical arts, we fulfill our main mission, Christian proselytizing. Here Sigismondo implied that he and his fellow missionaries at court were exploiting their skills to build useful relationships and patronage networks. In this view, they were in fact trying to goad the court for their own ends. Sigismondo Meinardi's correspondence, unlike what we are used to reading in the more guarded and emperor-centric Jesuit correspondence, reveals that within the existing power structure and under the sway of imperial favor, there was a space for Europeans in Beijing to use their cultural and technical skills in an informal exchange to protect their "core business" of religious activities from state intervention, although they could never be sure of this reciprocity.

Missionaries like Sigismondo did this by combining direct imperial patronage with interpersonal networking among lesser actors. Within a clearly asymmetrical balance of power, luxury objects and commodities, which were the very elements of leisurely pursuits, in fact became the medium of gift exchange between divergent interests and authorities, working to weaken Qing imperial prohibitions and laws and to create

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in charge of European court artisans with the title of Director; see *Ming Qing renwu zhuanji*, (accessed April 24, 2017): <http://archive.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ttscgi/ttsquery?0:0:mctauac:NO%3DNO8130>.

79 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, letter from Sigismondo to Emiliano Palladini, Beijing, March 4, 1764, f. 1v. The term "viceroy" (*viceré*) in missionary correspondence usually indicates both Qing governors and governors-general, making identifications difficult.

80 APF, *Procura Cina*, box 15, Sigismondo to Palladini, March 4, 1764, f. 1v.

81 Sigismondo, *Epistolario*, letter no. XVIII, 1 November 1741, 24.

*ad hoc* arrangements tolerated by the emperor that benefitted the missionaries and their communities.

Sigismondo clearly stated that his skills, the objects he produced, and his occasional gifts, far from being a “temporal matter” (*negozio temporale*), “help me captivate the affection of the emperor and princes, and this benefits the holy Christian religion, and for this reason alone I suffer these labors and toils, i.e. for love of God, and zeal for the conversion of souls.”<sup>82</sup> The apparently innocuous and apolitical nature of artisanal skills, and the customary daily politics of gift-giving within a ritualized yet fully commodified economy of exchange among Qing political elites, prevented the status quo of European and Christian presence in China from being upset too violently by the central government’s interventions.

Sigismondo’s patronage network was layered: it depended on the emperor’s personal favor, but operated on multiple levels, including princes, members of the Grand Council, officials of the Imperial Household Department, provincial governors, military commanders, and functionaries in the Canton System. In fact, other minor actors, who deserve further research, enabled this web of patronage, from lower-level officials and clerks within the bureaucracy of both Inner and Outer Courts, to the indispensable mediators within the palace, the eunuchs. The production of leisure goods enjoyed by elites and technical skills useful to the state acted as buffers against ideological purity and mitigated the exertion of state violence against Chinese Christians and missionaries.

The European archival records explored here illuminate to an unusual degree the forging of power relations from the point of view of subordinates within the court system, whose labors indirectly supported the economy of leisure of the imperial elites. A question remains: who was using whom? The answer might be that both sides were confident that they were using the other.

## Figures

Fig. 1: *Huangchao liqi tu shi* 皇朝禮器圖式 [Illustrated Regulations for Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Qing Dynasty], 1766, *juan* 3, 儀器, p. 78a (in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edition), reprinted in Qu Yanjun 曲延鈞 ed., *Zhongguo Qingdai gongting ban hua* 中國清代宮廷版畫 [Printed Images from the Qing-period Imperial Palace in China] (Hefei: Anhui meishu chubanshe, 2002), vol. 17, *juan* 3, 515.

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82 Letter from Sigismondo to the Swedish supercargo in Canton, Jean Abraham Grill (1719–1799), Beijing, September 30, 1764, in Jean Abraham Grill Papers (Godegård Archives), Nordiska Museet, Stockholm, SE/NMA/35/EA2/6/7/20. Grill supplied the missionary with parts for clocks and his luxury production in general. I am conducting separate research on the important connection of court missionaries to the Canton System.

- Fig. 2: *Huangchao liqi tu shi* 皇朝禮器圖式 [Illustrated Regulations for Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Qing Dynasty], 1766, *juan* 3, 儀器, p. 81a (in *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edition), reprinted in Qu Yanjun 曲延鈞 ed., *Zhongguo Qingdai gongting ban hua*. 中國清代宮廷版畫 [Printed Images from the Qing-period Imperial Palace in China] (Hefei: Anhui meishu chubanshe, 2002), vol. 17, *juan* 3, 519.
- Fig. 3: "Screen of Twelve Beauties: A Beauty at Leisure, Watching Cats while Handling Beads" [《雍親王提書堂深居圖屏》, "念珠觀貓"], and detail with clock; Beijing, Palace Museum, Gu6458. From Guo Fuxiang 郭福祥. *Shijian de lishi yingxiang: Zhongguo zhongbiao shi lun ji* 時間的歷史映像: 中國鐘錶史論集時 [Historical images of time: Essays on the history of Chinese clocks] (Beijing: Gugong chubanshe, 2013), 119.
- Fig. 4: Collection of the Gugong Museum. From Guo Fuxiang 郭福祥. *Shijian de lishi yingxiang: Zhongguo zhongbiao shi lun ji* 時間的歷史映像: 中國鐘錶史論集時 [Historical images of time: Essays on the history of Chinese clocks] (Beijing: Gugong chubanshe, 2013), 238.
- Fig. 5: Collection of the Gugong Museum. From *Ri sheng yue heng: Gugong zhencang zhongbiao wenwu / Aomen yishu bowuguan* 日升月恒: 故宮珍藏鐘錶文物 / 澳門藝術博物館 = *Momentos da eternidade: coleção de relógios do Museu do Palácio / Museu de Arte de Macau = Moments of eternity: timepieces collection from the Palace Museum* ([Aomen]: Aomen yishu bowuguan, 2004), 263.
- Fig. 6: Archivio Storico Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli, o 'de Propaganda Fide', Rome, *Scritture Originali della Congregazione Particolare per l'Indie Orientali e Cina* (SOCP), vol. 54 (1764), f. 270r, "Facciata della porta di mezzo della Chiesa della S. Congregazione in Pekino." Copyright © Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide.
- Fig. 7: Courtesy of Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Purchase Smithsonian Collections Acquisition Program and partial gift of Richard G. Pritzlaff, S 1991.47.
- Fig. 8: Courtesy of Dora Wong (Huang Huiying), New York. Image from Valerie Steele and John S. Major, *China Chic: East Meets West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999): 27, image 13. Thanks to Annette Bügener for the image.

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Nancy J. Smith-Hefner

## **Satan in the Mall: Leisure and Consumption in Java's New Muslim Middle Class**

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**Abstract** Indonesia's "new" middle class first emerged in the early 1980s in the context of New Order educational expansion, economic growth, and bureaucratic consolidation. Among specialists of Southeast Asia, however, questions have emerged as to how to define this most fluid of social classes. Is the key to the definition political participation, economic mobility, or something else? The German sociologist Solvay Gerke, has suggested that the emerging middle class was identifiable by its consumption-oriented lifestyle and leisure habits that included shopping, sports, travel and watching Western movies. Adopting a Bourdieuan framework, she argues for an approach that considers socially constructed class experience or habitus as constitutive of the new middle class, and as distinguishing this social class from others (2000:146). Drawing on Gerke's suggestions, I examine the lifestyles and leisure habits of educated Javanese youth in the city of Yogyakarta. How is consumption understood and contested by educated young people as a particular mode of middle-class lifestyle and practice? An examination of the consumption practices associated with modern shopping malls and new youth publications reveal a far more varied menu of options for choice and individual expression than was previously available to young people. A popular discourse of Muslim self-help literature promotes the possibilities of fashioning new and cosmopolitan selves while simultaneously warning young people of the dangers of moral laxity, unbridled consumption, and spiritual vacuity. Warnings of these dangers, widely associated with westernization, are also regularly deployed by young people as a means to distinguish the "new" Muslim middle class from wealthy elites.

**Keywords** Indonesia, Islam, malls, morality, youth

This chapter takes up the discourses and practices of leisure and consumption that are associated with Java's newly emergent middle class. Writing in the late nineteenth century, Thorstein Veblen traced the history of leisure as a kind of status competition, a means of displaying one's position vis-à-vis others in the performance of social distinction.<sup>1</sup> Veblen, who is credited with coining the term "conspicuous consumption," focused his conceptualization of leisure on the idea of "waste." In particular, the ability to "spend" and "waste" time and resources on leisurely activities and consumption, in his view, emerged as visible markers of class status. More recently, Chris Rojek has proposed that in contemporary consumer capitalism, leisure and consumption have become increasingly intertwined, serving together as vehicles or symbols for the creation and expression of social relationships.<sup>2</sup> In the modern world, leisure has virtually become consumption or "leisure consumption." In Muslim Java, this intertwining of leisure and consumption is evident in the culture and life styles of the new middle class—but it is not without moral tension and societal concern. The tension has largely to do with more normative understandings of Islam and questions of what constitutes appropriate Islamic forms of leisure activities.<sup>3</sup>

My interest in this chapter is in examining leisure and consumption among university-educated Muslim youth in urban Java as an expression of new subjective understandings and identifications. Beginning in the early 1980s, like many areas of the Muslim world, Indonesia experienced a resurgence of interest in more normative forms of Islam. The impacts of this resurgence have been most evident among educated urban youth, many of whom have moved away from their rural homes for school or work. These young people are part of Indonesia's rapidly growing middle class, a middle class based on credentialization rather than on property ownership and trade. In her contribution to this volume, Sarah Frederick discusses a similar process in a different cultural context, namely the

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- 1 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Daniel T. Cook, "Leisure and consumption," in *A Handbook of Leisure Studies*, ed. Chris Rojek, Susan M. Shaw, and Anthony J. Veal (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 304–316; see also Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984), 310–311.
  - 2 Chris Rojek, *Leisure and Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000), 89–103; see also Cook, "Leisure and Consumption," 308.
  - 3 Johan Fischer, *Proper Islamic Consumption: Shopping Among the Malays in Modern Malaysia* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2008); see also Asef Bayat, "Islamism and the Politics of Fun," *Public Culture* 19, no. 3 (2007): 433–459; Lara Deeb and Mona Harb, *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite Beirut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008); Kenneth M. George, *Picturing Islam: Art and Ethics in a Muslim Lifeworld* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2011); Samuli Schielke, "Ambivalent Commitments: Troubles of Morality, Religiosity and Aspiration among Young Egyptians," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 2 (2009): 158–185; and Schielke, "Being good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (S1) (2009): 24–40.

acquisition of social and cultural leisure skills as a path to upper class membership as depicted in the American movie *Stella Dallas* and its Japanese adaptation. Since the early 1980s, but especially over the past fifteen years, Indonesia has also experienced an explosion of modern leisure sites, including malls, restaurants, movie theaters, and coffee shops, offering young people a dizzying array of new spaces for enjoyment and self-expression. Building on Veblen's linkage of leisure and consumption as markers of class status and the more recent work on leisure in specifically Muslim societies mentioned above, I explore how these leisure and consumption linkages are expressed and debated in an environment of increasing consumer choice on the one hand, and Islamic normativity on the other. How is leisure-as-consumption understood and contested by young Javanese Muslims as a particular mode of middle-class lifestyle and practice? What are the available discourses for understanding "proper" Islamic leisure-consumption?

It should be pointed out that most mainstream Indonesian religious authorities see no inherent conflict between Muslim piety and the accumulation and display of wealth. Religious teachers and scholars associated with Indonesia's mass Muslim organizations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama<sup>4</sup> often point out that the Prophet's first wife, Kadijah, was a successful and wealthy businesswoman. Within Islam, wealth is viewed as a gift or blessing from God (Ar. *barokah*), which carries with it great responsibility. On the Day of Judgement, each individual will be asked to offer an account of their actions and how they used the gifts they were given. The concern with wealth, then, is not so much with having or accumulating money, but what one does with it.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly: Does one tithe? Does one contribute to the poor and to religious foundations? Is one modest in one's personal behavior? In discussions of consumption, rather than highlighting the issue of money, religious authorities focus on the issue of

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- 4 With an estimated 25 million members, Indonesia's Muhammadiyah is one of the largest Muslim social welfare organizations in the world. It is second in size only to the Nahdlatul Ulama ("Renaissance of Islamic scholars"), which has some 30–35 million members, the single largest concentration of which is found in East Java, see Robin Bush, *Nahdlatul Ulama and the Struggle for Power within Islam and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, National University of Singapore, 2009); Greg Fealy and Greg Barton, *Nahdlatul Ulama, Traditional Islam, and Modernity in Indonesia* (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, 1996); Andrée Feillard, *Islam et Armée dans l'Indonésie Contemporaine: Les Pionniers de la Tradition* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995); and Feillard, "Traditionalist Islam and the State in Indonesia," in *Islam in an Era of Nation-states: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, eds. Robert Hefner and Patricia Horvatich (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 129–156.
- 5 In his book *L'Islam de Marché* [Market Islam], the Swiss political scientist Patrick Haenni writes of the recent religious developments in Turkey, Egypt, and Indonesia that "piety, wealth and cosmopolitanism have been substituted for ideals of social justice and a frugal mode of life. [...] Poverty is presented as a vice and wealth as the path to God...but the wealthy are invited to avoid ostentation," see Patrick Haenni, *L'Islam de Marché* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2005), 61; see also Deeb and Harb, *Leisurely Islam*, 15.

immodesty and, more specifically, on the opportunities that the marketplace offers for impropriety and even immorality. In the case of modern shopping malls with their varied spaces for both conspicuous consumption and display, and private—sometimes even intimate—meetings, these opportunities are multiple. In Java they have given rise to intense debates over acceptable forms of Islamic leisure-consumption and new discourses of proper Muslim sociability.

An examination of the leisure and consumption practices associated with modern shopping malls and the discourses of contemporary Muslim self-help tracts reveals that a far more varied menu of options for individual choice and self-expression is now available to young people than in previous generations. Rather than following the settled patterns of their parents and grandparents, Muslim youth selectively consume new “Islamic” products—Muslim headscarves, Islamic music and video sermons of celebrity preachers, halal foods, and Muslim ringtones.<sup>6</sup> A popular discourse of Muslim personal and spiritual development promotes the possibilities of fashioning cosmopolitan selves while at the same time warning young people of the dangers of moral laxity, unbridled consumption, and spiritual vacuity in a line of argument developed by state and religious authorities since the “rational leisure” movement in nineteenth-century England, as discussed by Tim Oakes on modern China in this volume.<sup>7</sup> In all of this I suggest there is evidence of a new Muslim middle-class subjectivity which self-consciously draws on the modern discourse of expressive individualism and self-making while attempting to ground both—not without points of tension or ambiguity—in new forms of Muslim sociability.

## The new Indonesian middle class

The “new” Indonesian middle class emerged in the early 1980s in the context of New Order (1965–1998) educational expansion, economic growth, rapid urbanization, and bureaucratic consolidation.<sup>8</sup> Among specialists of Southeast Asia, however, questions have arisen as to just how to define this most fluid of social categories. What, after all, is so “new” about the

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6 Fealy, “Consuming Islam.”

7 See James B. Hoesterey, “Marking Morality: The Rise, Fall and Rebranding of Aa Gym,” in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, eds. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008) 95–112; Fealy and White, “Prophetic Cosmopolitanism: Islam, Pop Psychology, and Civic Virtue in Indonesia,” *City & Society* 24, no. 1 (2012): 38–61; Carla Jones, “Women in the Middle: Femininity, Virtue, and Excess in Indonesian Discourses of Middle Classness,” in *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing Through Ethnography*, eds. Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, and Mark Liechty (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2012), 145–168; Daromir Rudnycky, *Spiritual Economies: Islam, Globalization, and the Afterlife of Development* (Athens, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

8 Hal Hill, “The Economy,” in *Indonesia’s New Order: The Dynamics of Socio-Economic Transformation*, ed. Hal Hill (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 54–122.

new middle class? Is the key to its identity higher levels of education, political participation, economic mobility, or something else? In answering these questions, many analysts have trained their attention on questions of political participation and democratization.<sup>9</sup> A generation ago, classical varieties of modernization theory assumed that the rise of the middle class challenges elite monopolies and leads gradually to demands for democratic participation. In the case of the Indonesian middle class that emerged in the 1980s, however, this does not seem to have occurred, at least not on the scale anticipated. In their introduction to *The Politics of Middle Class Indonesia* (1990), Richard Tanter and Kenneth Young described what they referred to as the "missing bourgeoisie" in Indonesia, and argued that it was one of the "socially distorting legacies" of colonial domination. Instead of the emergence of a politically assertive middle class, they write, in Indonesia one saw the rise of a military-dominated state as the agent of capitalist development.<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein, the political scientist Richard Robison writes that the middle classes in Indonesia were so dependent on the state for jobs, careers, and patronage that they had little interest in challenging the bureaucratic class or calling for democratic reform.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding the active participation of a younger generation in the effort to remove President Suharto from office in May of 1998 and the subsequent rise of political Islam, the Indonesian middle class has maintained its reputation for social quiescence.

A somewhat updated version of modernization theory posits that the new middle class creates a civil society which provides the social networks and the Tocquevillian "habits of the heart" assumed to be vital for more widespread democratic participation. But this model too has been challenged by the Indonesian example. In a 2005 ethnography of wealthy Jakartans, Elisabeth van Leeuwen writes, building on the work of James Siegel,<sup>12</sup> that Jakarta's suburban rich view the lower classes with anxiety, as uneducated and not quite "civilized," and thus unable to understand how democracy works. Van Leeuwen's work explores the tacit understandings held by the suburban rich concerning those who are not-yet-ready to be admitted to suburban society and the "newly emerging exclusion mechanisms and technologies" used by the wealthy to keep the underclass

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9 Howard W. Dick, "The rise of a middle class and the changing concept of equity in Indonesia: An interpretation," *Indonesia* 39 (1985): 71–92; Hilmar Farid, "The Class Question in Indonesian Social Sciences," in Vedi R. Hadiz and Daniel Dhakidae, eds., *Social Science and Power in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2005), 167–196; Hill, "Economy," 1994; Richard Robison, "The Middle Class and the Bourgeoisie in Indonesia," in *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonalds and Middle Class Revolution*, eds. Richard Robison and David Goodman (London: Routledge, 1996), 79–104; Richard Tanter and Kenneth Young, *The Politics of Middle Class Indonesia* (Clayton: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990).

10 Tanter and Young, *Politics of Middle Class Indonesia*, 12.

11 Robison, "Middle Class," 81.

12 James T. Siegel, *Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

outside the gates of their communities.<sup>13</sup> These suburban elites, at least at the time of van Leeuwen's research in the late 1990s, were fearful of change and concerned with maintaining their privileged position within their suburban enclaves where "nothing ever happens" and residents hoped to keep it that way.

Whatever their political role, until the beginning of the twenty-first century the number of middle-class Indonesians was arguably never a great proportion of the larger population; it was smaller than in Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore. Ian Chalmers and Takashi Shiraishi estimated that in the early 1990s the Indonesian middle class comprised only between 7 and 10 percent of the population.<sup>14</sup> The largest and most distinct group within this emergent class were civil servants (*pegawai negeri*), many of whom had obtained their positions as a result of the rapid expansion of the educational system and bureaucracy under Suharto's New Order. By the first decade of the new millennium, however, the middle class began to expand at an unprecedented rate. Market research, including that conducted by the Japanese Bank Nomura, estimated that middle class households—defined as those with disposable incomes of over \$3,000 per year—had swelled to between 20 and 30 percent of the population.<sup>15</sup> In 2010, the International Monetary Fund ranked Indonesia as a "middle income" country for the first time based on a US \$3,000 per capita GDP, "the growth of which was largely driven by household and personal consumption."<sup>16</sup>

An alternate framework for describing the new middle class has been put forward by German sociologist Solvay Gerke. In an edited volume on consumption in Asia, Gerke suggests that a lifestyle of consumption and leisure has become the defining characteristic of Indonesia's new middle class and that this aspiration has spread far beyond those identified as middle class by income or education to affect all people. She writes that as early as the late 1990s this aspiring middle class was identifiable by its consumption-oriented lifestyle and leisure habits that included shopping, sports, travel, and watching Western movies and that a distinctive array of consumption practices were gaining greater significance as markers of social rank in contrast to socio-economic criteria of classification.<sup>17</sup>

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13 Elisabeth M. Van Leeuwen, *Lost in Mall: An Ethnography of Middle Class Jakarta in the 1990s* (Leiden: KILTV Press, 2005), 16–17.

14 Ian Chalmers, "Democracy Constrained: The Emerging Political Culture of the Indonesian Middle Classes," *Asian Studies Review* 17, no. 1 (1993): 50–57; Takashi Shiraishi, "The Rise of New Urban Middle Classes in Southeast Asia: What is its National and Regional Significance?" RIETI Discussion Paper Series (Tokyo: The Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2004). Accessed April 25, 2017. <http://www.rieti.go.jp/en/>.

15 "Indonesia's Middle Class, Missing BRIC in the Wall: A Consumer Boom Masks Familiar Problems in South-East Asia's Biggest Economy," *The Economist*, July 21, 2011. Accessed April 25, 2017. <http://www.economist.com/node/18989153/>.

16 Jones, "Women in the Middle," 151.

17 Solvay Gerke, "Global Lifestyles under Local Conditions: The New Indonesian Middle Class," in *Consumption in Asia: Lifestyles and Identities*, ed. Beng-Huat Chua. London: Routledge, 2000, 135–158, on 136.

Adopting a framework based on the pioneering work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu,<sup>18</sup> Gerke presents an analysis of the middle class that foregrounds practical experience and habitus; that is, the disposition to act in a particular manner as an expression of one's social group and socialization. In particular, according to Gerke, engaging in "symbolic consumptive acts" as part of what she calls—after Bourdieu—"lifestyling" allows individuals to signal their class aspirations without significant real expenditure. These aspirational practices, moreover, create opportunities for the development of the cultural skills necessary for navigating the modern, much more varied social landscape.

## Leisure and consumption in Yogyakarta

The Special Region of Yogyakarta where I have conducted research on contemporary youth, Islam, and social change for the past fifteen years is located in the south-central portion of the populous island of Java in Indonesia. While Java itself has about 110 million residents, Yogyakarta has 3,594,290 inhabitants, 400,000 of whom live in the city proper.<sup>19</sup> Yogyakarta is widely referred to as a "city of students" (*kota pelajar*). The area has 120 state and private religious and secular tertiary educational institutions and over 100,000 university students in residence. Its schools attract young people from all corners of the archipelago and increasingly (though still in relatively small numbers), from abroad. Historically many of the city's graduates have gone on to fill important professional and political positions both locally and in Jakarta, the nation's capital. The city is also a renowned tourist area. It is a center of classical Javanese art—batik, dance, drama, music, poetry, and puppet shows—and is home to the Sultan of Yogyakarta, whose palace or *kraton* is an important tourist site visited by Indonesian and international tourists alike. To this day the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, continues to play an important role in the politics and cultural life of the region. In 1998 he was elected governor of the province. As a cultural and educational center, Yogyakarta has long been regarded as a trendsetter for the nation, second only to the capital, Jakarta, in influence.

My research focuses on the aspirations and identifications of Javanese Muslim university students who are currently attending or have recently graduated from one of Yogyakarta's many institutes of higher education.<sup>20</sup>

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18 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

19 Numbers are based on estimates extracted from Badan Pusat Statistik [Central agency on statistics], Sensus Penduduk 2010 [2010 Indonesian population census], accessed April 28, 2017, <http://sp2010.bps.go.id/>.

20 Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, "The New Muslim Romance: Changing Patterns of Courtship and Marriage among Educated Javanese Youth," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2005): 441–459; Smith-Hefner, "Reproducing Respectability: Sex and Sexuality among Muslim Javanese Youth," *Review of Indonesian and*

University-educated youth are assigned a certain social status and prestige by Indonesian society, but generally lack the economic wherewithal to take up a lifestyle suitable to their status. Significantly, the majority (between 68 percent and 75 percent) of the young people in my study are the first members of their families to obtain a college degree—with higher percentages of first-time degree earners among women students than men.<sup>21</sup> Students uniformly expressed great anxiety about their future economic prospects. In Indonesia today a tertiary degree is necessary but no longer sufficient for secure or highly remunerative employment. Nonetheless, their families have high expectations that a diploma will translate into a salaried position and most make clear their hopes for some return on their investment in their children's education. "Lifestyling," that is, developing the practical experience and habitus identified with middle-class status, is viewed positively by both students and their parents. Nonetheless, activities surrounding consumption and leisure have become a focus of concern, not only for religious reasons, but for their potentially problematic relationship to the goals of achieving an academic degree and securing a middle-class life style.<sup>22</sup>

## Consuming Yogyakarta

In today's urban Yogyakarta, the signs of the new middle-class consumerism are widely apparent, and have been so since the sustained economic expansion of the late 1980s and 1990s. Although the broader district has some of the highest population densities in Java and is still one of Java's poorest districts per capita, the region's poor now live scattered across a landscape visibly transformed by a new global order of consumerism and varied lifestyles. Today where there were once verdant paddy fields, multi-story gated housing communities have sprung up. Coffee shops, ATMs, fast food restaurants, and western-style supermarkets now appear on most major intersections, and even in some congested suburban neighborhoods. Modern appliances, up-to-date electronic devices, and the latest fashions are featured on billboards and in store windows.

As in other modern societies, consumption and leisure in Yogyakarta have become ever more intimately linked. Malls and mall culture provide some of the more remarkable illustrations of this leisure-consumption linkage. Although it falls far short of Jakarta's 173 shopping centers (in a city

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*Malaysian Affairs* 40, no. 1 (2006): 143–172; Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post-Soeharto Java," *Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 2 (2007): 389–420; Smith-Hefner, "Youth Language, Gaul Sociability, and the New Indonesian Middle Class," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (2007): 184–203; Smith-Hefner, "'Hypersexed' Youth and the New Muslim Sexology in Contemporary Java," *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 43, no. 1 (2009): 209–244.

21 Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women," 411.

22 Smith-Hefner, "Reproducing Respectability," 146.



twenty times the size of Yogyakarta),<sup>23</sup> Yogyakarta boasts three popular shopping plazas and six modern malls with several more in various stages of planning and development. The oldest of the six, the *Malioboro Mall* located on Yogyakarta's main tourist drag, was built in the early 1980s. The *Ambarukmo Plaza* or *Amplaz*—where I spent many hours taking notes and drinking coffee—went up in 2006. I was also a regular patron and observer at the somewhat older but nonetheless comfortable *Galeria Mall* (built in 1995). Since my last visit to Yogyakarta in 2014, two new “mega” malls have opened. The *Lippo Plaza* is located next to the four-star *Hotel Saphir*<sup>24</sup> and the *Hartono Lifestyle Mall*, billed as “the largest mall in Central Java” is in a complex with the Yogyakarta Marriott.<sup>25</sup> Although not yet fully occupied, the *Hartono* will eventually have nine floors of shops and parking space for 1,300 cars and 350 motorcycles.

All of the malls are all brightly lit, multi-storied, air-conditioned structures with a large assortment of retail shops, cafés, regional and Western-style restaurants, and fast food chains, among them Wendy's, Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and McDonald's, as well as less expensive food courts with mostly local fare. The newest malls are billed as lifestyle and leisure centers which feature, in addition to shops and restaurants, modern multiplex cinemas where the latest Indonesian, Indian, and American films are shown.

A characteristic feature of many Asian malls is their floor plan. All of Yogyakarta's malls are anchored by a large western-style supermarket in the basement and have at least one multi-level department store. More significantly, they are built around a large open public space on the first or ground floor level (or both) which is visible from all other floors. This open space is used for a variety of retail and entertainment purposes including computer, automobile, and furniture exhibitions, fashion shows, talent competitions, home sales, appliance rentals, and handicrafts fairs. Each of the malls also features several western-style coffee shops and dimly lit billiards or game rooms, often located on the upper floors. Not surprisingly, these are for the most part masculine spaces filled with young men who

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23 In a recent article in *The Jakarta Post* (September 17, 2013) entitled “No more Malls in Jakarta: Jokowi” the governor of Jakarta, Joko “Jokowi” Widodo, promised that he would issue no more building permits for malls in the capital. He pledged, instead, to build more public spaces and mosques.

24 The Lippo Plaza has replaced the former Saphir Square Mall, which went up in early 2000s and underwent bankruptcy in 2010 due to its inability to compete with the larger Ambarukmo Plaza Mall and concerns relating to its environmental impact, see “Sederet Mall Baru Siap Berdiri, Yogyakarta dalam Masalah” [A series of new malls ready to go up, Yogyakarta faces problems], *Kompasiana*, May 29, 2012. Accessed July 25, 2015. <http://regional.kompasiana.com/2013/05/29/sederet-mall-baru-siap-berdiri-yogyakarta-dalam-masalah-564128.html>.

25 “Mal Terbesar Se-Jawa Bagian Tengah Ada di Yogyakarta!” [The largest mall in all of Central Java is in Yogyakarta!], *Kompas*, December 6, 2013. Accessed May 12, 2014. <http://properti.kompas.com/read/2013/12/06/1635320/Mal.Terbesar.Se-Jawa.Bagian.Tengah.Ada.di.Yogyakarta>.

congregate to smoke, watch passers-by, or simply pass the time hanging out with friends (*nglencer, nongkrong*). In the evenings and on weekends (especially *malam minggu* or Saturday night) the malls are filled with married couples, young parents with small children in tow, the occasional befuddled senior citizen being shepherded along by an eager grandchild, and, above all else, throngs of young people—most of them, it is important to note, in small, same-sex groups. Young women in Islamic headscarves, long sleeved tunics and wide-legged pants or maxi skirts navigate the crowd arm-in-arm, avoiding eye contact with male passersby. Others, less demurely dressed in tight jeans, talk on cell phones and giggle with girlfriends. Larger groups of young people congregate in the food courts to eat snacks and sweets; those with more money enjoy a chicken and rice box at “Kentucky” or an ice cream cone at McDonald’s. Aside from the occasional small purchase and quick meal, many young mall-goers merely engage in window shopping, checking out the various goods on display, perhaps taking note of prices, and enjoying the ambiance of the colorful, bustling, air-conditioned atmosphere.<sup>26</sup>

As a number of consumer theorists have noted, modern leisure and consumption require that actors acquire a new and distinctive set of social skills, which is to say, a consumer habitus. Of course, not everyone is familiar with the requisite code of behavior and self-presentation.<sup>27</sup> Here in Yogyakarta, those who are *au courant*, are referred to as “already developed” (*sudah maju*) and “modern” (*modèren*); those who are not (or not yet), are deemed “less developed” (*kurang maju*), “old-fashioned” (*masih kuno*), or *kampung* (“newly arrived from the village”). The (for the most part unstated) behavioral expectations of modern Indonesian malls include prohibitions on squatting, spitting, sarongs, plastic sandals, bare chests and bare feet, haggling, and the use of regional languages when speaking with mall personnel. In this modern environment, western-style jeans are the unspoken dress code and the use of the national language, Indonesian, is deemed most appropriate. Security guards are stationed at the entrances to monitor the crowds and to turn away those who do not meet minimum standards of presentability.<sup>28</sup> However, there also appears to be a high level of self-discipline and even self-censorship: most people

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26 In the early 2000s, news articles raised concerns about window shopping and the economy. Some surveys indicated that as many as 70% of mall goers did not buy anything, see “Malls for All?” *The Jakarta Post*, February 7, 2004, accessed May 12, 2014, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2004/02/07/malls-all.html>. This situation raised questions about the economic viability of the growing number of malls in Indonesian cities, particularly but not only in the capital. Planners, however, indicated an awareness of the importance of Indonesians developing a mall habitus and insisted that when their economy improved, window shoppers would be primed to buy. See Lyn Parker and Pam Nilan, *Adolescents in Contemporary Indonesia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Van Leeuwen, *Lost in Mall*.

27 See Haenni, *Islam de Marché*; Jones, “Women in the Middle.”

28 Indonesian friends from Jakarta reported that in the early 2000s, security guards at some Jakarta malls offered shoes and appropriate clothing to those inappropriately dressed.

recognize the mall as a specially marked cultural space, and they are eager to behave accordingly. Those who lack the proper clothing or modern sensibilities—like the man who served as the driver of the run-down mini-van I use when visiting Yogyakarta—confess that they just don't feel comfortable in the malls, any more than they do at the related spaces of modern consumption and self-identification, western-style restaurants and modern cinemas. For these still largely rural and working-class Javanese, malls are too expensive, the food is too foreign, and their air conditioning only makes for headaches and chills.

In addition to its bright and bustling palaces of modern consumption, Yogyakarta also has a modest night scene (*dugem*) of discotheques, hotel bars, and clubs. Individual establishments tend to come and go, all the more so in recent years because some of these morally murky places have been targeted by working-class Muslim vigilantes. Since the early 2000s, Muslim militias have taken to attacking such sites on the grounds that they are centers of "moral impropriety/vice" (*maksiat*)—a vice which is almost always portrayed as "made in the West." As one young Yogyakarta clubber explained to me, "When the anti-*maksiat* groups begin to make threats, the clubs close for a while until things quiet down. Then they reopen, sometimes in the same building, sometimes in another location with a different name."

## Cosmopolitan subjectivities: The individual as project

If not among the working class vigilantes, among the new middle class a much remarked upon new cosmopolitan social style has emerged that both parallels and builds on recent developments in consumption and leisure. The new style is referred to in Indonesian as *gaul* (pronounced like howl) which means "social/hip."<sup>29</sup> At its most basic level *gaul* designates someone who is both socially at ease in and socially savvy with regard to the modern landscapes of malls, theaters, restaurants, and universities, all of which lie outside the established hierarchies and disciplines of the rural countryside. *Gaul's* associations with a modern cosmopolitanism and hip sophistication are nicely captured in the following comment made by a young Javanese college student in response to my question, "So, what is *gaul*?"

*Gaul* means someone who is self-assured and good at adapting socially. A kid who can talk to older people or to people from the village or to city people or modern people is a *gaul* kid. They're "up-to-date" (*tidak ketinggalan jaman*), developed, and "advanced" (*maju*). *Gaul* is modern. I think whoever or whatever is not *gaul* is just not modern (*tidak modèren*).

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29 See Smith Hefner, "Youth Language."

In the late 1990s and early 2000s Yogyakarta's bookstores were flooded with handbooks on how to cultivate the mysterious but alluring habitus of this new *gaul* style. These books, which are modelled very much on similar advice books in Europe and the United States for aspirants to middle class status which we see reflected in the stance taken by the film *Stella Dallas*, see Sarah Frederick in this volume, had titles like: *All about Gaul!*;<sup>30</sup> *Gaul Smart with the World*;<sup>31</sup> and *Gaul: Take Advantage of More Opportunities*.<sup>32</sup> The authors of this last book state that *gaul* is "any activity where one has an opportunity to meet people who are interesting and to invite them to engage in a relationship."<sup>33</sup> They assert that, furthermore, "experts" have now determined that *gaul* is the best method for achieving social success, both personal and professional.

Gaul has now become an important value/skill in everyday life as well as at work. Those who are not *gaul* (*yang tidak gaul*) are considered not really ok. Why? The impression is that they are not trendy (*tidak trendi*). This might be surprising because usually trendiness is judged by outward appearance—does he follow the latest fashion trend or not. But now *gaul* has also become a measure of trendiness.<sup>34</sup>

Personal and professional success in the face of rapid urbanization requires new forms of social interaction across ethnic, religious, regional, and gender lines as well as new understandings of the self. *Gaul* ideology encourages flexible, open, and ostensibly "democratic" (but in practice thoroughly apolitical) interactions. It is meta-ethnic rather than ethnically marked. Like the new horizons of consumption to which it is linked, *gaul* posits the modern individual as an on-going project ever in need of self-making improvements. The improvements have first and foremost to do with oneself as a product and presenter. All individuals, these *gaul* self-help books explain, have both strengths and limitations (*kelebihan dan kekurangan*). The point is to be aware of one's own personal qualities, to learn to minimize one's limitations and "optimize" one's strengths (*ngoptimalin bakatnya*) in social interactions. This emphasis on self-understanding and on self-development as a continuous and quasi-career enhancing process is a central theme of the *gaul* guidebooks, exemplified in the following excerpt from *All About Gaul!*

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30 Adi Kurnia, *All about Gaul!* (Bandung: Simbiosia Rekatama Media, 2005).

31 Wining Rohani, *Gaul smart Dengan Dunia* [Social smarts for interacting with the world] (Yogyakarta: Gloria Graffa, 2004).

32 Eileen Rahman and Petrina Omar, *Gaul: Meraih Lebih Banyak Kesempatan* [*Gaul: Take advantage of more opportunities*] (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004).

33 Rahman and Omar, *Gaul*, 9.

34 Rahman and Omar, *Gaul*, 6.

Why [are you less than impressive in front of people]? We could say that it happens because you maintain several negative characteristics. Or you just haven't developed a strategy to rid yourself of those characteristics [...] like egoism, stubbornness, and thinking you're always right. Everyone has an ego, but don't become egotistical; that's dangerous you know! The effects of these characteristics are simple. You become too self-confident and in the end, conceited. Or you become too self-effacing/self-conscious (*minder*), and in the end, overly timid. Of course other people don't like these characteristics. If you exhibit them, people will stay away from you. But you don't have to give up. *You should remember that life is a process that never ends. Everything that you are and everything that you know will continue to develop, as long as you believe that everything is a process.*<sup>35</sup>

Unthinkable or unattractive under the earlier scheme of Javanese social style and self-presentation, with its heavy emphasis on ascribed social classifications and identification with ethnically marked communitarian categories and consumption, the achievement of "personal style" is critical to the new *gaul* habitus. Yet, as the above quotation makes clear, personal style is not viewed as something that just happens through interactions with one's family or natal community; it requires conscious reflection, cultivation, and self-making work. And that is what the proliferation of *gaul* handbooks is about. These handbooks take as their focus, not the recognition of a communal, ethnic, or local identity, but the cultivation of the individualized self-confidence and ego-centered social skills required for interacting outside of one's circle of family and close friends. *Gaul* orients one to a distinctive social world, but it is a world made up of expressive individuals rather than tradition-minded communities.

Thus, the authors of the new *gaul* guidebooks offer tips on how to make friends, how to be a good listener, how to express oneself, and how to make the most of one's individual abilities and talents. The small guide whose title translates as *The Secret to Successful Social Interaction*, for example, suggests that the reader should always "be present" in social interactions, should put the interlocutor first, and act like an equal partner in conversations rather than like a parent/elder—all skills identified as necessary in navigating the modern, socially varied, landscape. To underscore this focus on direct, more democratic interactions, authors often address the reader with the youth slang equivalents of "bro" (*brur*) or "dude" (*bo, coy*) and will regularly interrupt their narrative to ask rhetorical questions: "What do you think will happen if you continually exasperate people? I'm sure you know the answer." "What do young people today find so

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35 Kurnia, *All About Gaul*, 14–15, emphasis added.

engrossing in just hanging out in coffee shops or in the malls? What do they accomplish that way? Nothing."<sup>36</sup>

The intended audience for these guidebooks is the young people, eager for middle-class status, who have arrived in urban centers in large numbers in order to take advantage of new educational and employment opportunities. Many are living on their own and away from close parental supervision for the first time or commute daily to schools or work sites some distance from their homes. The publications hold particular appeal for those in their late teens and early twenties who have grown up in villages or small towns, in socially conservative or closely monitored backgrounds. And although the authors tend to take males as their focus, according to publishers and authors as many if not more females than males buy and consume these publications. The books speak most directly to those young people who feel insecure and uncertain in the new urban environments of high school and college campuses, internet cafés, modern offices, cinemas, and shopping malls. These modern environments require the employment of cosmopolitan interpersonal social skills and poised self-confidence in interactions with individuals from widely varied backgrounds—including, most importantly, members of the opposite sex.

## Sex and modernity

The deep insecurities that many young people feel in interacting with members of the opposite sex may be difficult for the casual observer to comprehend. Javanese women are not sequestered or kept out of public view. On the contrary, middle-class or aspiring middle-class parents actively encourage their daughters to pursue an education. In 2011 according to World Bank statistics, the ratio of Indonesian female to males in tertiary institutions had reached 85 percent and by 2012 had surpassed the percentage of males.<sup>37</sup>

Classrooms, with the exception of the Muslim boarding schools, are not sex-segregated, though students nonetheless tend to self-segregate into same-sex groups. Socializing outside of school also tends to take place in single-sex groups with taunts and teasing back and forth as the most common form of interaction. Young people report having "boyfriends" or "girlfriends" in high school or even middle school, but this may consist of little more than passing notes or innocent flirtation.<sup>38</sup> A surprising number

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36 Wishnubroto Widarso, *Kiat Sukses Bergaul* [The secret to successful social interactions] (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1997).

37 In 2012, the ratio of females to males in tertiary institutions in Indonesia reached 103.5% and has only risen since that time, accessed April 25, 2017, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ENR.TERT.FM.ZS/countries/1W-ID?display=graph>.

38 Smith-Hefner, "The New Muslim Romance"; see also Linda Rae Bennett, *Women, Islam and Modernity: Single Women, Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Contemporary Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2005) as well as Parker and Nilan, *Adolescents*.

of students, by college age, have had relatively few opportunities to interact with members of the opposite sex in other than a superficial manner, and certainly not in an intimate one-on-one situation like a date.

Since Indonesia's 1974 marriage reforms, the notion that young people should not be forced into arranged marriages has become widely acknowledged. Yet "dating" is a highly contested means of getting to know possible marital partners. Dating is particularly risky for young women whose reputations depend on the appearance of chastity and whose behavior is constantly being evaluated by neighbors, friends, and community members.<sup>39</sup> Parents regularly request that their children, particularly their daughters, wait to have a serious boyfriend until they have finished their educations. Dating is also an important focus of the required religious education that all young people receive in the schools. This education teaches young people that "there is no dating within Islam";<sup>40</sup> there is only chaperoned meeting for the purposes of negotiating marriage. Despite concerns over dating and mixed-sex socializing, marriage is nonetheless viewed as compulsory—preferably as soon as possible after graduation.<sup>41</sup> How and where to find an appropriate marriage partner without overstepping the bounds of Islamic propriety has thus become a point of tension for many young people and particularly for many young women.

## Back to the mall: Satan, sin, and consumption

As noted earlier, not everyone views the new cosmopolitan life styles and leisure-as-consumption as unambiguously positive. There are ripples of discontent even among established members of the middle class. Jakarta-based newspapers and glossy women's magazines lament the lack of physical exercise and creativity among urban youth who prefer to spend their afterschool and weekend hours hanging around the malls socializing with friends. A 2009 article in *The Jakarta Post* describes a program called *Wiken Tanpa ke Mall*, which literally means a "weekend without going to

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39 Bennett, *Women, Islam and Modernity*; Parker and Nilan, *Adolescents*.

40 See Salim A Fillah, *Nikmatnya Pacaran Setelah Pernikahan* [The pleasure of courtship after marriage] (Jakarta: Pro-U Media, 2005).

41 The Australian sociologist Gavin Jones, and his colleague, Bina Gubhaju, describe Indonesia as following the pattern of "universal marriage," defined as a country where less than 5 percent of women are still single in their late forties. In Indonesia in 2005, they write, only 2 percent of Indonesian women were never married in their late forties, see Gavin Jones and Bina Gubhaju, "Trends in Age at Marriage in the Provinces of Indonesia," Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 105 (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2008), 11. Although this pattern has shifted in many areas of South and Southeast Asia and may shift with later generations in Indonesia as well, marriage is still taken for granted by the vast majority of Indonesian youth. According to this near-universal norm, women who reach their mid-twenties and are not yet married are considered "old maids" (*prawan tua*) and anxious concern is expressed over their "marketability" and, in particular, their declining fertility.

the shopping mall," organized by several local groups in an attempt to get young people in Jakarta to go to the zoo rather than hanging out at the malls. Among the parents interviewed for the story was a father who said he agreed with the effort because, "Going to the mall has become like an addiction for many people living in the capital, including children. The kids should be involved in more creative activities."<sup>42</sup> It was a comment I often heard from parents of young people in Yogyakarta as well. *Nglencer* "hanging out, doing nothing" has become a key worry of parents, teachers, and community leaders and is the focus of similar concerns voiced by Malays and Singaporeans (where the term used for this activity is *lepak*).<sup>43</sup>

These middle-class anxieties aside, the strongest critiques of the new leisure and consumption life styles come from conservative and even some mainline Muslim groups who identify the new consumerism with westernization pure and simple. Consumption in this view is a subtle form of (Western) re-colonization that captures young people's bodies and minds through the alluring but superficial devices of new trends and fashions. In recent years, a stridently moralizing religious counter-discourse has emerged in opposition to the new leisure-as-consumption. This discourse depicts the new consumption-oriented lifestyles as materialistic and hedonistic and cautions against the opportunities for sinful activities that malls and other modern leisure sites provide.

Among the most fiery of these critiques are the copious works of the Muslim entrepreneur Abu Al-Ghifari, printed by his personal publishing house, Mujahid Press.<sup>44</sup> Al-Ghifari blames the moral corruption of today's youth directly on media and consumptive flows from the West.<sup>45</sup> He points to American movies and television shows which are widely watched by Indonesian youth (offering the anachronistic examples of Bay Watch,

42 "Jakartans Enjoy Non-mall Weekend Recreation," *The Jakarta Post*, June 14, 2009. Accessed June 22, 2014. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/06/14/jakartans-enjoy-nonmall-weekend-recreation.html>. This same parent lamented the lack of opportunities for healthy outdoor activities in the capital, saying he takes his young daughter to the mall because there are so few alternatives. Yogyakarta parents made similar complaints about the shrinking green spaces in the city, the traffic gridlock, and increasing levels of pollution associated with mall expansion.

43 Fischer, *Proper Islamic Consumption*, 67.

44 Among Al-Ghifari's works are: *Kudung Gaul: Berjilbab Tapi Telanjang* [Trendy headscarves: Covered but naked] (2002); *Remaja dan Cinta: Memahami Gelora Cinta Remaja dan Menyelamkannya dari Berhala Cinta* [Teens and love: Understanding teen love and safeguarding them from the love of teen idols] (2003a); *Pacaran Yang Islami, Adakah?* [Muslim dating, does it exist?] (2003b); *Selingkuh, Nikmat yang Terlaknat* [Cheating, a damning pleasure] (2003c); *Gelombang Kejahatan Seks Remaja Modern* [A wave of modern teen sex crimes] (2004a); *Roman-tika Remaja: Kisah-Kisah Tragis dan Solusinya dalam Islam* [Teen romance: Tragic stories and solutions in Islam] (2004b)—all of which have been published in multiple editions. Note too, the top-selling Islamist magazines, *Hidayah* [God's guidance] and *Sabili* [Fighters for the holy cause] which recently stopped publication and then reemerged in 2014 as *Sabiliku Bangkit* [Sabili revived], which offers a similar message.

45 Al-Ghifari, *Gelombang*, 47.



Beverly Hills 90210, and Melrose Place) as contaminating young people with ideas of free sex and promiscuity as an individual right.<sup>46</sup> He describes Western youth as behaving “like animals” and free sex as an extreme form of “narcissism which develops into a wandering lust that can never be satisfied, eventually becoming an insatiable sexual hunger.”<sup>47</sup> The outcome is a condition he calls “hypersexuality” which, in the case of women can be understood as a type of “pathological masochism.” When sexual freedom has gone too far and can no longer be controlled, the only solution, Al-Ghifari and other authors writing in this genre write, is to quickly marry.<sup>48</sup>

The works of Al-Ghifari and others writing in this genre are uniform in their condemnation of Western immorality and their appeals to young people to avoid situations that offer the temptation of *berzina* (illicit sex). Satan, these authors remind young readers, is in all those places (cinemas, night clubs, bars, discothèques, and malls) that create opportunities for *berkholwat* (being alone together with an unrelated member of the opposite sex) and lead quickly to other immoral acts like being too close together, or holding or touching each other. The best defense is to avoid such places altogether.<sup>49</sup> An even more radical course of action—that taken up by Islamist vigilantes—is to force such places to close down.<sup>50</sup>

## Sociable but *Shari'a*-minded

Muslim resistance to the dangers of mall immorality also takes other, less militant, forms. Indeed, some of this resistance adopts the trappings of mall cosmopolitanism, becoming an accommodating and hybridized variety of Muslim consumption, similar in some respects to the *Islam de*

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46 Al-Ghifari, *Gelombang*, 110–113, 117–121.

47 Al-Ghifari, *Gelombang*, 40–41.

48 Al-Ghifari, *Remaja dan Cinta*; Al-Ghifari, *Pacaran Yang Islami*; M. Fauzil Adhim, *Indahnya Pernikahan Dini* [The beauty of early marriage] (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2002).

49 Al-Ghifari, *Remaja dan Cinta*, 48.

50 Because of their well-trained and muscular security personnel, large malls are rarely the target of Islamist vigilantism. However, since the overthrow of the Suharto regime in May 1998, other centers of middle-class cosmopolitanism, including cafés, bars, and discotheques, have been the targets of repeated attacks, not least by the nationally organized militia known as the Islamic Defenders' Front (*Front Pembela Islam*), see Ian D. Wilson, “As Long as it's Halal: Islamic Preman in Jakarta,” in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, eds. Greg Fealy and Sally White (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2008), 192–210. On the rise of various Islamist groups in Indonesia, see Anthony Bubalo and Greg Fealy, *Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism, and Indonesia* (Sydney, NSW: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2005); Noorhaidi Hasan, *Islamist Party, Electoral Politics, and Da'wa Mobilization among Youth: The Prosperous Justice Party in Indonesia* (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Working Paper, 2009); Yon Machmudi, “The Emergence of New Santri in Indonesia,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2, no. 1 (2008): 69–102; Machmudi, *Islamizing Indonesia: The Rise of the Jemaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)* (Canberra: ANU e-press, 2008).

*marché* (Market Islam) described by Patrick Haenni. Haenni sees in this the “embourgeoisement” of the process of Islamization; that is, a disengagement from the political and a corresponding refocusing on personal development and upward mobility.<sup>51</sup> He notes the appearance in the 1990s of a new pamphlet genre in many areas of the Muslim world which focuses on topics of self-cultivation and improvement, but within an Islamic frame, “a form of predication closer to coaching than theology.”<sup>52</sup>

In Indonesia, among the books on *gaul* sociability that flooded the bookstores in the late 1990s and early 2000s, were those that offered an alternative, Islamic sociability (*gaul Islami* or *gaul syar’i*) based on a distinctive blend of Muslim piety and individual self-expression—where the self-expression that is prescribed is more systematically responsive to religious norms than typical in more mainstream *gaul* culture. These more moderate Muslim tracts include such titles as *The Gaul Era: Tips for Muslim Youth on Becoming Sociable without Losing Your Muslim Identity*,<sup>53</sup> *Sociable but Shari’a-minded*,<sup>54</sup> *Becoming Friends with Islam*,<sup>55</sup> and *Sufi Funky: [How to] Be Gaul and Pious*.<sup>56</sup> These books, like those of more conservative Islamist authors, lament the current state of the world and its negative effects on today’s youth and counsel young people against being drawn into sin and immorality. However, rather than rejecting this new world of materialist consumption outright, they offer the believer tips for how to enter more effectively—but also ethically—into its dizzying corridors.

In *Sociable but Shari’a-minded*, for example, the author, Muhapi, writes,

In this book I want to help youth to understand an era which is becoming so much more complex and more challenging, and some say, more crazy (*edan*). *Don’t get pulled into ignorance, laziness, let alone drown in the world of darkness that is immorality, that is considered “gaul!”*<sup>57</sup>

Their broader message, however, is one that links a principled sociability (*gaul yang berprinsip*) with personal success.

Typical of these tracts is the small book *Make your socializing more sociable: The secret to great socializing that’s still acceptable*, by Alwi

51 Haenni, *Islam de Marché*, 9.

52 Haenni, *Islam de Marché*, 76.

53 Muhammad Najib Salim, *Zaman Gaul: Tips Menjadi Gaul bagi Remaja Tanpa Kehilangan Identitas Keislamannya* [The *gaul* era: Tips for Muslim youth on becoming sociable without losing your Muslim identity]. (Yogyakarta: DIVA Press, 2004).

54 Muhapi, *Gaul Tapi Syar’i* [Sociable but *shari’a*-minded] (Jakarta: Penerbit Karya Ilmu, 2006).

55 Teguh Iman Perdana, *NgeFriend sama Islam #2* [Becoming friends with Islam #2] (Bandung: Mizan, 2004).

56 Thobieb Al Asyhar, *Sufi Funky: Menjadi Remaja Gaul yang Saleh* [Funky Sufi: Become a young person who is *gaul* and pious] (Jakarta: Gema Istani, 2005).

57 Muhapi, *Gaul Tapi Syar’i*, emphasis added, 24.

Alatas.<sup>58</sup> In its opening chapter, entitled "Leisure and Pleasure," the author offers the usual litany of leisure activities that modern young people find pleasurable, but that often make others unhappy. These activities include aimless hanging out with friends, smoking and taking drugs, going to clubs and discotheques, wasting time at malls, and reading and watching pornography. Most of these activities, the author admits, are enjoyed more often by males than by females; however, young women are hardly immune from the lure of modern sociability. Alatas describes how recently an increasing number of teenage girls have lowered themselves to taking pictures of their breasts and naked bodies with their cell phones and sending them to friends or posting them on the internet for everyone to see. But "self-confidence," he writes, "does not mean selling oneself so cheaply." Those things that are free and enjoyed by everyone clearly lose their value. As support for his argument, he cites the example of the virgins in heaven, described in Islamic *hadith* as being as beautiful as coral and rubies because they have never been touched by humans or *jinn*. More importantly he reminds his readers, "Pleasure does not guarantee happiness. Only Allah can give us true happiness."<sup>59</sup>

Instead of leisure as pleasure and consumption, these Muslim *gaul* authors propose a "principled sociability" (*gaul yang berprinsip*) and religious study (*ngajit/ta'biyah*). Principled sociability is sociability that is responsive to and based on an understanding of the requirements and prohibitions of Islam. Religious study is the means to obtain that knowledge. Young people are encouraged to use their free time to seek religious knowledge, including, most importantly, knowledge of Islamic law (*shari'a*). It is only by organizing one's free time and *habitus* around God's commandments that one can learn how to resist things forbidden by religion. The model at work here is not that of the self-expressive individual consumer. It is that of the pious believer, whose piety is defined with reference not to the expressive celebration of personal feelings, but to knowledge of God's commands.

Sociability that is truly "OK" is that which is principled.

[. . .] We have to hold on tightly to our religious principles. If our friends invite us to go against the requirements of God or to do something forbidden by our religion, we have to refuse. "Sorry, this is against my principles. I can't go along with it." But if they still press us, what do we do? [If they say,] "Oh you act so pious. Have you become an *ustadz* (religious scholar/teacher)?" If they say that, don't be surprised. Just respond, "Better to act pious than to act like a *kafir* (unbeliever)!"<sup>60</sup>

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58 Alwi Alatas, *Bikin Gaulmu Makin Gaul: Kiat Bergaul yang Asyik dan Oke* [Make your socializing more sociable: The secret to great socializing that's still acceptable] (Jakarta: Hikma Press, 2006).

59 Alatas, *Bikin Gaulmu Makin Gaul*, 26–27.

60 Alatas, *Bikin Gaulmu Makin Gaul*, 97–99.

What is of particular interest in this discourse is that, even while occasionally railing against the West, these authors do not suggest that Muslims seal themselves off from the social world or from the changes linked to globalization. While there are dangers associated with Westernization, "Muslims have to keep up with the latest in order to develop and advance so that we are not left behind."<sup>61</sup> In fact, these authors liberally quote Western figures throughout their works, urging young people to take their inspiration from people like Henry Ford, Helen Keller, and Albert Einstein, in order to overcome difficult odds and to make a difference in the world. Like the new Muslim celebrity-preachers described by James Hoesterey,<sup>62</sup> these authors draw on western psychological models from Freud to Howard Gardner to "buttress their claims to modern authority while encouraging new forms of religious experience." Also like Hoesterey's celebrity preachers, the *gaul* authors are themselves entrepreneurs who, in addition to writing books, typically write advice columns in newspapers and magazines, work as consultants, offer educational seminars, and participate in television and radio talk shows. As a result, their message of principled sociability has an influence that extends far beyond the readership of their books.

## Modern Muslim subjectivities

It was to this discourse of "principled sociability" that the students in my study consistently referred in describing the temptations of consumption and, especially, interactions with members of the opposite sex. An example of this discourse as applied to shopping arose early in my research in a discussion with a second year dentistry student from Gadjah Mada University. In response to my queries about her weekend, she described with obvious embarrassment having gone with a small group of girlfriends to a student bazaar where she just couldn't restrain her "urge to consume" (*jiwa konsumsi saya*). She had spent the equivalent of US\$12.00 (Rp. 100,000) on ethnic crafts like Papuan ashtrays and Balinese carved wooden wall hangings. Next time, she vowed, she would be more disciplined (*lebih disiplin*) and "hold to her principles." When asked if she considered shopping wrong or sinful, she cited the example of the Prophet who didn't avoid the marketplace, but never lingered. Ideally, she said, one should have a specific aim or objective in mind when going out to the market or mall, purchase what one needed, and then quickly return

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61 Muhapi. *Gaul Tapi Syar'I*, 37.

62 Hoesterey, "Marking Morality," 2; see also Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) and Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

home. She, however, would not return to the student bazaar because—she laughed—in that environment, “women just can’t keep their desire to consume under control.”<sup>63</sup>

Nonetheless, by 2010, spending time at the mall had become an important and valued leisure activity for a majority of middle-class and aspiring middle-class youth. The newer malls like the *Amburukmo Plaza* were so crowded on weekends that there were long lines of cars and taxis snaking down the street waiting for a parking spot to open up. Even much older malls like the *Malioboro* were often so packed with mall-goers that it was difficult to navigate the escalators. Young people reported that in addition to offering a comfortable, clean, and modern environment where one could browse the latest fashions and lifestyle trends, going to the mall had become an enjoyable way to pass time with friends “hanging out” or “showing oneself off/putting oneself out there” (*mejeng*). They readily admitted that *mejeng di mall* or hanging out at the mall included the exciting possibility of seeing and being seen by members of the opposite sex. However, rather than spaces of sin or immorality (*maksiat*), they argued malls were “safe” spaces (*tempat yang aman*) where their acts were controlled and surveilled both by their friends and by a watchful public eye. While they conceded that a certain amount of flirting was also a possibility, they were quick to add that it was done in such a way that it did not violate religious norms (*tidak melanggar batas agama*). Interactions, they pointed out—if they occurred—typically took place between groups. None of the young women I knew would ever consider going to the mall alone, but always went with a female friend or friends. Young men too typically moved around the mall in small same-sex groups. The groups were, nonetheless, very much aware of each other, and group members would exchange discreet glances or smiles or even, in some cases, attempt to deliberately cross paths. Among younger groups of mall-goers, in particular, joking and even calling out to one another is not uncommon, though most of the calling and joking tends to be from young men to the groups of young women, who do their best to pretend to ignore it.

In their article on youth and mall culture in the nearby Javanese city of Solo, authors Pam Nilan and Michelle Mansfield describe a similar pattern among high-school aged youth they studied. They focus their research during the fasting month (Ramadan) when young people flock to the malls in the late afternoons to spend time with friends while waiting to break the fast together. Texting has become an integral part of mall interactions, they observe, enhancing and supplementing the physical interactions taking place between groups of young people. “Observed reactions [on the part of the young people involved] indicate that at least some, if not the

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63 See Jones, “Women in the Middle.” Especially damning to women is the label *cewek matre* “material girl” or *mata uang* (literally, “money eyes”) both designating a woman who is only interested in money or involved with a man only for his money.

majority, of text messages were exchanged flirtatiously," they write.<sup>64</sup> The young people they spoke to emphasized, however, that what is important "is not to diminish the religious merit of fasting" (*yang penting nggak mengurangi pahala puasa*). While enjoying the atmosphere and each other's company, young people supported one another to insure that no one broke the fast early. Nilan and Mansfield's respondents were somewhat younger than my own; nonetheless, the concerns they expressed with socializing in a manner that was fun but did not violate religious norms or limits were in line with those expressed by the young people in my study.

## Leisure, consumption, and the new Muslim middle class

In embracing a principled, religiously-informed sociability, young people draw on widely available discourses that address and express the major concerns in their own lives. For the university students in my study and the majority of Javanese youth, these concerns have everything to do with the anxieties that surround achieving and maintaining middle-class status: how to stay clear of the enticements of the urban social scene; how to avoid serious sexual involvements; and how to stay disciplined and focused, all so as to finish their educational program and obtain a college diploma. Liberally sprinkled with borrowings from contemporary youth slang (*bahasa gaul*) and making major concessions to popular interest in self-expression and self-making, this principled sociability comes across as thoroughly modern, even trendy. It is a mechanism of principled integration into, not segregation from, the allures of the marketplace. It is, in Patrick Haenni's terminology, a key feature of *l'islam de marché*: an Islam accommodated to rather than rejecting modern consumption and capitalism, but accommodated on terms that remake and yet restrain individual habitus—while not challenging the larger economic system as a whole.

Significantly, young aspirants to middle-class status referred to this theme of principled sociability not only to differentiate themselves from the perceived hyper-individualism of the West, but also from wealthy Indonesian elites like the Jakartan suburbanites described by Van Leeuwen. The general consensus among Muslim Javanese college students is that sexual experimentation is associated with wealthy, urban individuals who did not have a good family life and moral upbringing. The stereotype is that sexually "looser" women and men attend expensive private schools and that many of these wealthier individuals come from families that didn't give them sufficient love and attention while they were growing up. I was frequently told that these young people are the products of "broken homes" (due to divorce or separation) or of families in which the parents were too

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64 Pam Nilan and Michelle Mansfield, "Youth Culture and Islam in Indonesia," *Wacana* 15, no. 1 (2014): 15.

busy with their professional careers or consumer lifestyles to spend time with their children. Not surprisingly, there is also an assumption that these young people had insufficient religious training. As further evidence for these generalizations, students pointed to the recurrent stories in newspaper and magazine articles of Indonesian media stars who described their broken home life and lack of religious education, their flirtation with sex and drugs, and their eventual turn to a life of Islamic piety. These examples were widely cited by parents and young people as moral lessons for those who would be tempted to go astray. Islam, in other words, has become a defining feature of the new middle-class habitus, one which separates the new middle class from both the unenlightened and uneducated lower classes, but also from the morally suspect wealthy elites who have been tainted by excessive Westernization.<sup>65</sup>

In approaching the new Muslim middle class through the optic of leisure and consumption, we get glimpses of new and contested Muslim subjectivities. However, by paying more attention to the moral debates raging in and around the mall, so to speak, we can also appreciate that the nature of these contestations is not limited to economic or political concerns, as some of the early literature on Asian middle classes implied. As the religious sphere increasingly shifts away from the settled world of "tradition" and established religious hierarchies, new options for individual "choice" and expressivity have appeared. At the same time, the individual is confronted by a host of public groupings trying to woo or pressure him or her toward their way of being. There are more options, more choices, but also a painfully enhanced awareness that many groups are trying to convince one to follow *their* way. The contest and deliberation reaches down into the most intimate spheres of the individual.

The Javanese example speaks to the question: Is individualism an inevitable aspect of the globalization of consumption, of modern lifestyle choice, of the development and spread of new middle classes? The idealized model of consumption and lifestyle in the liberal West is one that emphasizes the autonomy and self-expressivity of the individual. The reality of course is more complicated. Our market places and our social worlds are sites of powerful and perpetual social communication, both by advertisers and businesses and by masses of consumers. Not surprisingly then, the autonomous individual of liberal consumption theory turns out in fact to be a heavily socialized being—socialized through and for consumption. He or she is, in Patrick Haenni's terms, an *individu du marché*.

While one might expect Muslim consumers to reject this capitalist model outright, the trend across the Muslim world is more hybrid and accommodating than it is oppositional. If the consumerist West is populated by *individus du marché*, the Muslim world is giving rise to, to borrow Haenni's phrase again, an *Islam de marché*. This is to say, that rather than

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65 Mark Liechty, *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-class Culture in a New Consumer Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

rejecting capitalist production and consumption outright, the main currents of thought and practice in the Muslim world are developing their own models of capitalist consumption. These are for the most part system-accommodating rather than system-rejecting.<sup>66</sup> But they attempt to embed the mall, so to speak, in a world of religious ideals – albeit ideals in dialogue with markets and market culture.

All this is to say that Indonesia's new middle class is being redefined not just with reference to shopping, fashion trends, or even social activism, but also in relation to a new and more individualized, but still thoroughly normativized, profession of Islam. As young people experiment with new ways of practicing and experiencing the city through leisure sites like modern shopping malls, their understandings of self and of morality are being challenged and reshaped. What I have tried to suggest is that, even at the heart of modern consumerism's cathedral, the mall, Islam is nurturing alternative forms of middle-class modernity.

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66 See Haenni, *Islam de Marché*; Deeb and Harb, *Leisurely Islam*; and Fealy, "Consuming Islam."



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Sarah Frederick

# The Leisure of Girls and Mothers: Affective Labor, Leisure, and Taste in the Transnational and Transmedia Adaptations of *Stella Dallas*

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**Abstract** Analyzes the cultural capital attached to gendered leisure activity and work in the story *Stella Dallas* as it moves from novel to film and from the United States to Japan to create its own genre of mother melodrama as *A Mother's Song* (*Haha no kyoku*, 1936). By comparing these texts and their creators, the chapter develops an understanding of the symbolic properties of leisure across cultures in the early twentieth century. It argues that various versions of the story use the category of the girl (*shōjo*) to explore a potential space of leisure outside the workplace or the heterosexual family unit. Of course, this space was also easily occupied by expectations that the leisure would cultivate the young woman's taste and domestic skills. Considering a flexible use of the concept of affective labor, the paper looks at the ways these texts used aspirational activities on the edges of "leisure" to negotiate various anxieties surrounding wage and unpaid domestic labor by women in the early twentieth century in relationship to class and sexual identities. A central case is the use of piano playing in the Japanese versions as a multifaceted activity, both work and leisure, that could represent good taste and potential for marriage, while also providing access to professional activity and a way for women to support themselves outside the family structure. In the Japanese case, this allowed them to remain permanently attached to what was seen as girl culture, including aspirations to cross cultural spaces and media, as does the entertaining story *Stella Dallas*.

**Keywords** Yoshiya Nobuko, *Stella Dallas*, women, cinema, adaptation, Japan

## Introduction

Chino Bōshi's playful book *Literary Girl's Companion* takes up works of contemporary literature it classifies as "girls' fiction" (*shōjo shōsetsu*).<sup>1</sup> For Japan, one definition of the *shōjo* (girl)<sup>2</sup> is that she is a "non-worker."<sup>3</sup> Chino's volume itself is a sort of celebration of play and reading for fun in a "girlish" mode. He associates that leisure with the girl and girls' magazines, particularly *Girls' Companion* (*Shōjo no tomo*), which was published from 1908 to 1955.<sup>4</sup> Chino Bōshi's book recasts the term "girls' fiction" from the prewar period to talk about contemporary women writers and comic books, and reflects on what it means to read them as producers of leisure material rather than works of literature and art that could be handled with traditional academic tools. He ends his book talking about his plans to use his own "free time" (*jiyū jikan*) to extend his "study trip" (*shūgaku ryokō*) to Paris.<sup>5</sup> My translation of the term "study trip" is awkward precisely because the meaning lies between work and play, denoting a form of leisure that may result in cultivation and learning but might also result in a product for which the player is paid (here a book). Often behind such trips and leisure activities by a girl is the domestic and wage labor of a parent or other supporter who makes them possible.

It is this ambiguous and gendered interaction between work and leisure that I will explore, in particular the anxieties concerning the relationship between the two as grappled with in the works of fiction and film examined in this article, namely the American and Japanese adaptations and translations of the novel *Stella Dallas*, a story of a mother and daughter's pursuit of cultural capital through tasteful leisure. I should note that these texts and adaptations are fictional representations with different contexts, which each bear their own perspectives on these issues. In fact, the "girl" culture associations of the various American and Japanese, men and women creators of these works frame the perspectives on work and leisure in their work.

In 1920s Japan, we see terms related to the "study trip" above, such as "self-cultivation" (*jishū*) and "cultivation" (*shūyō*), connected with girls and young women. "Cultivation" was a key concept in 1920s and 30s Japan, when it stood at the interstices of work and leisure and was thought to be acquired through a combination of schooling, reading, and white-collar work. This type of work included that performed by what came to be known

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1 Chino Bōshi 千野帽子, *Bungaku shōjo no tomo* 文学少女の友 (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2007). Clearly Chino's adoption of the "girl" stance is playful.

2 *Shōjo* is now taken to be an untranslatable Japanese concept that it is retained in Romanization rather than translated in English language scholarship. See, for example, Frenchy Lunning, "Under the Ruffles: Shōjo and the Morphology of Power," *Mechademia* <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/mechademia/toc/mec.6.html>, 3–19.

3 Chino Bōshi, *Bungaku shōjo no tomo*, 8.

4 *Shōjo no tomo* 少女の友 (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1908–1955).

5 Chino, *Bungaku shōjo*, 218.

as “working women,” *shokugyō fujin*, in what were seen as higher echelon service industry areas such as “elevator girls,” department store clerks, telephone operators, and typists. These sorts of jobs were distinguished from the physically-demanding labor of so-called “factory girls,” *jokō*, who came largely from poor families under a form of indentured servitude and who fueled Japanese economic growth in the 1910s and 20s, particularly through their work in the textile industry.

Many social pundits and educators interested in the situation of upper middle-class women thought the experiences of “working women” should be re-deployed after marriage in service to husband, children, and extended family. Whatever its intentions, “cultivation” necessarily enriched both the work and leisure experience for women of that era and could not but help spilling over beyond the confines of non-wage labor of marriage and childrearing, as shown by Barbara Sato.<sup>6</sup> This quality distinguished “cultivation” from its related precursor, the “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbō*) education promoted during the Meiji period. Compared to the “good wife, wise mother” educational goal, “cultivation” and its companion “hobbies,” *shumi*, were more flexible and less institutionalized.

Indeed many of these working women did not marry, being sometimes able to make that choice due to the degree of financial independence they had gained through their work. Those who did marry came with new skills and interests such as flower arranging, piano playing, and sewing, or routines of service industry politeness, which would be directly employed as part of the affective labor for the household. Others might be more focused on the education of children or self-fulfillment at home. The experiences of these working women would leave imprints on the education of their daughters. While the work of these married women moved into the domestic sphere and separated from wage labor, it also often remained in conversation with it.

As Kathi Weeks and others have shown, it can be remarkably difficult to talk about women’s non-wage labor as much as it has been a frequent topic of inquiry among feminists.<sup>7</sup> Particularly difficult in this respect are the more thoroughly “immaterial” forms of labor, for which Hardt and Negri have proposed the term “affective labor.” Referring to the entertainment industry, they say, “this labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion.”<sup>8</sup> As a category this might

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6 Barbara Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 134–151.

7 Kathi Weeks, “Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics,” *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* 7, no. 1 (2007), 233–249.

8 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 292–293. This form of “affective labor” is connected to the concept of “immaterial labor” sketched by young Karl Marx in his *Grundrisse*.

well extend to self-cultivation performed by women, and perhaps children. Veblen, the first sociologist of leisure, defined leisure primarily as the conspicuous non-engagement in productive labor. He defined the work of servants and housewives who are facilitating the leisure of the gentleman head of the household, but also are not engaged in productive work, as performing “vicarious leisure” or providing leisure for others and enhancing through their own non-engagement in productive labor the conspicuous waste of their master. He writes:

In this way, then, there arises a subsidiary or derivative leisure class, whose office is the performance of a vicarious leisure for the behoof of the reputability of the primary or legitimate leisure class. This vicarious leisure class is distinguished from the leisure class proper by a characteristic feature of its habitual mode of life. The leisure of the master class is, at least ostensibly, an indulgence of a proclivity for the avoidance of labor and is presumed to enhance the master’s own well-being and fullness of life; but the leisure of the servant class exempt from productive labor is in some sort a performance exacted from them, and is not normally or primarily directed to their own comfort. The leisure of the servant is not his own leisure. So far as he is a servant in the full sense, and not at the same time a member of a lower order of the leisure class proper, his leisure normally passes under the guise of specialized service directed to the furtherance of his master’s fullness of life. Evidence of this relation of subservience is obviously present in the servant’s carriage and manner of life. The like is often true of the wife throughout the protracted economic stage during which she is still primarily a servant—that is to say, so long as the household with a male head remains in force.<sup>9</sup>

As Japanese middle-class households in the 1920s moved away from having maids or servants, the burden of providing a fully comfortable domestic space fell on the housewife’s shoulders alone. Magazines, especially *Shufu no tomo* 主婦の友 (The housewife’s friend, 1917–2008) emphasized the need for the housewife to serve as both the efficient “manager” and the servant in the household, providing spouse and children with some space for leisure rather than pursuing their own goals.<sup>10</sup> In the case of a daughter, this may often take the form of creating space to acquire “taste”

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9 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class. An Economic Study in the Evolution of Institutions* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1899), 59. Later he refers to the vicarious consumption of goods such as “food, clothing, dwelling, and furniture by the lady and the rest of the domestic establishment” as a “subsidiary range of duties” executed to enhance the conspicuousness of the consumption of time and substance by the gentleman, *ibid.*, 68.

10 Sarah Frederick, *Turning Pages: Reading and Writing Women’s Magazines in Inter-war Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 85–92. One excellent resource on views about middle-class children in this period is Mark Jones,



through activities that might look like leisure but are in fact training for the affective labor she may perform later in either a service industry or as a wife and mother.<sup>11</sup>

As indicated above, the transcultural aspect of these efforts is important, particularly in the aspirational experience of girls and women in 1920s and 30s Japan. As we see from Chino's examples, the "girl" has been a figure ambiguous not only in her relationship to adulthood and childhood, but also in her cultural location: she is often a culturally hybrid or even cosmopolitan figure. There are some historical reasons for this: the early twentieth-century magazines that helped to popularize the term were very much a part of the Meiji Era (1868–1912) culture that valued culturally Western things. Many of the readers were students at missionary schools and were learning English there, acquiring school routines based on European models. But it was also because the "girl's" leeway for "leisure" made this cultural mix a part of the conception of this figure from the start.

The image of the *shōjo* is that of a girl who has been given the time to consume products and develop skills on her own that allow her a certain fluidity to become more cosmopolitan and move across cultures, but also to cross class divides through education. At least in novels and movies, she often has a complicated family situation (orphaned, mixed marriage parents, foster parents, etc.) that is designed to signal a complicated identity.<sup>12</sup> Her leisure also gives her the time and space for a more intense and broader range of emotions, which in turn allows her to be imagined as empathizing beyond identity markers dear to her parents.

Living during this flexible period between the confines of parental authority and marriage, she was able to explore through "cultivation" multiple possible futures and identities with an imaginary unlimited by physical location. The most mobile of women—generally speaking, the most wealthy—had options such as studying abroad or extensive travel.<sup>13</sup>

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*Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard East Asia Monograph Series, 2010).

- 11 Veblen himself rather stresses the need of the gentleman to acquire the trappings of taste through what in fact is an "arduous application to the business of learning how to live a life of ostensible leisure in a becoming way," which includes learning a foreign language, playing an instrument passably well, and acquiring the capacity to distinguish fine foods from regular fare, see Veblen, *Theory*, 74–75.
- 12 One excellent example is the silent film *Japanese Girls at the Harbor* (Minato no Nihon musume 港の日本娘, Shimizu Hiroshi 清水宏 director, 1933), which uses the space of Yokohama to link the cultural hybridity of schoolgirls going to Christian schools to a biracial character. It also considers how these identities operate across multiple class positions, from a girl who falls into prostitution and lives in a housing project with a house-husband (often shown doing the ironing) to her friend who lives in a house with a picket fence.
- 13 Sally Hastings, "Travelling to Learn, Learning to Lead," in *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender Mobility and Labor in Japan*, eds. Alisa Freedman, Laura Miller, and Christine Yano (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 193–208; Sarah Frederick,

For most, however, this movement took place through the fictional stories and the multiple media, especially photography, recorded music, and film that were increasingly circulating during the first part of the twentieth century. Such stories themselves were leisure material, but they also showed alternate ways of living in relationship to gendered leisure and work.

Considering a case of both cross-media and cross-national translation is useful to understand the specifics of the Japanese situation and Japanese media, as well as for a comparative understanding of the changing relationship between leisure and modernity more generally, particularly as these stories are highlighting changing notions of gender roles and sexuality. A similar trajectory across countries, languages, and media from Victorian England to Japan and China of Ellen Wood's melodramatic *East Lynne* (1860) has recently been followed by Xuelei Huang; my method is similar in focusing on retellings in multiple media, and shares the interest in complicating "influence" relationships. In the media-rich and increasingly globalized nature of media of the early twentieth century, specific stories circulated in conjunction with more general sets of codified images, sentiments, and genres that affect their reception in ways both globalized and localized.<sup>14</sup> For this purpose, I will focus on the travel of a particular novel and film from America to Japan and into film adaptations to consider their framing of leisure and taste among girls and women in 1930s Japan as the plot and the imagery move across spaces and languages.

The product is itself meant for consumption as leisure material, but it also engages in some meta-reflection on the intersection of women's and girls' activities that have a leisure aspect with social change, class, and sexuality. In all versions, we see a distinction between the successful self-cultivation for vicarious leisure on the part of the girl, contrasted with a failure to match the norms of a socially acceptable provider of vicarious leisure on the part of her mother. Ultimately the "mother love" that is a theme in all versions is cemented by the mother giving up the financial support that allows for her own "leisure" and moving into manufacturing labor so that her daughter may develop the wherewithal to rise socially. As a result, the girl is allowed to fully engage in the cultivation of skills and tastes that prepare her for affective labor in an upper-class, cosmopolitan, and cultivated married life. The character of her cultivation as affective labor (or the preparation for it) is highlighted through the fact that the steps preparing her to become a housewife and provider of vicarious leisure are the same that opened the way for her to become a professional entertainer.

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"Beyond *Nyonin geijutsu*, Beyond Japan: *Kagayaku* Writings by Women Travellers in *Kagayaku* (1933–1941)," *Japan Forum* 25, no. 3 (2013): 395–413.

14 Xuelei Huang, "From *East Lynne* to *Konggu Lan*: Transcultural Tour, Trans-Medial Translation," *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2012): 48–84.

## *Stella Dallas*

The American novel *Stella Dallas*, by Olive Higgins Prouty (1892–1974) of Massachusetts, was published in 1923.<sup>15</sup> It was first made into a film in 1925, in a silent version directed by Henry King and starring Belle Bennett, Lois Moran, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.<sup>16</sup> Another better-known film version directed by King Vidor and starring Barbara Stanwyck came out in 1937, followed by a long running radio drama (1937–1955) sequel, which is sometimes credited as being the first “Soap Opera” and was sponsored by Bayer and Double Dandrine Shampoo.<sup>17</sup> There was also a 1990 remake called *Stella* with Bette Midler.

In American film studies, the 1937 *Stella Dallas* is often marked as the quintessential “maternal melodrama,” and was the focus of extended debates among feminist film critics.<sup>18</sup> While the novel began in serialization and Prouty claimed not to want it to be too melodramatic or cliché, it already contains many references to the film culture of which it will become a part. It uses cinematic language “close ups” and people imagining becoming “like folks in the movies.” At one point, the teenage daughter Laurel, who has come to Mrs. Morrison’s house for the first time, has a glance at the elegant living room before she is noticed. “It was like a scene at the ‘movies’ with all those books, and the piano, and the comfortable chairs, and the big portrait hanging over the fireplace, and the pretty lady behind the steaming tea-kettle, and the dog, and the boys (there were three of them in the room. One of them, the littlest one, was seated in her father’s lap)—only it was real!” But as she looks at her father, “suddenly the room faded, disappeared, and a close-up of his face dawned on the screen before her, as it were. Why, her father was gazing at the lady behind the tea-kettle, as if—as if—! Laurel had seen too many close-ups of faces not to recognize that look! She drew in her breath sharply. It flashed over Laurel that perhaps this man wasn’t really her father after all!”<sup>19</sup>

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15 Olive Higgins Prouty, *Stella Dallas* (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1923).

16 Henry King, dir., *Stella Dallas* (Samuel Goldwyn, Inc., 1925).

17 King Vidor, dir., *Stella Dallas* (Samuel Goldwyn, 1937). Lux Radio Theatre, starting off with a one-hour presentation introduced by Cecil B. DeMille (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n1X0s6h1kxI>). It was then restructured to fifteen-minute installments written by the Ann and Frank Hummert’s Hummer Radio Factory, 1937–1955, as “The famous story of mother love and sacrifice.” The source for the sponsorship information is Jim Cox, *The Great Radio Soap Operas* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, 2008), 229–230.

18 Linda Williams, “Something Else Besides a Mother: *Stella Dallas* and the Maternal Melodrama,” *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1984): 2–27; E. Ann Kaplan, “Mothering, Feminism, and Representation: The Maternal Melodrama and the Woman’s Film 1910–1940,” in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 130–135; E. Ann Kaplan, “The Case of the Missing Mother: Maternal Issues in Vidor’s *Stella Dallas*,” in *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*, ed. P. Erens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 126–136.

19 Prouty, *Stella Dallas*, 42–43.

Meanwhile, his story has its own Japanese history. Rewritten as *Haha no kyoku* 母の曲 (A mother's song) by the popular woman writer Yoshiya Nobuko 吉屋信子 (1896–1973), the story was reset in Japan and serialized from 1936–1937 in a heavily illustrated version in the mass-market women's magazine *Ladies' Club* (*Fujin kurabu*, 婦人倶楽部). When this "translation adaptation," *hon'an*, was released as a book in 1937, Yoshiya claimed in the postscript that her novelization was created at the behest of "Mr. Mori" of the Shintōhō movie studio in preparation for a film version.<sup>20</sup> Mori refers to a producer at the studio who was also regularly involved in overseeing the adaptation and translation of stories that had potential for theatrical production. Interestingly, he had also overseen a direct translation (with the original American setting) of the novel *Stella Dallas* into Japanese, collected with *La Bohème* in an anthology of *Popular World Literature* (*Sekai taishū bungaku zenshū* 世界大衆文学全集), a collection itself created as leisure reading for the type of social climbers depicted in the novel.<sup>21</sup>

The film adaptation of Yoshiya Nobuko's version was released as a film in December 1937, starring several famous actresses. As the US version of 1937 with Barbara Stanwyck was only released in August, it is unlikely or impossible that the makers of the Japanese version, with its release date in December 1937, directly incorporated elements from it, even though there are some uncanny similarities. Like *Stella Dallas* in the US, *A Mother's Song* spawned multiple remakes and TV dramas in Japan over the years. Having consulted with both the film studio and the magazine, Yoshiya writes that they were in favor of her "taking the theme from *Stella Dallas*, and moving it into a story of Japanese mother-love [. . .] In both East and West a mother's love is the same. However, I think I was able to depict this mother, who holds on to this ignorant but pure, rich love for her daughter, in a way that will go over especially well in Japan and, without forcing things, transfer the story so that it depicts Japanese customs as well as a Japanese mother, daughter, and husband."<sup>22</sup> While the title character is the mother and not the girl, it is this relationship and contrast between mother and daughter that highlights the position of the girl as being in a temporary space of "leisure" enabled by her mother's sacrifices, and the layers of class, taste, work, and sexuality that surround the girl as a figure developing the skills for refined vicarious leisure in modern Japan (Fig. 1).

#### STELLA DALLAS IN THE US

In the American version of the novel, the drama surrounds the eponymous Stella Dallas, a 30-something mother who has married Stephen Dallas, a richer man who worked as a factory manager in her hometown of

20 Yoshiya Nobuko, "Sakusha no kansō 作者の感想 [The author's thoughts]," in *Haha no kyoku*, in *Yoshiya Nobuko senshū* 吉屋信子選集 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1938), 301.

21 Purōchi プローチー (Prouty), *Sutera darasu* ステラ・ダラス [Stella Dallas], trans. by Mori Iwao. *Sekai bungaku zenshū* vol. 20, (Tokyo: Kaizōsha, 1928).

22 Yoshiya, *Haha no kyoku*, 301.



Figure 1: Cover of Program for Tōhō Studios Nagoya Takarazuka Theater showing *A Mother's Song*, December 1937, featuring actress Hara Setsuko as Keiko, holding a piano score.

“Milhampton Massachusetts” (a fictional hybrid of various Massachusetts mill towns). The man is rather easily seduced by this lower-class woman in large part because he is depressed, having just broken up with the love of his life and fiancée, Helen Morrison, a move he makes because his own family’s fortunes have fallen and he does not wish to make her suffer from his newfound poverty. He and Stella have a child, Laurel, whom he adores. He also rebuilds his financial situation to the point of getting a job in New York. Stella refuses to go with him, preferring to stay behind in Milhampton with her friends, and so that Laurel can remain in the same private girls’ school in their town. Although now raised in status through her marriage to Stephen, she still feels uneasy acting the part of the upper-class wife. To her later detriment, one of her fun-loving friends in Massachusetts is Ed Munn, a horse track regular and drinker with class origins closer to Stella’s own. In New York, Stephen happens upon Helen Morrison as she is riding a horse in Central Park, a clear marker of high respectability and the skills associated with upper class vicarious leisure. Helen is now a widow with two sons, but is still in love with Stephen. Although Stella continues to raise Laurel, making her fashionable clothing

from pattern books and magazines, Laurel looks up to the more graceful and refined Helen Morrison, to whom Stephen has introduced her during a holiday visit.

Stella draws her own models for how to dress and apply make-up primarily from magazines and movies, but these are often incongruous with her actual surroundings. Particularly in the film versions, this excess of lace, frills, bold patterns, and make-up is highlighted as Stella's failing and the visual suggestion is that these are what drove Stephen Dallas away and certainly would drive potential suitors for Laurel away. In many senses, Stella tries too hard, makes too many outfits, and applies too much make-up. She also has poor taste in leisure goods.<sup>23</sup> She likes popular music and cheap fiction. In the 1925 film, she goes for the "latest Elinor Glyn" novel rather than Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*, which has been lent to her by the mother of a potential suitor of Laurel's at a high-end resort to which she has taken Laurel to meet high class people in a leisure setting (Laurel is seen playing tennis, boating, and the like).<sup>24</sup> Eventually Stella sees herself through the eyes of the rich young boys and girls with whom Laurel is socializing and realizes that she must separate herself from her own daughter if Laurel is to be able to marry any of these young gentlemen. She agrees to divorce Stephen so that he may marry Helen and have them raise Laurel together, an arrangement that Laurel only agrees to when Stella pretends to get engaged to the alcoholic and vulgar Ed Munn, who also tends to make lascivious comments toward Laurel. In the silent movie, this is dramatized by Stella frenetically playing the piano while singing a love song to Ed's photo, all as an intentionally tasteless performance to repulse Laurel (while of course this is not audible in a silent film, the images highlight the ineptitude of her playing and her uncontrolled emotional state).

These performances seem genuine—and genuinely abhorrent—to Laurel, but Helen sees through what Stella is trying to achieve based on her own intuition as "a mother." Stella disappears from Laurel's and Stephen's life, and starts working in a factory, getting by with Ed Munn's support

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23 Another important aspect of excess in Stella's behavior is getting drunk (with Munn). This view of drinking as an impropriety for women (but not the husbands of the leisure class) is marked by Veblen: "The ceremonial differentiation of the dietary is best seen in the use of intoxicating beverages and narcotics. If these articles of consumption are costly, they are felt to be noble and honorific. Therefore the base classes, primarily the women, practice an enforced continence with respect to these stimulants, except in countries where they are obtainable at a very low cost. From archaic times down through all the length of the patriarchal regime it has been the office of the women to prepare and administer these luxuries, and it has been the perquisite of the men of gentle birth and breeding to consume them. Drunkenness and the other pathological consequences of the free use of stimulants therefore tend in their turn to become honorific, as being a mark, at the second remove, of the superior status of those who are able to afford the indulgence." Veblen, *Theory*, 70.

24 Elinor Glyn is the creator of the concept of the "it girl." The film is a bit self-reflexive in this way, and one imagines that Elinor Glyn is something probably closer than Bernard Shaw to the Hollywood world of which the film is a part.

(but not in a romantic relationship). Eventually Ed shows her the newspaper announcement for Laurel's wedding. In one of the most famous final scenes of all of the American movies, Helen makes sure that the curtains of their grand home in New York remain open so that Stella, who is coming there to get a glimpse of her daughter's wedding through the window, can see the success of her sacrifice as Laurel marries a young gentleman amidst the rich surroundings inside (notably this famous scene is *not* a wedding in the original novel, but rather a debutante style tea for Laurel—her options remain open and the event contrasts directly with the unsuccessful birthday party that Stella had planned). While Stella is a middle-aged mother and usually analyzed as such, we can also read her entire life motivated by the wish to remain a sort of "girl." This aspect appears in her bearing and in her highly vicarious pleasure in Laurel's success. While her own problems in "taste" are partly due to class and upbringing, they manifest themselves to a major degree in her efforts to remain too girlish for her age. Many have wondered how she could be so successful in making tasteful dresses for her daughter, while failing so miserably when doing the same for herself. But one reason for her failure is that her own clothing is too young for her, and her makeup and hairstyles are depicted as being heavily artificial in order to keep her looking young.

Her girlish dreaming, which is based partly on the movies and which had led her to pursue Mr. Dallas, exceeds the boundaries of decorum. When she and Ed Munn go to buy decorations for Laurel's birthday party, they behave like children on the train, he throwing spitballs and she giggling. Her excessive girlishness is mistaken by others for improper sexuality and bad breeding, while it is largely about trying to hold on to "friends" from her youth and to a sense of play. To others it seems like she is wasting time and is too much at leisure, going about town, even as her real intentions are to help her daughter in securing a match with an upper class gentleman. The enduring marker of her class background is her inability to use the resources made available to her by Dallas to make the best of her leisure opportunities to cultivate herself, even as she succeeds in creating the environment for Laurel to do so. In Japan, this would be the equivalent of failing to apply her "cultivation" properly, even as her dress-making for Laurel meets with some success. The more properly brought up Ms. Morrison is able to fully integrate home decorating, managing the household, bringing up her children, and low-key elegance into the perfect performance of vicarious leisure; she wears lovely dresses, rides horseback without risking proximity to the racetrack, and avoids exaggerating effects in her make-up. As Stella is unable to work out this integration, it is only when she eschews the environment provided by Dallas, supports herself, and removes herself from Laurel's environment completely that Laurel is able to pursue her cultivation unimpeded, unmarred by the uncanny vision of a girlish older woman accompanying her own daughter. A disturbing aspect of the novel is the apparent message that a woman such as Stella, who did not grow up to acquire the skills needed to provide high-end

leisure in her youth, cannot acquire the taste necessary to be accepted as an adult in a different social class. She simply has to return to her original environment, moving from vicarious leisure to work in a factory. The creators of the 1937 film especially explore the tragic aspect of Stella's quandary, building a strong sense of empathy for her that is shared by Helen in a further sign of her social refinement. It is through this fictional and exaggerated plotline of melodrama, of which this film becomes a quintessential example, that Stella is granted some space to be happy and that her awkward but understandable desire to enjoy life a little bit—just as girls and women going to see this movie might—is given the rationale of being part of the self-sacrifice for her daughter. An important key to sympathy for Stella is the clear indication that she works hard to support Laurel's move into the apparently effortless beauty of Helen Morrison's home: we see Stella sewing, ironing, decorating for a party, and so on, even if she has trouble keeping up with all the housework and her home is a bit slovenly. Her domestic affective labor is realistic and visible. This is played out with an important difference in a particular scene in the silent film and the 1937 version. At one point, Stephen makes a somewhat sudden visit back to Milhampton and there is a sense that he comes bearing some warmth or hope for his relationship with Stella. In the silent version, one problem with the sudden visit is the slovenliness of the home. Stella's dressmaking items are scattered everywhere and the kitchen sink is piled with dishes. Stella quickly makes herself up and does her hair, but the performance is not successful. In the 1937 version, however, Stephen comes into a living room nicely decorated for Christmas, and Barbara Stanwyck is wearing the most subdued and tasteful dress and hairstyle we see in the whole movie.

While most analyses of the films are about Stella's bad taste in clothing and read her extravagant behavior (mistakenly) as excessive sexuality, this homemaking work and its challenges are quite important. In 1937, we see a gesture to the aspirations of the moviegoer to truly succeed at these affective labors, but for good measure the scene is followed by the gut-wrenching tragedy of Munn ruining Stella's otherwise convincing and sincerely felt performance. In all American versions, and in the Japanese as well, Stella ultimately needs the space of a resort hotel for her daughter to interact sociably with the right kinds of boys, and she needs to hide away in her room as much as possible. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the place of the black maid in Laurel's household at the birthday party film scenes (in the 1937 version, she is played by Hattie McDaniel of *Gone with the Wind*). In each version, the overlap between Stella and the maid's role is highlighted. In the silent film, a pair of maids are quite comically called in to put on airs for the birthday party, popping up each time the doorbell rings in a highly choreographed way. Barbara Stanwyck's Stella also carefully places her maid, who casts a somewhat doubting expression that seems to question the likelihood that her performance will succeed. Since Stella has grown up as a sort of scullery maid for her own father in their mill town, there is an awkwardness to the two women being together and



sorting who will perform what affective labor for the birthday party, with Stella being jumpy and ill at ease as she waits for the guests where she will try to perform a cultivated caring mother for them. She quickly realizes that the party has already been ruined by gossiping among Stella's friends about her cavorting with Ed Munn—they have forbidden their children to come. This outcome does not seem to affect the maid, though presumably she will lose her job as Stella's status declines. The setting in depression era America and the slippage and tension between working class women and the black servant women is one of the very American aspects of the film. Laurel is depicted in the novel as a girl not engaged either now or in the future in productive labor and she remains so in the movie versions. But in the original novel, her potential future employment in the service industry as a pianist and music teacher rather than providing vicarious leisure for a gentleman from the leisure class is a serious option. Once Stella realizes she must convince Laurel to live with Helen and Stephen in New York if she is to have any hope for marrying up, she agrees to the divorce and pushes Laurel to go to live with her father and Helen Morrison. However, Laurel's sympathy and love for her mother prompts her refusal to leave. She would rather stay and go to work as a stenographer. Stella is upset about this prospect:

A stenographer! Laurel, her beautiful Laurel, shut up all day long in an office, reeking with tobacco smoke? Laurel the servant for a lot of men, taking dictation, taking orders? Laurel wearing paper cuffs and elastic bands and pencils in her hair; eating lunch out of a box with a lot of other girls, also wearing paper cuffs and elastic bands and pencils in their hair? No. No. It musn't be. It simply musn't be. Why, even she herself wouldn't have been a stenographer. [...] It would be like planting an orchid between the cobblestones at the corner of Washington and Winter Streets to stick Laurel in front of a typewriter, inside one of the big grimy office-buildings downtown. She'd get all dust and dirt and trampled and spoiled in no time. She musn't be sacrificed like that! Why, New York would go simply crazy about Lollie. It would exclaim over her, oh-and-ah over her, like the people at the Horticultural Shows over some new amazing flower. Oh, gracious, what can I do? What can I do to save the kid?<sup>25</sup>

Here she sees that her own cultivation work for Laurel, her exhibition piece for the "Horticultural Show," is about to fail and be trampled upon. She has to give up her hobby of mothering the girl to help her marry up and to put her into the hands of those able to make this possible. The failure

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25 Prouty, *Stella Dallas*, 270–271. The quote is already long, but at this juncture, Stella considers suicide, stopping mostly because this would damage Laurel's reputation, particularly given that her grandfather committed suicide as well—it might be seen as a family disposition.

would be her daughter having to do this sort of office work, rather than marrying and taking care of her husband through tasteful affective labor at home. Instead, the plot leads to a distinct opposition in their respective activities: the daughter fully at ease to come out in New York society and the mother working in a sweatshop. The *Time* magazine headline for the review of the silent film was: "Sweat-Shop Employee, She Looks on from the Street at Her Daughter's Debut."<sup>26</sup> Laurel is thus able to go from girl to wife with no interruption, directly applying the good manners and cultural skills she cultivated as a student to the domestic space. We learn no more about their marriage after Stella has witnessed its conclusion from outside the window. Stella's project of raising the girl is complete and the audience can enjoy her "success" while seeing the tragedy of their separation as the necessary condition of this success and joining in Helen's empathy. As Lauren Berlant writes in *The Female Complaint*, in *Stella Dallas* "modern love's promise of transcendence and deracination from the determinations of history are available as grounds for and explanations of dependable life only to people with money. For the rest, romantic heterosexuality provides a motor for class mobility."<sup>27</sup> Although it takes two generations, this is quite arguably the overall message of America's *Stella Dallas*. As Berlant shows, Prouty's later novel *Now, Voyager* and its film version starring Bette Davis more fully problematize the role of heterosexuality in American class, and more fully reflect Prouty's own bisexuality.

Given the leisure culture of film itself at this time, the cinema is much more Stella's taste than that of the prim ladies at the resort or from the private school looking down on her. Via Helen and Laurel's own respect for Stella, the audience's empathy is with Stella as well, even if they might not wish to wear her outfits. In fact, there is even something appealing in Stella's vernacular speech and her "fun" sort of playful taste in movies, music, and clothing. The women at the resort who criticize her are rather stodgy and hypocritical, laughing at her living in another town than her husband, though in one case the woman herself is divorced while, as Stella points out, she herself "is only separated." Again, the film's audience, which showed its appreciation through the box office success, is likely much closer to Stella's world than to her husband's, and while they might wince at her outfits, they know that the inspiration comes from the same magazine advertisements and movies that they are scouring. Again, the echo with audience's own aspirations is strong in the 1937 movie, when Stella tells Steven that she "wants be like all the people in the movies doing everything well-bred and refined." The movie has held longstanding interest in large part because it helps to bring out the inconsistencies in and anxieties about class mobility and self-transformation through leisured consumption of

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26 "Sweat-Shop Employee, She Looks on from the Street at Her Daughter's Debut," *Time* magazine, May 28, 1923.

27 Lauren Gail Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 175.

fashion and beauty products that were part of the late 20s and 30s milieu of post-Depression America. This interest was enhanced by the excellent acting through which both Belle Bennett and Barbara Stanwyck in their respective versions brought out the grotesque as well as the appealing aspects of this misguided and ambitious mother figure.

#### STELLA DALLAS IN JAPAN: A MOTHER'S SONG

Turning to the Japanese version, *A Mother's Song* (*Haha no kyoku*, 1936; film 1937),<sup>28</sup> how are these dynamics transformed in the nearly contemporary rewriting and remake in Japan? Yoshiya Nobuko's "translation" offers a complete resetting of the story in Japan, with Laurel becoming Keiko (played by the great Hara Setsuko [1920–2015] early in her career), Stella the mother named Ine, Stephen Dallas a doctor named Junji, and Helen Morrison a professional pianist named Kaoru (played by another major actress, Iriye Takako [1911–1995]).

Both the Japanese novel and the film are replete with references to and influences from multiple entertainment platforms including the cinema, serialized fiction, book anthologies, radio shows, and live and recorded music, as well as live theater, all of which thematize leisurely consumption of popular culture and its relationship to domestic life, labor, and status during the early years of the Pacific War. Some of the Japanese changes from the original versions highlight related but divergent views of social class, women's labor, and marriage in the two contexts (though we have at least five versions, each with its own context, namely: Prouty's *Stella Dallas*, Henry King's silent film *Stella Dallas*, the adaptation novel by Yoshiya Nobuko *Haha no kyoku*, the film of *Haha no kyoku*, and King Vidor's sound film of *Stella Dallas* with Barbara Stanwyck). The silent film *Stella Dallas* was listed in the top three for 1926 by Japan's major film magazine *Kinema Junpo*, and it is not surprising that the development of Japanese versions found interest.<sup>29</sup> Yoshiya Nobuko was chosen for this adaptation task just as she reached a high point in her popularity. In some sense she resembled Higgins Prouty, author of the original, but she was more famous and prolific in serialized fiction. Yoshiya refers to Prouty in the adapter's post-script as "an American woman writer," an American equivalent of herself.

By 1928, Yoshiya had made enough money from royalties and film adaptations to make a well-publicized trip around the world with her partner Monma Chiyo. Yoshiya lived with Chiyo from 1923 to Yoshiya's death in 1973, and adopted Chiyo in the postwar period. Also of significance to this chapter is that on her return from that trip she went to California and toured Hollywood with Sōjin, a Japanese actor active in Hollywood who at the time was playing various "Oriental" characters (though never Japanese

28 Yamamoto Satsuo 山本薩夫, dir. *Haha no kyoku* 母の曲 (Tokyo: Tōhō Eiga, 1937).

29 Takeda Shiho, *Yoshiya Nobuko kenkyū* [A study on Yoshiya Nobuko] (PhD diss., Gakushūin University, 2013), 125.

ones). Yoshiya had many interactions with the film industry in Japan, including consulting on the Japanese subtitles for *Little Women*, starring Katharine Hepburn (1933). Her daily writing routine involved writing all morning and going to see movies with Chiyo in the afternoon.<sup>30</sup> Her novelization was also influenced by plot patterns of Japanese and “Western” movies (she watched both), and we can imagine that she was adapting not only this particular novel but also drew on a range of related plotlines. While we might expect that Yoshiya as a person with a same-sex partner might alter the plot to suit her own biography, that is and is not the case, just as Higgins Prouty’s own bisexuality does and does not appear in this work explicitly. Meanwhile, the director of *A Mother’s Song*, Yamamoto Satsuo (1910–1983), was a leftist director and student of Naruse Mikio (1905–1969), who seems to have taken on this project for income more than passion for the storyline.<sup>31</sup>

As Takeda Shiho has pointed out, a major difference between these texts is that the mother in the Yoshiya version and its movie adaptation does not herself aspire to rise to the higher ranks of providers of vicarious leisure, even if she sometimes makes attempts to learn certain skills under pressure.<sup>32</sup> The source of the daughter’s own taste is the readings suggested by her father and the school, as well as the cultivation of her own musical talent. Yoshiya specifically writes that her text contests the “good wife, wise mother” education popular in the day, where an educated mother was considered necessary to raise the class status of her daughter. This is why Yoshiya refers to both Ine and Stella as “ignorant” in the postscript to her novel adaptation of *Stella Dallas* in 1936, without meaning this as a criticism. Instead, Yoshiya idealizes a mother like Ine, whose source of mothering is “love” and diligence. She writes in the magazine serialization that this “stupid mother” is one who can be idealized as much as any product of modern education or even the “cultivation” of the workplace, the view that white-collar work would cultivate the taste of a woman for the benefit of her future marriage. This does not mean that she rejects the educational system, but rather that she values other aspects of it, namely the female friendships and humanistic learning that girls experience there. These are not instrumentalized for marriage and family but of value for themselves. This stance on “girl” culture and its life-long value is expressed in her 1921 essay on erotically charged friendships among schoolmates, “Loving One Another,” which argues for a celebration of such friendships (rather than fear of them) because of the positive role they can play in fostering ethical behavior.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps reflecting the leftist

30 Yuka Kanno, “Implicational Spectatorship: Hara Setsuko and the Queer Joke,” *Mechademia* vol. 6 (2011): 287–303.

31 Yamamoto Satsuo, *Watakushi no eiga jinsei 私の映画人生* [My film life] (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1984), 65; see also the translation of this work, *My Life as a Filmmaker* (Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies, Ann Arbor, 2017), 11–12.

32 Takeda, “Yoshiya Nobuko,” 145–150.

33 Yoshiya Nobuko, “Aishiau kotodomo” 愛し合うことども [Loving one another], *Shin shōsetsu*, January 1921, 79–80. To this end, she quotes Edward Carpenter and his views on same-sex love as a kernel for socialist democracy.



Figure 2: Schoolyard as space of leisure and management of social hierarchies.

inclinations of the director Yamamoto Satsuo, even as he worked within a popular film production studio, the film would go beyond the novel in emphasizing the cruelty of educational institutions as they try to incorporate all aspects of girls' cultivation into the broader purposes of the family and the imperial-state.

The opening of the 1937 Japanese film first shows us the schoolyard, the institutional space that frames girlhood, and the students arranging flowers in the yard (Fig. 2). In the next shot, we see the PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meeting of mothers and the principal in a tearoom (Fig. 3).

The PTA meeting includes two important details. First, the room has an Ikebana flower display, which seems to have been arranged by the girl students whom we saw in the schoolyard in the opening shots of the film. It is part of their trained leisure skills that will help them perform their expected work as wives and mothers later. While this might be seen as simple cultural education, the principal's speech makes clear the importance placed on the cultural modeling that the mothers are to perform in order to have successful daughters. The composition of the scene, with the principal in the center and the mothers lined up on both sides, emphasizes the gender division of labor that the school expects after adulthood. In a later scene, Ine also tries to learn Ikebana to please her husband, and her inability to do it well is seen as sign of her hopelessness. The playful space of the schoolyard is constituted by the surrounding institutional buildings, but still allows for free play. In the school's tearoom, the manners learned in school are employed in a more regulated fashion under the guiding gaze of the school principal. Secondly, we see the women drinking coffee out of Western cups. Ine first displays her country background by bringing the coffee to her mouth with the stirring spoon (Fig. 4). From the start, her "taste" is put front and center. But rather than



Figure 3: PTA meeting with school principal, organizing the role of mothers' leisure activities and reading in their childrearing.

putting on airs in public like Stella, Ine is shown as awkward and miserable in this environment. Her only aspirations for tasteful leisure are shown within the domestic setting.

The formal conversation led by the principal is about elements from the mothers' own experiences as girls that might be useful to guide their daughters. The other mothers prod Ine into describing her childhood reading material, which turns out to have been limited and decidedly lowbrow, taken from entertaining storytelling (*kōdan*), including humorous samurai tales. Her admission makes everyone laugh, as it neither demonstrates literary refinement nor displays any of the erudition shown by the other women who for the 1910s would seem to have been highly educated. We do not hear what they read, but we would expect a combination of modernized neo-Confucian moral tales, some Western literature, and perhaps children's stories from modern girls' magazines. But it is made clear that the daughter of this "stupid mother" has actually developed a most refined talent for piano playing.

This formative text by a "writer of girls' fiction" about "motherly love" also shows the effort needed to develop such a skill as playing the piano well, which is commonly associated with emotional richness. It is this exertion for the "cultivation" discussed earlier that results in the difference in social standing between those who have acquired such vicarious leisure skills and those who have not. Though beyond the scope of this chapter, the screenplay for the 1950s Japanese remake opens with the schoolgirls talking about what they might do together during the summer vacation. When Keiko (the counterpart of Laurel in the Japanese version, appropriately written using the character 桂 to represent a laurel of flowers) says she must focus on her piano practice, the other girls criticize her diligence



Figure 4: Ine (Hanabusa Yuriko) displays table etiquette errors when drinking Western tea at the PTA meeting and is scorned by the other mothers.

after she has left: "I guess she's too good to play with us!"<sup>34</sup> This reflects the more ambivalent but central role of the piano playing, an invention of Yoshiya for the story in the 1930s Japanese versions. Importantly, it is this skill that allows Keiko to move across the various public, domestic, and media spaces of the film and across the borderline separating work as a music entertainer and providing vicarious leisure to her family. In the novel adaptation by Yoshiya, Keiko is described first in terms of an image of bourgeois elegance, out of place in a working class house. She plays a lacquered piano, wearing a neatly tied *obi*-belt over a crisp morning glory print cotton summer kimono, looking cool and refined on a hot day. This is a look that is nicely translated into the white polka-dotted dress of Hara Setsuko, the actress playing this role, in the film version.<sup>35</sup> Her mother is introduced as one "we would never guess could be the mother of this lovely *shōjo*, if we did not hear the girl call out 'Mother'." The mother is described as tired and overworked, with an "overly rich voice," and she loudly complains of being hot and overwhelmed by the plinking (*ponpokopon*) of the piano. Her name, "Ine" (稲), meaning "grain of rice" sets her up as a simple girl from the country and foreshadows her later difficulties with the etiquette of eating Western food and interacting with upper class people.

Two kinds of "leisure" for women are contrasted in the mother-daughter pair: the daughter's is that of a student in a girls' school, who studies classical piano and uses polite language while acquiring the skills that will

34 Koishi Eiichi 小石栄一, dir., *Haha no kyoku* 母の曲, (Shintōhō Studio, 1955), scene 1.

35 As suggested by the illustrations in the serialized version, Keiko seems to have been written from the outset for Hara Setsuko, who may be best known outside Japan for her role as Noriko in Ozu Yasujiro's *Tōkyō Story* (1953).

qualify her to provide high-class leisure to the leisure class; the mother's is that of a temporary relief from the hard work of securing her husband's comfort and her daughter's acquisition of upper-class tastes and skills by herself enjoying Japanese popular entertainment, period films, radio storytelling, and popular songs. These, she says, are consumed without much effort, unlike the *Anthology of World Literature* and the *Anthology of Modern Literature*, which her husband had bought her to "better her taste," but which were lacking in pronunciation guides for the characters and were full of long foreign names in *katakana* script.<sup>36</sup> In later scenes, Ine is shown lacking interest in eating Western food or interacting with foreigners at a resort. This lack of higher aspiration in Ine's own leisure pursuits is a major difference between the American and Japanese texts. Rather than attempting to be too girlish, as Stella does with her outfits, Ine maintains her purity as a loving mother by not displaying interest in upward mobility for herself. Such purity of spirit is strongly associated with the "girl," *shōjo*, and with the *shōjo* writer who created this adaptation (Fig. 5).

This addition to the plot works powerfully in a sound film. For Keiko, piano playing is initially a "hobby," *shumi*, but for Kaoru it has become a career. In both cases it is seen as an indicator of good "taste," the terms used for "hobby" and "taste" being the same. In the American silent film *Stella Dallas*, the mother's home also has a piano and Stella herself plays it in the key scene where she performs her "love" of Ed Munn. Laurel is often posed near the piano as if she plays it. In the 1925 American book version that contains stills from the movie, there is a lovely photo of Laurel and her beau on the piano bench.<sup>37</sup>

While this is not a major part of Prouty's written story, it is likely that Yoshiya Nobuko picked up these elements from the visual features of the illustrated book and the silent film, which had been released in Japan in 1927. In fact, these images of the girl playing the piano that we see in the illustrations accompanying Yoshiya's adaptation, as well as in the silent film have been influential in Japanese popular culture, from melodrama to contemporary schoolgirl *anime*. In something akin to Mariam Hansen's concept of vernacular modernism, these visual images of cultured leisure travel across boundaries as they find their way into Yoshiya's novel and its film adaptation in new ways, including the addition of the medium of radio, on which Keiko makes her piano debut (Figs. 6, 7, and 8).<sup>38</sup> In 1930s Japan, a piano was directly associated with Western culture and a bourgeois lifestyle. The whole set of piano associations in European and

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36 Edward Mack shows that these volumes were important signs of cultural capital in this period while at the same time they were part of the spread of high literature into mass culture. See Edward Mack, *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 126, 131.

37 Prouty, *Stella Dallas* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1925), n.p.

38 Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 60.





Figure 5: Keiko's taste in Western dress and rose decoration on the piano is contrasted with Ine's efforts at Ikebana. Here Keiko suggests that her mother move the arrangement to the parents' room, representing also the ways that Ine's cultural accomplishments are socially confined to the domestic and Japanese sphere whereas Keiko's have the potential for personal pleasure, cosmopolitan cultural capital, and professional independence inside and outside the home.

American culture is already present in Japan via literary works and films. At the same time, the meaning of a lifestyle associated with piano playing and its relationship to gender roles is expanding from this original context while continuing to draw on the range of meanings and status ascriptions associated with it. The place of the piano as an "instrument of the middle classes" has been noted by Max Weber,<sup>39</sup> and this is clearly the mode in which Laurel interacts with the piano in *Stella Dallas*.

During the Meiji period, the piano had been a sign of substantial wealth but by the 1930s, a broader range of individuals owned a piano. In her aspirational drive for her daughter, Ine has urged her husband to purchase one for Keiko. From the outset, Keiko's knowledge of classical music is a symbol of her effort at "cultivation" and is contrasted with the mother's ignorance and lack of taste. Her mother often asks Keiko to play something less depressing and more lively, perhaps the "Jaa, jaan jaan, jaan" that one hears at dramatic moments of a radio story show. An early scene in the movie has Keiko trying to teach her mother to say "Mendelssohn's *Gondellied*."<sup>40</sup> Ine tries to learn the name, but when she attempts

39 Max Weber, *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, ed. and trans. Don Martindale, Johannes Riedel, and Gertrude Neuwirth (1921) (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), 120–124.

40 Felix Mendelssohn composed two piano pieces of that name, both of them belonging to the genre "Lieder ohne Worte" [songs without words] which he invented with his sister. The first (Op. 19.6) was published in London in 1932, the second (Op. 30.6) was written in 1833 and published in Bonn in 1836.

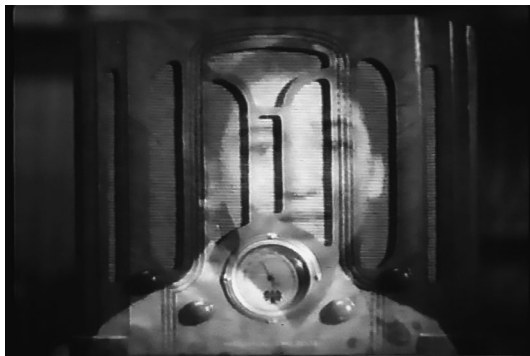


Figure 6: Keiko speaks through the radio to her mother, “Where are you?” as Ine listens to her live piano performance.



Figure 7: Keiko’s face superimposed on the piano, highlighting its important role in in her identity.



Figure 8: Keiko’s face fades into her mother’s, highlighting the importance of Keiko’s cultural accomplishments for her own aspirations as a mother.

to explain to her husband what Keiko is playing, she botches it as Godelied's *Mendelssohn*. The difference is not only between lowbrow and highbrow, but also between pre-Meiji Japan and modern Japan as symbolized (simplistically) by ignorance about and familiarity with western things. In the Japanese film, it is not so much the piano itself but the image of a young woman playing it that is beginning to mean something on its own, including access to Western culture and a sense of interiority and self-direction. Given the references to the husband's work in colonial Manchuria, this knowledge of the west is being deployed in this 1937 film in connection with Japanese claims to special status within East Asia based on mastery of European cultural refinements, an important element of 1930s Japanese imperialist ideology. Orientalist taste already has an important role in the original American *Stella Dallas* novel. Laurel's emerging acculturation and her step-mother's established taste is marked by their knowledge of foreign literature, and, interestingly, also by their appreciation of the opera *Madama Butterfly*. Stephen Dallas is proud of Laurel's cultured taste for art, music, and the exotic when she describes her response when she heard an orchestra play a tune from the opera: "And all of a sudden I saw that lovely Japanese lady in the beautiful white satin kimono on her porch with the pink sky beyond, singing about her baby. The orchestra played it lots of times after that. I asked them to, and it's my favorite piece of music now".<sup>41</sup>

Unlike Laurel, Keiko plays the piano quite seriously, and this becomes a central feature in the plot. Near the beginning of the novel adaptation, Junji has already learned that his first love, Kaoru, is now a professional pianist. Having just returned from Korea, where she has been teaching piano at a mission school, she would be giving a concert right there in Fukuoka that fall.<sup>42</sup> That Kaoru is a professional pianist highlights the link between the skills of a professional entertainer and a provider of vicarious leisure in a family environment. Even when Kaoru is playing the piano on stage and in a professional capacity, her visible cultural sophistication also makes her an appealing enough mother figure (or sister figure) for Ine to pass Keiko off to her, and it certainly is part of her continued appeal for Junji (Fig. 9).

The piano also provides feminine atmosphere in Kaoru's home, where it is surrounded by flowers and Western statues. When Ine first visits Kaoru in the novel, she sees that the whole modern apartment décor works together, from grand piano to Western side tables to a lapis lazuli vase with a yellow rose. Particularly in the film, the piano is the centerpiece of

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41 Prouty, *Stella Dallas* (1923), 32.

42 Kaoru is an unusual figure in the images of Korean mission school teachers, who were usually western or Korean women. The missionaries themselves were often in an ambiguous position, sometimes supporting nationalist movements, but also trying to make peace with the colonizers. As their goal was more to proselytize than to intervene, a (possibly Christian) Japanese pianist might have been an imaginable character. Yoshiya might also have wanted to create a sort of "Westernesque" figure in Kaoru. See Indra A. Levy, *Sirens of the Western Shore: The Westernesque Femme Fatale, Translation, and Vernacular Style in Modern Japanese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).



Figure 9: Professional pianist Kaoru (Iriye Takako) gives Keiko a lesson at her modern apartment.

a glamorous apartment set in high-key lighting. Visually it parallels the architecture of the modern institutions displayed: the school and the hospital, both all bright and white. At the same time it marks a feminine space where only the characters Ine, Keiko, and Kaoru ever appear and never any equivalent of the school principal. This visual similarity between the professional and domestic spaces represents the way the piano is used to present the possibility of a woman supporting herself, no small feat in 1930s Japan.<sup>43</sup>

I would argue that both Yoshiya Nobuko the author (who did not marry) and the actress Iriye Takako (at this point single and successful) represented similar hopes for young women. Kaoru's ability to transform her own artistic skills into a career provides an alternative to the marriage plot ending and an alternative to playing piano simply in order to be a good marriage candidate and create a pleasant domestic atmosphere. Indeed, another important change in the Japanese story is that Kaoru has never married (Helen Morrison was a widow with two sons and a deceased toddler daughter—all used as a basis for her "motherly" potential), choosing to channel her "passion" into the piano and making this a way to support herself. While Laurel's "leisure" is playing tennis, Keiko has instead a "hobby" that might extend across the boundary of work and play. While she does marry a young scientist at the end of the story, he "wants her to continue with her piano career and to be happy," and there is a sense that she could

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43 That the "translator" Yoshiya Nobuko is able to live on her own and support herself and her girlfriend by writing fiction as well as side projects like this translation is also well-known to many of the readers and viewers as well. This comes only from later history, but Hara Setsuko would also become famous for remaining single, and was until her recent death often referred to as an "eternal maiden."

use this skill to support herself should the marriage with which the film culminates not work out.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, Kaoru's piano skills had supported her in a job. After Junji broke off his engagement to her, she took a job in Korea as a piano teacher. Otherwise, she might have fared like the harassed stenographer Stella feared Laurel might become. With the elevated cultural status connoted by the piano and her study in France, and her pent-up passion for Junji, she moves to the colonies to put her hobby to good use to support herself. Her marriage to Junji later means that her piano can finally be transformed into part of her gracefulness as a doctor's wife.

In both the marriage and the work at the Korean mission school, her hobby is part of respectable affective labor that also takes on a more material quality when it helps support the East Asian power balance—the Japanese figure acquires Western “cultivation” and brings it to the Korean colony. Of course, a mission school is not an outpost of the Japanese empire, and it is unclear whether there could be any historical basis for such a character. But in the symbolic layout of the novel, Kaoru's time in Korea has two purposes. One to purify her of her failed engagement by spending time abroad. The second to show her ability to share her European taste with colonial subjects, just as Junji shares his knowledge of western medicine by going to Manchuria to help combat a “new influenza” there. But Kaoru's work remains within a sisterly girl's sphere where she maintains independence, while Junji is sent where he is told. Visually he is placed (by the director, Yamamoto) in hospital settings that are quite forbidding.<sup>45</sup> In the film version, the Korean mission school is not shown framing Kaoru's life, but strong emphasis is given to her status as an independent performer and teacher. Kaoru becomes more fully the type admired by young Japanese women at the time, as shown in the book version through Keiko's girlish crush on her in an early scene where we see Kaoru from Keiko's perspective: “Behind her father, there was a beautiful woman, pure like a white lily and wearing stylish western clothing.” When her father asks whether she likes this woman, she gushes: “Oh, yes, I like her so very much. If she were a teacher at my girls' school everyone would be all worked up and have crushes on her—[...] Junji laughed happily. Indeed it made him happy to see his love, Kaoru, reflected so fondly in the eyes of an innocent girl!”<sup>46</sup>

In the novel version as well, Yoshiya has the Helen Morrison counterpart be not a mother, but a single woman who has never had children. The basis of the empathy between Ine and her is their “women's heart” rather than “mother love.” They also interact in a warm sisterly fashion, somewhat along the lines of the female homosocial sphere of Japanese girls'

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44 In the 1950s Japanese version the groom is an opera singer, which gives a greater sense of shared interests, though perhaps more anxiety about their future together.

45 Of course, the mission school is an institution as well. The imagery is, however, absent, and Kaoru is presented as an independent figure able to go there or not at her own volition.

46 Yoshiya, *Haha no kyoku*, 33.



Figure 10: Keiko's mother and teacher are posed like schoolgirls in sisterly romances as they watch Keiko being courted by a wealthy boy at a resort.

fiction, and this is highlighted in a two shot of the mother and stepmother that mimics the illustration styles of Takabatake Kashō's pairs of girl friends popular in the same era (Fig. 10). In this sense, the two "mothers" are changed back to "girls" and are allowed to maintain some of the *shōjo's* flexibility regarding a future marriage. While technically Kaoru does marry Junji when Ine steps aside, this is barely perceptible in the film version. Her empathy for Ine is very strong and her bond with Kaoru is stronger than in the American equivalent.

Without the conceit that they understand each other as "mothers," they are instead bonded as women, and women who are basically on their own—Junji is usually off in the empire dealing with "the strange form of influenza" rampant there. The "jun" of his name implies purity, and perhaps his efforts are what allows them a pure girlish place in Japan, though this is somewhat speculative. Minaguchi similarly argues for this importance of the kind male character in this film version, though I see it more through his absence than anything else.<sup>47</sup>

The *shōjo* character Keiko does get married, but much more highlighted in the film is her success story as the girl artist. Not only is she able to move comfortably in all spaces of Japanese-style and Western-style homes, schools, and resorts, but she is also able to be present through the air, playing on the radio in public. Meanwhile, the classic melodramatic moment of their marriage, so highlighted in the American versions and Yoshiya's novel as well, is usurped by the powerful scene of Ine listening to her on the radio, a scene with a long set-up that takes up much more screen time than the wedding, and is clearly a "tear jerker." It is here in

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47 Kiseko Minaguchi, "Yamamoto Satsuo's *Haha no kyoku* [Mother's melody]: Making a Father's story of *Stella Dallas*," *Iconics* 6 (2002): 89-110.

Kaoru's apartment, listening to Keiko's piano performance, rather than in the wedding scene, that Ine looks with admiration and tears of joy on her daughter's success.

Although Prouty's *Stella Dallas* is less expansive about the various trajectories for young women than her later novel *Now, Voyager*, we see in *Stella Dallas* an element that is seldom noted, but may have inspired part of Yoshiya's plot. Being released from a guardian role is a key in Stephen Dallas's financial freedom to marry someone like Stella in the original novel, and amazingly, Japan plays a role in this:

If Stephen's mother hadn't died just when she did; and if, on top of that Stephen's sister Fanny hadn't received, in reply to an application she had made to teaching a girls' boarding school in Japan, summons to sail immediately, Stephen's infatuation would probably have burned itself out before he was in a position to consider additional financial burdens of any sort. Suddenly Stephen found himself free and unfettered. There was no more need to send weekly checks to Chicago. There was no more need to send letters there, or to go there from time to time himself. Stephen was entirely cut off from his old associations, his laboring boat had lost even its dragging anchor, and was touching the shores of a country on the other side of the earth.<sup>48</sup>

Fanny herself becomes a "girl" type character who can remain single without relying on her brother or parents and travel to Japan, just as Kaoru went to Korea of her own volition. Going out for this kind of immaterial labor opens up space for Fanny's own experience of travel as a single woman. It also eases Stephen's financial situation and time constraints, which allows him to pursue his apparent sexual interest in Stella. Somehow Fanny also becomes like a character in one of Yoshiya Nobuko's novels.

More broadly, looking at the scholarly discussion of the American movie *Stella Dallas*, we can see critics only recently beginning to talk about the same-sex erotics implied in certain scenes between Helen and Stella, an element that I think is picked up on much earlier by Yoshiya Nobuko.<sup>49</sup> An important aspect of this is that Helen has the manners to put Stella at ease in her home, in a way she never was able to be at, for example, the resort. Obviously, looking at the role played by women as providers of and objects of representation in leisure entertainment across multiple cultural spaces and media can be revealing about how these spaces and media might reflect and be agents of social change. We can see here that all of the texts are on some level conservative about gender roles and marriage—in

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48 Prouty, *Stella Dallas*, 90–91.

49 Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 94–134. She also explores the implications of Laurel and Stella comforting each other in the bunk on the train.

all versions the happy ending is brought about by a girl marrying a man from a good family and her mother getting to see it. At the same time, we can also see that, particularly for audiences such as the Japanese, with access to multiple versions the multiple visual images, plot alterations, sounds, and fashion choices used to represent forms of work, home life, and leisure did open up some space for imagining a range of trajectories and developing empathy for them.<sup>50</sup> After 1937, the “girls” culture came under government attack because of the idleness associated with it and the non-productive nature of passionate friendships among girls. Deborah Shamoan writes: “But by the late 1930s, what had once seemed an innocent way to prevent girls from becoming prematurely sexually active now interfered with the wartime government’s total war strategy. The attack on girls’ culture was not a condemnation of homosexuality but of sentimentality. The *shōjo* was by her nature nonproductive and non-reproductive, but the total war effort could not afford to allow any citizen to be idle, even the formerly protected girl students.”<sup>51</sup> *A Mother’s Song* is produced at the cusp of that shift towards viewing girlhood as underproductive. This suggestion is supported by a change in the 1950 remake: the “other man,” called Ryūsaku (竜作 “Dragon Maker,” evoking an organized criminal) in the earlier version, is renamed Kokusaku (国作 “Nation Builder,” a sort of name only popular during the long Pacific War). His wartime-tinged masculinity is depicted as an impediment to the mother-love and girlhood that came to be seen as the essential element of the story during the previous decades.

At the same time, I would argue that the multiple layers of translation and re-visualizing of *A Mother’s Song* and *Stella Dallas* in the Japanese setting also allowed for other readings. Even from the perspective of the state, there were two separate demands on the former leisure space of the girl and young woman. As Yoshiko Miyake shows in “Doubling Expectations,” during the 1930s and 40s the Japanese state needed both women’s factory labor and reproductive labor, and vacillated in its support for these two contradictory policies.<sup>52</sup> Although piano may be a way to make a living or improve the feel of the household in the early 1930s, it became increasingly associated with leisure rather than productivity. For the creators of the novel adaptation and film, however, leisure associated activities remain an important space for difference and interpersonal relations. In that context, the sympathy for an array of women characters in the different versions of this story—and perhaps especially for the financially

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50 There might be some question of whether audiences in 1937 would remember the 1927 film, but given that it was listed among the top three films in 1927’s *Kinema Junpo*, and seen as worth remaking and adapting in these ways, they might well have done so.

51 Deborah Shamoan, *Passionate Friendship: The Aesthetics of Girls’ Culture in Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011), 56.

52 Yoshiko Miyake, “Doubling Expectations: Motherhood and Women’s Factory Work under State Management in Japan in the 1930s and 1940s,” in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 267–295.



independent Kaoru in the 1937 film—suggests that there was a legitimate space for an independent life outside the constraints of labor as good wives, wise mothers, or workers for the war effort in a way sanctioned by the family-state. While Kaoru does act as a “mother” to Keiko, she is not a part of reproductive culture. Even Ine’s life at the end of the film version is seen as a pleasant one, with Ryūsaku helping her (unlike her single life in the *Stella Dallas* versions). We see her not in the factory, but walking home from it in a relaxed mood, peeping at the happy Keiko from outside Kaoru’s apartment, and listening to Ryūsaku bringing her various good news about Keiko’s radio performance and then her marriage. Ine and Ryūsaku have found a space for themselves as friends and companions who do not seem to be married and each have an independent job, no longer in danger of being laughed at, and eating and enjoying things that are to their own taste. Depending on the creator, attitudes regarding work vary. Yoshiya Nobuko focuses on the mother’s newfound virtue as an obedient worker who does not go on strike and makes sacrifices so that her daughter can have a career as a pianist *and* a good marriage. The wedding takes place on May 1, and there is a mention that this International Workers’ Day is *not* celebrated at her factory. Accordingly, she is working on the morning of Keiko’s wedding, having to rush to go see it. The novel was published just after the “February 26 Incident,” an attempted coup in 1936 that led to a crackdown and the suppression of May Day celebrations.

Meanwhile, Yamamoto Satsuo’s film depiction of the final scene reflects his Marxist inclinations. Altering the famous American film scenes of the mother viewing the wedding through a window, Yamamoto shows her in the lead up to this scene first walking toward the wedding venue in the shadow of a smokestack filmed in the style of Soviet industrial photography. Eventually she is prevented from reaching a point from which to gaze at this scene as she is knocked over by the rich wedding guests in their cars. The plot device of the new stepmother alerting the mother of the bride’s appearance remains, but the cars and the forbidding building keep them apart. The use of the car to separate the privileged from the rejected is a trope in Japanese films of this era, one example being the party parking lot scene in *Japanese Girls at the Harbor* (*Minato no Nihon musume*, 1933) where a spurned schoolgirl wanders in frustration (and in some peril) among the departing cars as a big party from which she has been excluded is ending. Yamamoto’s take reflects more strongly a sense that the future privileged life of Keiko and her chances of performing for privileged audiences come at some cost, not only for her mother, but also for the class of workers of which she is a part.

Returning to the American versions, we see that one of the most disturbing aspects of the final scenes is the way that Laurel’s wedding seems to have to rely on Stella becoming a sweatshop worker. At the same time, one of the most brilliant and appealing aspects of the Stanwyck performance is the purity of her look and the girlish joy in her eyes at her daughter’s wedding. This look captures something of the audience’s own feeling

as spectators, combining their experience as workers, of some sort, and, at this moment in the theater, their feelings of women in a moment of escape into leisure.

## Conclusion

Veblen had focused on the behavior of the “leisure class” and the various layers of people supplying the wherewithal of services, entertainments, status props, and goods. He did not study the leisure times enjoyed by the classes pursuing productive labor. The text, serialized illustrated text, film, radio performances, and film series forms of the Stella Dallas story analyzed here take a broader view. They deal with different cultural layers of leisure pursuits and the tension marking the borders between them; with the labor necessary to acquire the skills to become a high class independent entertainer and/or a candidate for the vicarious labor of an upper class wife and mother, who would then herself also have access to upper class leisure pursuits; and with the laborious acquisition of cultural skills as a condition for a girl’s upward mobility and the emotional and life sacrifices this demands of her mother.

There is a certain self-referentiality in these works, as they themselves are geared towards filling the leisure hours of working urbanites with works that address serious and challenging issues in a melodramatic form. As the likely audiences are girls and women, research that would specify the actual historical reader and viewership would be helpful for an analysis of whether we are seeing a new gendered urban public that is consciously targeted by writers and filmmakers.

There is a clear difference in perspective between mother and daughter in all versions. As the girl engages subjunctively in what the “Theoretical Essay” called “autotelic” pursuits of serious leisure, the mother is committed to the utterly “heterotelic” goal of gaining access for her daughter to upper-class circles and their lifestyle, in which she herself has never felt comfortable. Moving away from this inside perspective to a functional analysis, Laurel/Keiko’s self-cultivation ends up opening the door to her social advancement and a professional career. The Javanese youths acquiring the social skills of being “gaul” in Nancy J. Smith-Hefner’s study in this volume are having a good time in an environment to which they aspire, but for which they lack the means. In a functional perspective, the acquisition of social routines in the mall might serve many of the boys well in finding a white-collar job and might help the girls to an upward marriage. The risk in their real lives is to be drawn into anomic leisure pursuits considered unhealthy by the forces of order, while Keiko/Laurel is depicted as naturally immune to them in the idealized depictions of *Stella Dallas*.

The focus of these works is on the “young girl” period between school and marriage and between a state where the girls’ acquisition of cultural skills is still supported by the work of the parents and the moment when

the options of professional independence and housewife become pressing concerns. It is also depicted as a period of close relationships between girls as well as competition and bonding between women to secure the best future for these girls. As the plot and story, as well as many of the cultural accouterments of lower- and upper-class leisure, move across linguistic, cultural, and media borders they interact with different local audiences and their concerns at the given time.

At the same time, the fact that the original context is the urban United States gives Stella Dallas in Japan a particular attraction, because it deals with a quandary also experienced by the urban classes here, and it does so with the normative cachet of being actually Western rather than westernized. This cachet might also have been important as a cultural protection as the Japanese film version implied a critical take on the government's wartime strategies for women's employment. The creators of these works focus on the interstices between leisure and work to talk about the position of women vis-à-vis class and sexuality in their given contexts. Given the particular context of *Haha no kyoku*—the Japanese government's promotion of women as workers in wartime production and mothers of future soldiers—the insistence on the legitimacy of “Western” cultural skills as qualifiers for professional women entertainers and cultivated wives might be read as a defense of the cultural contribution of the very *shōjo* whose unproductive lifestyle was under official scrutiny.

The smooth insertion of references to the colonial enterprises in Korea and Manchuria might be read as a reassurance that the immaterial labor performed by these women was part of the projection of a beneficial modern Japan. In all contexts, the different players (including those same creators) are depicting leisure as determined by class, are showing that the only way for a girl of lower class background to rise to the upper class is through the cultivation of the cultural skills required at that level for providers of vicarious leisure, and are claiming that while the sacrifices this demands of the mother are heartwrenching, they are unavoidable and necessary.

## Figures

Fig. 1: Cover of Program for Tōhō Studios Nagoya Takarazuka Theater showing *A Mother's Song*, December 1937.

Fig. 2–10: *A Mother's Song* (*Haha no kyoku*), 1937.

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PART III

# Leisure as a Contact Zone

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Yu-chih Lai

# Traditional Leisure in a Globalized Age: Selling and Consuming Japanese Illustrated Books in 1880s Shanghai<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** Living in what became one of the most cosmopolitan cities in China in the late nineteenth century, people in Shanghai were fascinated by various kinds of newly imported urban activities. Shanghai soon became the center of globalized exchanges of leisure products. Its life was often characterized by an attraction to exoticism, which most of the time took of the form of spectacles. In contrast to watching or experiencing spectacles, reading as the most traditional form of leisure also underwent a great change in various aspects.

One of the most significant phenomena in the book industry at that time was the growing interest in Japanese books, most of which were illustrated ones. Therefore, this paper, focusing on the selling and consumption of Japanese books in Shanghai, would situate the whole phenomenon in the transcultural exchange of leisure products in East Asia and the fascination with “otherness” in Shanghai, and try to see why Japanese books, especially illustrated books, were so popular in Shanghai. It also asks by whom, how and what kind of books were chosen for the Shanghai market? Hopefully, this paper will show how reading as the most traditional form of leisure activity transformed itself in that global age, and how the Japanese books, neither the most traditional, nor the most exotic, played out its space in this process of transformation.

**Keywords** Late Qing visual culture, art reproduction, lithography, Ernest Major, *Shenbao*

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1 This essay is partially based on my Chinese article, however, with significant modifications, new structure, and new arguments. See Yu-chih Lai, “Qingmo shi-yin de xingqi yu Shanghai Riben huapulei shuji de liutong: yi Dianshizhai cong-hua wei zhongxing 清末石印的興起與上海日本畫譜類書籍的流通：以《點石齋叢畫》為中心 [The rise of lithography during the late Qing and the circulation in Shanghai of Japanese books of the painting manual type: The *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*],” *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan* 85 (Sept 2014): 57–127.

## The world triangle

As a result of China's defeat at the hands of the British in the Opium War (1840–1842), which ended in 1842 with the Treaty of Nanjing, Shanghai and four other ports were opened to foreign powers for the first time in China's history, leading to Shanghai's transformation into one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the world. Under similar Western pressure, Japan in 1853 finally ended its long policy of national isolation in the face of the threat posed by American military forces under Commodore Matthew Perry. The increasing presence and intervention of Euro-American countries in Asia in the mid-nineteenth century marked the beginning of modern political and economic globalization. Given the establishment of foreign settlements in Shanghai, Shanghai as a microcosm of international society and, most importantly, its experiences in coping with modernity, it made a perfect model for Japan to emulate in the early 1860s. However, the transformations following the Meiji Restoration in 1868 drew attention from China. The *Shenbao* 申報, Shanghai's most important early newspaper, frequently took Japan as a model for comparison with China and paid great attention to its efforts at Westernization. The paper was run by Ernest Major, an Englishman, who quickly expanded its publication formats to include books and periodicals done with metal font machine printing, and eventually an illustrated journal, book reproductions and art reproductions done with lithography.<sup>2</sup> Lithography reproduction can be done in black and white, for which only one stone surface is needed, or in color, but in this case each color has to be printed separately. The Dianshizhai studio used only the black-and-white monochrome. The image, furthermore, can be applied to the stone directly or via a photomechanical process, which also allows for reduction or enlargement of the size of the image. The Dianshizhai only used the latter method.<sup>3</sup>

As a consequence, many Chinese elite members might have been more sophisticated in their knowledge of the world than ever before, but it was actually this simplified triangular framework of "China, the East (*Dongyang*, i.e., Japan), and the West" that framed the daily life of members of the Shanghai middle-class, who wrote traditional Chinese poems, read newspapers, visited Japanese courtesan houses, watched Western plays, appreciated oil paintings, went to Western restaurants, and so on. At the same time, we also observe that these various activities involving different foreign cultures in daily life contributed at this time to the construction of a new worldview. In other words, while the activities of daily life might

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2 On the publication strategy of this company, see Rudolf G. Wagner, "Advocacy, Agency, and Social Change in Leisure: The Shenbao guan and Shanghai 1860–1900," in this volume.

3 Rudolf G. Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire: The Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai Huabao*," in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers*, ed. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 105–174.

appear trivial on their surface, they actually defined one part of these peoples' lives and impacted the way in which they comprehended the world around them and interacted with it.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, we may wonder what everyday life was like in Shanghai during the late nineteenth century. Upon browsing contemporary newspapers, diaries, and journals, we might be surprised to find that the records of everyday life contained in them were almost all about entertainment or leisure activities,<sup>5</sup> such as meeting friends, looking for antiques, shopping for books, carriage-riding, dining at restaurants, going to shows, or visiting sites. In contrast, areas that might seem truly important such as work, family, or religion are barely mentioned. Despite the fact that we *do* see the nascent stages of a professionalization of work among literate Chinese in Shanghai at this time—examples are compradors for Western firms or journalists in Western-owned Chinese-language newspapers—and although leisure activities were clearly on the rise since the 1870s with peace reigning and prosperity rising, it remains highly questionable whether the conscious work/leisure dichotomy that was already shaping the life of the Western sojourners in the city was shared by the Chinese sojourners prior to the 1890s. In the English-Chinese dictionaries published before 1890 and used in Shanghai, the work/leisure pair has not yet stabilized with “leisure” often rendered by terms basically meaning “having free time.”<sup>6</sup> Even by the early 1890s, Shanghai writers of the new genre of entertainment tabloids still felt a need to explain to their readers the Western-style conceptual and lifestyle division between times dedicated to “work” and those set aside for “leisure.”<sup>7</sup>

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- 4 Western material culture, to give an example, re-defined the image of the courtesan in the late Qing Shanghai and these entertainers in turn led changes in urban taste, manners, fashion, and material culture, see Catherine V. Yeh, “Modeling the Modern: Courtesan Fashion, Furniture, and Manners in Late-Nineteenth-Century Shanghai,” in her *Shanghai Love: Courtesan, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 21–95.
  - 5 An 1884 publication by a subsidiary of the Shenbao publishing house might be considered representative of this perspective. It presented Shanghai as a series of tourist sites, see *Shenjiang shengjing tu* 申江勝景圖 [Great sites of Shanghai] (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1884). For a detailed analysis of this illustrated volume, see Rudolf G. Wagner, “Advocacy, Commodification, and Agency,” in this volume.
  - 6 The terms are *dexian* 得閒 and *xianxia* 閒暇. See Robert Morrison, *A Dictionary of the Chinese Language* (Shanghai: London Mission Press, 1822), 252; Walter Henry Medhurst, *English and Chinese Dictionary* (Shanghai: Mission Press, 1847), 783; Wilhelm Lobscheid, *An English and Chinese Dictionary, with the Punti and Mandarin Pronunciation* (Hong Kong: Daily Press, 1866–1869), 1101; Wilhelm Lobscheid, *An English and Chinese Dictionary*, revised by Inoue Tetsujirō (Tokyo: Fujimoto, 1884), 673; and Kwong Ki Chiu, *An English and Chinese Dictionary* (Shanghai: Wah Cheung; San Francisco: Wing Fung, 1887), 194.
  - 7 See Catherine V. Yeh, “Shanghai Leisure, Print Entertainment, and the Tabloids, *xiaobao* 小報,” in *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers*, ed. Rudolf G. Wagner (New York: State University of New York, 2007), 201–234.

As the work/leisure dichotomy only consolidated in the gradual process of an evolving urban lifestyle, it seems best to define leisure in Shanghai between the 1870s and the 1890s as “unregulated time.” It had no fixed slot in the day, week, or year separating it from “work” time, and was actually still framed by traditional socio-cultural determinants rather than the newly evolving Westernized and urbanized Shanghai lifestyle. At the same time, the leisure activities pursued, which could be “of a physical, intellectual, artistic, or social nature,” or even be “non-activities,” such as rest, relaxation, thinking, day-dreaming, etc.,<sup>8</sup> had the potential to act as the playful testing ground for new values and roles first pioneered by figures on the margins of elite society and as the privileged contact zone through which transcultural elements were absorbed. In this way, leisure activities were at the origin of much broader social change.<sup>9</sup>

It is important to note that, in addition to new leisure activities coming from the West, many others that found favor in Shanghai at this time were from Japan or had Japanese overtones. This does not only refer to the new entertainment offered by Japanese geisha or Japanese teahouses, but for the more aesthetically minded illustrated Japanese books. Starting in the 1880s, the *Shenbao* newspaper carried many advertisements for such books.<sup>10</sup> Judging from the frequency of such advertisements, the popularity of them was surprisingly greater than that of translated Western books.

In contrast to the better-studied Western presence in Shanghai, the present study is interested in the convergence and divergence of the modernization process in East Asia and the intricate shaping of the new worldview beyond the two poles of China and the West. These will try to decipher the complicated mindset and internal contradictions associated with a worldview formed by the triangular relationship between China, Japan, and the West during this vibrant time. Rather than focus on the political motives, the visible West, or the fascination with sensationally new imported wonders, it will explore the place of Japan in more traditional leisure products and activities in daily life during this early period, especially illustrated books (or painting manuals, *huapu* 畫譜) imported from Japan.

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8 For example, see Nicole Samuel, “The Prehistory and History of Leisure Research in France,” in *Leisure Research in Europe: Methods and Traditions*, ed. H. Mommaas, H. van der Poel, P. Bramhan, and I.P. Henry (Wallingford: CAB International, 1996), 12.

9 The relationship between leisure and social change was the theme of one of the workshops leading up to the present volume. It is discussed in the “Theoretical Essay” concluding this volume under the proposition “The time/space of leisure is the privileged environment for the ‘new’.” One of the best case studies demonstrating the interplay between these two is Catherine V. Yeh’s *Shanghai Love*.

10 During the same period, the *Shenbao* also carried many advertisements about other Japanese leisure offerings such as restaurants and acrobatic shows, see Xie Wei 謝薇, “Shinmatsu minchō Shanghai ni okeru Chūgokuga shinbun no Nihon kōkoku to shakai seikatsu yōshiki no henshen (1861 nen ~ 1914 nen) 清末民初上海における中国語新聞の日本広告と社会生活様式の変遷 [Japanese newspaper advertisements in Chinese newspapers in late Qing and early Republican Shanghai and changes in the forms of social life],” *Wakumon* 23 (2013): 29–42.

These illustrated books, although conventionally called painting manuals, were both, guides for the study of drawing, and objects of visual pleasure and appreciation.<sup>11</sup> Hopefully, this study will show how book perusal as the most traditional form of leisure activity was transformed in that global age, and what role Japanese illustrated books, which neither the traditionally Chinese nor utterly exotic, played in this process.

### Publishing *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*

An exemplary case to illuminate what kind of Japanese illustrated books circulated in Shanghai and how they were appropriated in the Chinese context is the painting manual *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*, a lithography print compiled by the Dianshizhai subsidiary of the *Shenbao* publishing company that also published the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.<sup>12</sup> There are two editions, one from 1881, the other from 1886,<sup>13</sup> the second edition being one of the most popular, most widely circulated, and most frequently reproduced painting manuals from the time it was published until even today.<sup>14</sup> The version available to scholars in libraries is either the 1886 edition or reprints of it. The 1881 edition is extremely rare.<sup>15</sup> It came out just after the Dianshizhai lithographic studio had started operation and might have been a first test of the technology and the market with a small print run. The success came with the 1886 edition. The two editions, however, are not identical, but characterized by many differences in the structure, categorization of the images, form of the typesetting, the editorial strategy, and even the details of the images themselves. Interestingly, the most significant changes will be found in the Japanese images that were included into this painting manual and redone for the second edition. Because these Japanese paintings are not marked as such they have neither been identified by scholarship nor have the sources of many of them in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Japanese painting manuals or illustrated books

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11 For the consumption of painting manuals and related visual products as important leisure products in Shanghai during this period, see Jonathan Hay, "Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-century Shanghai," *Art at the Close of China's Empire, Phoebus Occasional Papers in Art History* 8 (1998): 134–188.

12 *Dianshizhai conghua* 點石齋叢畫 (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1881, 1886). The Dianshizhai specialized in the lithography reproduction of paintings and calligraphy as well as previously inaccessible old Chinese books. Since 1882, it published the first, and very successful, commercial illustrated paper in China, the *Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報 [Dianshizhai pictorial].

13 The preface of the second edition is dated in the eleventh month of the eleventh year in the Guangxu reign (i.e., December 6, 1885 to January 4, 1886) and was printed in the twelfth month of the same year (January 5, 1886–February 3, 1886). Some scholars erroneously took the eleventh year in the Guangxu reign as 1885 and mistakenly referred to this as its publication date. I will refer to the second edition as the 1886 edition.

14 More than seven reprints have come out since the 1970s.

15 I am grateful to Rudolf G. Wagner to make this 1881 edition accessible to me from his private collection.

been traced. Most importantly for this study, because of the inaccessibility of the 1881 edition, it has not been noticed that these two editions adapt and fashion these Japanese images in very different ways.

What might have prompted those changes? The remaking of the first edition in 1886 must have corresponded to a more precise grasp of the “reader’s expectations,” and this led to the popularity of the second edition. A comparison of the ways in which these two editions handled Japanese images will show how the presentation of Japanese images and related Japanese books was adjusted to the reception and consumption by Chinese readers steeped in a largely traditional mode of leisure pursuits.

Why, however, would the Dianshizhai publishing company compile such a traditional Chinese painting manual that included so many Japanese images in the first place? The preface to the 1881 edition by Ernest Major, the British manager of this company who was crucially involved in deciding all aspects of the publications of the Shenbao publishing company to which the Dianshizhai belonged, gives some clues about the selection criteria, the compilation process, his personal role in it, and the place of the *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* in the lives of the anticipated readers :

It has always been true that only the action of illustrations and paintings is capable to enlarge one’s mind and express one’s feelings about the live action of nature’s mysteries. When painting human figures, to achieve utmost likeness of their features, when painting landscapes to get their atmosphere completely realistic, when painting birds and beasts, grasses and trees as well as insects or fishes to completely show their development according to the particular situation. Even all the great figures of the Tang and Song [i.e. painters and writers] also never failed to heed this principle.

I have always liked painting but have no skill in applying the brush. Whenever I came across painting books (*huaji* 畫籍) by famous people, I would purchase the all for my collection. Last autumn, I went to Japan and when I went out to the bookstalls, I saw some (works as precious as) “pieces of gold and jade”. Although not undamaged, they were all done by famous artists, so I returned only after having bought them all. Combining them with my previous collection of many years, I assembled them into book volumes and added some pages with recent famous rubbings from stone, divided it into twelve chapters and gave it the title “Dianshizhai conghua [Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings].” [We] used photo-lithography imported from the West to reduce it to the small pocket-size (*xiuzhen* 袖珍) format as this is easier to take along when travelling. The delicacy and refinement of the brushstrokes and the way in which the expression is revealed [in the original] are perfectly matched [by lithography]. Browsing through it lets one form a composition in one’s mind with the spirit roaming beyond the conventional. This greatly contributes to artists’ exploring new ways. As printing was about to finish, I have

added some words to share with other art lovers. Recorded in May, the summer, of the xinsi year (1881) of the Guangxu reign, by the Master of Dianshizhai. Meicha [=Major] (seal).<sup>16</sup>

Major was an art lover and collector. He argued that images were the ultimate means to express the life of nature. He apparently asserted a Western “realistic” approach to every genre of it and insisted that the Tang and Song masters also held the same point of view on painting. He went to Japan in the autumn of 1880 and collected “pieces of gold and jade” by famous artists. These new acquisitions, combined with his old collection and some recent famous works, constitute the main body of *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*. The book was made with photo-lithography and miniaturized in size for the convenience of travel. Major defined it as a kind of guidebook or reference to help artists meditate on compositions, etc., thereby functioning like a traditional painting manual. Here, Major consciously marketed his experience in Japan, especially the foreignness and rarity of those Japanese sources.

What specifically do those Japanese “pieces of gold and jade,” his old collection of famous “painting books” and recent famous ink rubbings from stone refer to? The twelve chapters in 1881 edition have headings defining the topic of the paintings. Some are taken from familiar themes of paintings such as *The Twenty-four Exemplars of Filial Piety*, others from sayings of famous poets, and still others were newly created.<sup>17</sup> They do not seem to follow any known system of categorization.

The majority of the images are actually culled from Japanese illustrated books, such as the seven sets of *Illustrations of Tang Poetry* (1788–1836), the last two of which were illustrated by Hokusai (1760–1849);<sup>18</sup> the *Japan's*

16 Dianshizhai zhuren zhuren 點石齋主人 (Ernest Major), “*Dianshizhai conghua xu* 點石齋叢書序 [Preface to the *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*],” in *Dianshizhai conghua* 點石齋叢書 (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1881), vol. 1, 1a–b.

17 These headings are *Qunxian gaohui* 羣僊高會 [Lofty gathering of immortals], *Youmu chenghuai* 遊目騁懷 [Letting the eyes roam and give free rein to one’s feelings], *Neng yi wo qing* 能移我情 [Apt to change my sentiments], *Ershisi xiao* 二十四孝 [The twenty-four exemplars of filial piety], *Zui fangrong* 醉芙蓉 [Intoxicated by fragrant hibiscus], *Li Yaomen Baijie tu* 李躍門百蝶圖 [Li Yaomen’s Hundreds of Butterflies], *Chunse hong han* 春色紅酣 [Intoxicated by the red of spring colors], *Ji bei kong qun* 冀北空羣 [Northern Hebei emptied of all talents], *Qian yan jing xiu* 千巖競秀 [Myriad crags vying in splendor], *Qixiang wanqian* 氣象萬千 [Myriad shifting scenes], *Ru gu han jin* 茹古含今 [Taking in the ancient while cherishing the contemporary], and *Chao yu xiangwai* 超於象外 [Beyond representation]. *Northern Hebei Emptied of All [Talents]* refers to a preface by the Tang Dynasty essayist Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824 CE), which said that after the famous horse groom Bole visited Hebei, all the best horses were taken away. It mainly contains images related to frontier subjects. *Letting the Eyes Roam and Give Free Rein to One’s Feeling* is a quotation from the famous calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361 CE). The last two chapters, i.e., *Taking in the Ancient while Cherishing the Contemporary* and *Beyond Representation*, incorporate mainly works by contemporary Shanghai artists, such as Hu Gongshou 胡公壽 (1823–1886) and Ren Bonian 任伯年 (1840–1896).

18 *Tōshisen ehon* 唐詩選畫本 (Tokyo: Susebō, 1788–1836). Set one was annotated by Kobayashi Shinbei 小林新兵衛 and illustrated by Tachibana Sekiho 橘石峰

*Famous Mountains, Illustrated* (about 1802);<sup>19</sup> the *Meishu Painting Manual* (1810);<sup>20</sup> *Fuyō Drunk with Paintings* (1809);<sup>21</sup> and *Classified Illustrations of the Twenty-four Exemplars of Filial Piety* (1843), as well as *Kaisen's Eighteen Ways of Delineation* (1861).<sup>22</sup>

We can identify images from at least twelve Japanese illustrated books or book sets, some of them with many different illustrators. Most of them are illustrated woodblock printed books done by Japanese literati or Nanga painters active in the first half of the nineteenth century. Except for Oda Kaisen's two books, which were included in their entirety and in their original order, all other Japanese images were rearranged into the new categories. The Japanese "pieces of gold and jade" of Major's preface actually refer to Japanese painting manuals of the Edo period. In the same context, Major's old collection of "painting books" also refers to Chinese painting manuals, rather than actual paintings. But what do his "recent famous rubbings from stone" refer to?

## Competition in the market of art reproduction

Art historians have noticed the involvement of Shanghai artists with the Shenbao guan Publishing House and pointed out how the new technology of reproduction might have had a great impact on artistic practices and

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(1788–1805); the second, published in 1790, was annotated by Kobayashi Shinbei and illustrated by Suzuki Fuyō 鈴木芙蓉 (1752–1816); the third came out in 1791 with annotations by Kobayashi Shinbei and illustrations by Takada Enjō 高田円乘; the fourth came out in 1793, annotated by Kobayashi Shinbei and illustrated by Kitao Kōsuisai 北尾紅翠齋 (1739–1820); the fifth was published in 1832, annotated by Takai Ranzan 高井蘭山 (1762–1838) and illustrated by Komatsubara Suikei 小松原翠溪 (1781–1834); the sixth and seventh sets were annotated by Takai Ranzan and illustrated by Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北齋 (1760–1849) and came out in 1833 and 1836 respectively. The whole collection had thirty-five sets. For an introduction to the whole set, see *Hokusai no ehon sashie* 北齋の繪本插繪 [Hokusai's book illustrations], ed. Nagata Seiji 永田生慈, (Tokyo: Iwasaki bijutsusha, 1987), vol. 2, 6, and 94.

- 19 Tani Bunchō 谷文晁 (1763–1840), *Nihon meizan zue* 日本名山圖會 [Japan's famous mountains, illustrated] (Osaka: Bun'eidō, preface 1802), Waseda University collection.
- 20 Ōhara Tōno 大原東野 (1770–1840), *Meishu gafu* 名數畫譜 (Wakayama: Obiya Ihee, 1810). For an introduction to this book, see *Kindai Nihon kaiga to gahu, eden-hon den* 近世日本繪畫と畫譜・繪手本展 [Modern Japanese painting and painting manuals, an exhibition of paintings], ed. Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan 町田市立國際版畫美術館 (Tokyo: Machida shiritsu kokusai hanga bijutsukan, 1990), chapter 2, 172–173.
- 21 Suzuki Fuyō 鈴木芙蓉 (1752–1816), *Gazu sui Fuyō* 画図醉芙蓉 (Edo: Suhara-ya Ihachi, 1809).
- 22 *Bunrui nijūshīō zu* 分類二十四孝圖 (Kyoto: Yoshitaya jiyōe, 1843) and *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō* 海僊十八描法 (Kyoto: Kaisen an, 1861) (Ritsumeikan University collection). Both came from the hands of Oda Kaisen 小田海僊 (1785–1862). For an introduction to Oda Kaisen and his painting manuals, see *Oda Kaisen den* 小田海僊展 [Oda Kaisen exhibition], ed. Shimonoseki shiritsu bijutsukan 下関市立美術館 (Shimonoseki shi: Shimonoseki shiritsu bijutsukan, 1995).



visual culture in Shanghai.<sup>23</sup> This was followed by Rudolf Wagner's more comprehensive study of Major's use of the new lithography technology for the reproduction of texts and images, especially of traditional Chinese art works of ink painting and rubbings and of works by contemporary Shanghai painters, as well as the impact of his business strategies on the development of publishing in the Shanghai International Settlement.<sup>24</sup>

Roberta Wue further elaborated on the cooperation of Major's Shenbao guan company with contemporary Shanghai artists since his founding of the lithography studio Dianshizhai in 1879. Lithography allowed for the reproduction of black-and-white ink paintings and rubbings with a precision that made them practically indistinguishable from the originals, a point stressed in the Company's advertisements. Focusing on Ren Bonian's collaboration with the Dianshizhai Studio she points to the wide range of choices of reproductions of Ren Bonian paintings offered in the *Shenbao* and *Dianshizhai Pictorial* advertisements, which included the option for customers to buy the paintings mounted and/or handcolored. "Customers," she wrote, "had the chance to purchase a mass-produced Ren Bonian, just as attractive as the genuine article yet economically priced."<sup>25</sup> Ren Bonian's paintings are just one example from a wide range of paintings, calligraphy works, and stele rubbings from different times and artists that were offered in reproduction. An early list of such reproductions from 1879 shows, besides works by Ren Bonian, others by masters such as Li Gonglin 李公麟 (Song, 1049–1106), Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (Yuan, 1254–1322), and Dong Qichang 董其昌 (Ming, 1555–1636), in addition to lithographic reproductions of earlier woodblock painting manuals.<sup>26</sup> Is it possible that the "recent famous ink copies" refers to these lithography reproductions?

There are two reasons to support this argument. First, we do not see any invitations before 1881 by the Dianshizhai Studio to contemporary artists to produce painting manuals, sketches, or any images in the format that we see in *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*. Second, the lithography reproductions of painting manuals in the 1879 advertisement are based on the original woodblock-printed painting manuals, such as *Album of*

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23 See Hay, "Painters and Publishing in Late Nineteenth-century Shanghai," 163; Wu Fangzheng 吳方正, "Wan Qing sishi nian Shanghai shijue wenhua de jige mianxiang: yi Shenbao ziliao weizhu kan tuxiang jixie fuzhi 晚清四十年上海視覺文化的幾個面向——以申報資料為主看圖像機械複製 [Some trends in Shanghai visual culture during last forty years of the Qing—a look at the mechanical reproduction of images primarily based on Shenbao materials]," *Renwen xuebao* 26 (December, 2002): 49–95.

24 See Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire"; see also his "Advocacy, Commodification, and Agency in Leisure Products" in this volume.

25 Roberta Wue, "Selling the Artist: Advertising, Art and Audience in Nineteenth Century Shanghai," *The Art Bulletin* 91, no. 4 (2009): 469.

26 Shenchang zhuren 申昌主人 [Ernest Major], *Dianshizhai yin shu hua bei tie dui* 點石齋印書畫碑帖對 [Dianshizhai lithography prints of books, paintings, rubbings, calligraphy and antithetical couplets, loose leaf insert in the copy of the Kansai University collection of Shenbao guan 申報館, ed., *Xu Shumu* 續書目 [Books on sale, sequel] (Shanghai: Shenbao guan, 1879).

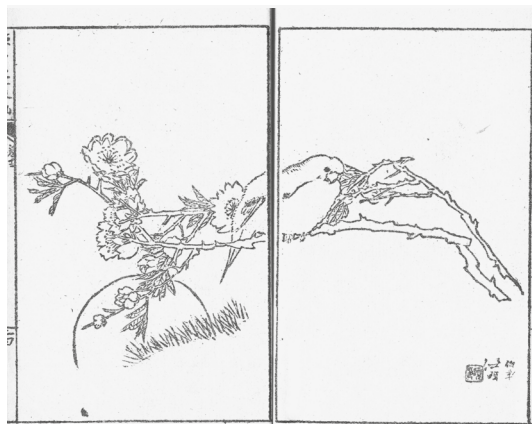


Figure 1: Ren Bonian, a leaf of bird and flower painting, in 1881 edition of *Dianshizhai conghua*.

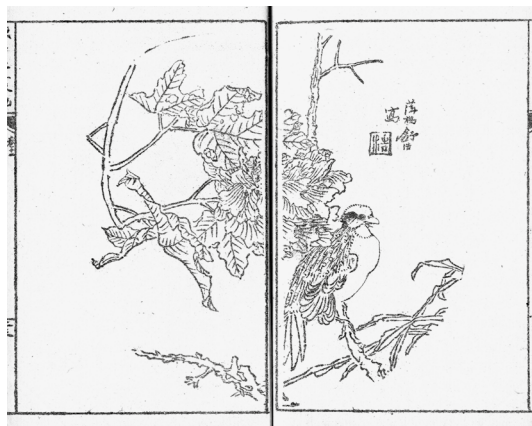


Figure 2: Su Qiaopin, a leaf of bird and flower painting, in 1881 edition of *Dianshizhai conghua*.

*Paintings from the Hall of Endless Laughter and Portraits and Biographies of Illustrious Forebears from Yuyue.*<sup>27</sup> Actually, if we take two leaves of bird-and-flower paintings by Ren Bonian (Fig. 1) and Su Qiaopin 舒橋萍 (Fig. 2) from chapter 12 of the *Assorted Paintings* as an example, we find that the quality and movement of the brushstrokes look very similar, despite the fact that they are supposedly by two different artists. The brushstrokes in both works appear to be awkward, rugged, tuneless, and occasionally

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27 Zhou Shangguan 周上官 (1665–), *Wanxiao tang huazhuan* 晚笑堂畫傳 and *Yuyue xianxian zhuan tu* 於越先賢傳圖. Library searches did not show a Shenbao guan print, but because the *Dianshizhai* subsidiary was established in 1879 and this is the date of the advertisement, it must be the publication date.

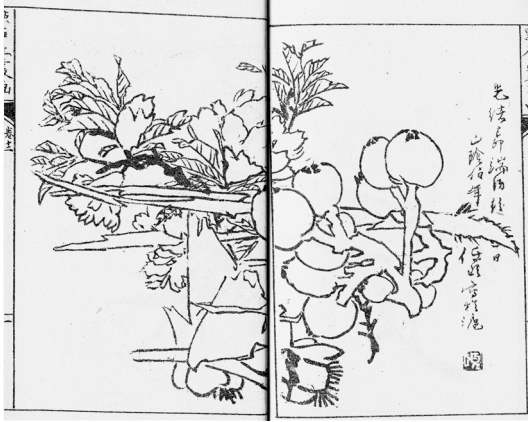


Figure 3: Ren Bonian, a leaf of loquat branches painting, in 1881 edition of *Dianshizhai conghua* printed in lithography.

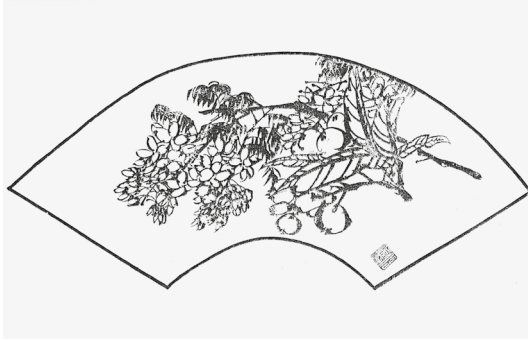


Figure 4: Ren Bonian, a leaf of loquat branches painting, in wood-block print.

with a hard angle. This is most likely due to the fact that these lithography images of woodblock transcribed the original paintings in a painting manual. One more piece of evidence to reinforce our argument is the leaf depicting loquat branches by Ren Bonian also in chapter 12 (Fig. 3).

Apparently, the transcriber was a careless and somewhat mediocre craftsman, who probably used a semi-transparent piece of paper on top of the original image, merely transcribing the outlines of the image. Moreover, he not only simply left everything blank inside the contours, he also failed to figure out the spatial relationship between the branches. This odd incompleteness becomes even more evident when the leaf is compared with a depiction of the same subject also by Ren Bonian from a wood-block-printed painting manual (Fig. 4), where the woodblock carver transcribed the image in a more precise way, delineating a clear relationship between the loquat leaves, fruits, and branches, but still with the inevitable traces of the angular and hard edges coming with the carving process.

In short, the “recent famous ink copies” referred to in the 1881 edition should be works photo-lithographically reproduced from woodblock prints of contemporary artists’ painting manuals based on in Major’s collection that offered hand-transcribed reproductions of the originals.

As mentioned earlier, most of the contemporary works are included in chapters 11 and 12. Browsing through them, we find most of the formats are leaves rectangular or fan in shape. Some of them are even closely related in subject and seem to come from serials. These formats are very different from the lithographic reproductions of paintings listed in the advertisement, which are almost all hanging scrolls. Therefore, the “contemporary” works included should be reproduced from Major’s collection of traditional woodblock print manuals of paintings published by contemporary Shanghai artists, not from the originals or previous lithographic reproductions.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to note that lithography uses simple chemical processes to reproduce images. In contrast with woodblock printing, in which images are reproduced through the carving process, lithography basically has the image drawn with oil, fat, or wax onto the surface of the lithographic plate and uses the immiscibility of oil and water to reproduce the image faithfully. Without the mediation of a knife as in the woodblock printing process, lithography is able to reproduce the feeling of handwriting by either painting directly on the stone or photo-transcribing the original painting on the stone. However, if the base copies are still woodblock prints including prints of blocks transcribed by awkward craftsmen, the “faithfulness” of lithography could only reproduce whatever the woodblock edition offered. In other words, the 1881 edition of *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* was a pioneer in the sense that it was most likely the first to apply the newly imported technology of lithography to the genre of the traditional painting manuals. Moreover, in addition to reproducing the images directly from woodblock prints, the Dianshizhai Studio tried to involve craftsmen to hand-transcribe some originally woodblock-printed painting manuals to create a softer sense of hand-drawing, though the poor quality of these transcriptions makes them even more remote from the originals.<sup>29</sup> Thus, despite the fact that Dianshizhai had the most advanced means and most innovative ideas for duplicating images faithfully, without the original or “faithful images” of the original, the results would only be faithful reproductions of unfaithful images.

It did not take very long for Dianshizhai Printing House to rectify this problem and realize how to take full advantage of the technology of lithography in the art field. Instead of using old woodblock prints as base copies,

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28 According to Wagner’s research, Major was a Chinese art lover and many collectors of the Jiangnan area sent him original art works to be reproduced. Major eventually asked Xu Jiali 徐家禮 to copy those works with his brush (rather than lithography) and later serialized Xu’s copies as free lithography inserts in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* starting in February 1889 (no. 178). See Wagner, *Joining the Global Imaginaire*, 154–155.

29 For examples, see Yu-chih Lai, “Qingmo shiyin de xingqi,” 111.

it started to invite contemporary painters to provide their drawings directly for reproduction. Major's announcement on February 28, 1885, of a delay in the beginning of inserting instalments of a painting manual in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* gives the details:

Because the two provinces of Suzhou and Hangzhou are rich in famous painting, our company has asked Ren Bonian, Ren Fuchang, Sha Shanchun, and Guan Quan to draw refined works of personalities, flowers, birds, and beasts. Originally we planned to insert at the beginning of the second issue of *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in the new year, corresponding to issue number 31 a painting entitled *Running into Rain* free of charge and from then on send out [new inserts] continuously with each new issue so that one can bind them all together or form topical sets. Later, if one accumulates enough of them, they can be mounted into albums. Someone doing copies might use [these albums] as a painting manual, but they are also perfect for the cultivated man to indulge himself by just opening and enjoying them in front of a bright window on a clean desk. Because too many things were going on during the first month of the years, we did not finish the photographs. Therefore, [the beginning of the inserts] has been rescheduled and they will be sent out [beginning] with issue number 32 on January 26.<sup>30</sup>

The inserts in the successive issues could be taken out to be bound together into a painting manual as reference for those practicing painting or as pleasure for the eye for the "cultivated gentleman," *yaren* 雅人. It will be a new manual with paintings by some of the best-known contemporary artists from the area such as Ren Bonian, Ren Fuchang (Xun 薰, ca. 1835–1893), Sha Shanchun (Fu 馥, 1831–1906), and Guan Quan (Nianci 念慈, –1909). This *Pictorial* insert series was not a first. During the Sino-French War in 1884, the *Shenbao* newspaper had inserted, free of charge, a map of Vietnam to allow people to follow events, and the *Pictorial* itself had started free inserts of texts with their own illustrations shortly after it began publication with the first such insert in issue no. 7 in June 1884.<sup>31</sup> It was a marketing strategy, and the free inserts were announced on the cover page with statements such as "attached illustrated texts and painting manual [parts] as supplements free of charge."<sup>32</sup> Importantly, these lithography inserts were not reproduced from extant woodblock-prints,

30 Shenbao guan zhuren (Ernest Major), "Fensong huapu yuqi 分送畫譜預啟 [Announcement of the impending free insertion in instalments of a painting manual (into the *Dianshizhai Illustrated*)]," *Shenbao*, February 28, 1885.

31 See Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire," 117–118, 126, 145, and fn. 84.

32 "Zengfu tushuo huapu, gai bu jia jia 增附圖說畫譜, 概不加價," see the announcement on the cover page of *Dianshizhai huabao* issue 51 dated eighth month, Guangxu 11, first decade, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.timetw.com/19860.html>. The "illustrated texts" were serialized writings by authors such as Wang Tao. They also could later be bound separately.

but were based on newly painted images by these artists, which allowed the brushstrokes of the artists to show rather than their translation into the carver's cuts.

It must indeed have been a sensation. We need to remind ourselves that painting manuals were mostly simple drawings showing only lines, compositions, and brushstrokes. Given lithography's strength in using simple chemical processes to faithfully recreate images, it could even reproduce the feel of hand guiding the brush through the photolithography based on the original paintings or drawings. The softness and carefree movement of the lines in the *Pictorial* inserts by Ren Xun depicting a lion and a deer are a good example (Fig. 5). The imagery of these inserts, which come without the frame usually seen in the traditional painting manuals, looks like a cartoon, or *gao* 稿, with its unusually spontaneous brushwork as well as composition. Given the accuracy of the lithography reproduction, it could be almost taken for an original. One striking example is the colored print of a painting by Jin Gui 金桂 depicting Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (1010–1063) of the Song dynasty burning incense to pray on the day before its announcement for choosing the right top candidate of the national examination.<sup>33</sup> Fortunately, two versions survive. One is in the Musée Guimet (Fig. 6) and the other at The University of Tokyo (Fig. 7). Given the impression of the free movement of the brush strokes and the uncontrolled spreading of the colors, one may have difficulty in identifying the fact that these actually are prints. Not until we juxtapose the two, which share identical strokes, yet without the same traces of colors, do we realize that they are actually lithographic prints with hand coloring. It is important to note that lithography allowed for colored prints. However, *Dianshizhai* never used this process, but always went for handcoloring.

In short, this was the first time in Chinese printing history that an artist's hand drawing could be mass-produced almost "transparently." Given the relatively simple procedure of painting and the increased emphasis on strokes in the two-dimensional surface of the Chinese painting tradition, it is far easier to make a facsimile of a Chinese black-and-white painting than of a European oil painting. The impact of the "Age of Mechanical Reproduction" resulting from the invention of lithography (as described by Walter Benjamin) was far greater in China than in Europe because it was superbly suited to the Chinese tradition of black-and-white ink painting, calligraphy, and stone rubbings. From this perspective, we could imagine that the free inserts by contemporary artists, which reproduced so vividly traces of the hand's movements, must have caused a sensation in the industry of reproducing Chinese paintings and making painting manuals.

Given the competitive business world of Shanghai, the *Dianshizhai* foray quickly led to rivals copying the idea.<sup>34</sup> After seeing the 1881 *Dianshizhai*

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33 This was a free insert for *Dianshizhai huabao*, no. 141 (February 1888).

34 This kind of cut-throat competition was also visible in novel publishing at the time; see Yeh, "Recasting the Chinese Novel," 187.



Figure 5: Two free inserts, by Ren Xun, for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.



Figure 6 (left): One free insert, for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, in Musée Guimet.



Figure 7 (right): One free insert, for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, in University of Tokyo.



Figure 8: Same image by Ren Xun for two different publications. The left one is the free insert for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, and the right one is included in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886 edition).

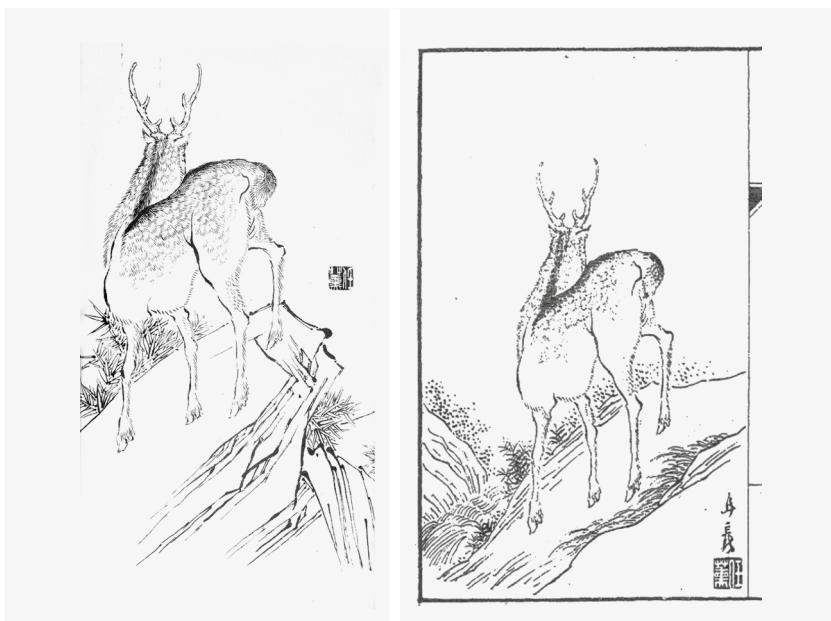


Figure 9: Same image by Ren Xun for two different publications. The left one is the free insert for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, and the right one is included in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886 edition).



*Assorted Paintings* and then in early 1885 the *Shenbao* announcement quoted above that the *Pictorial* would insert—without charge—lithography reproductions of new works by contemporary artists, the Menghuai Bookstore in Hangzhou quickly entrusted a Shanghai publisher, who had just bought a large set of devices for lithography reproduction, to make use of it for a painting manual with paintings by contemporary Shanghai artists entitled *Cartoon Drawings by Famous Shanghai Artists* that came out in November of that year.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, of the painters published by the *Pictorial*, only Ren Xun was included in this manual.<sup>36</sup> It was such a great success that we see the original publisher even warning readers against pirated copies of this book in a *Shenbao* advertisement.<sup>37</sup>

The Dianshizhai Printing House, as the first one to come up with this idea and practice in 1881, must have felt the pressure. It published the second and revised edition of *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* four months later.<sup>38</sup> As might be expected, the new edition incorporated some of the recent *Pictorial* inserts such as Ren Xun's pictures of the lion and the deer (Figs. 8 and 9).

The eleventh year of the Guangxu reign (February 15, 1885–February 3, 1886) not only saw competition between woodblock print and lithography as well as between lithography printers in image reproduction, but also a new entrant in the market, copperplate printing. It came from the Japanese bookstore and publisher Rakuzendō in Tokyo with its branch in Shanghai, who published a miniature painting manual *Yinxiangge Assorted Paintings*, *Yinxiang ge conghua* 吟香閣叢畫.<sup>39</sup> It shared a similar title, format, size,<sup>40</sup> and editing style with *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* of 1881,

35 *Haishang mingren huagao* 海上名人畫稿 [Cartoon drawings by famous Shanghai artists], ed. Menghuai shuwu 夢槐書屋 (Shanghai: Tongwen shuju, 1885). This album was printed by the Tongwen Bookstore in Shanghai.

36 *Shenbao*, November 22, 1885. This two-volume painting manual reproduced 112 paintings by eight Haipai (Shanghai School) painters, namely Zhang Xiong 張熊 (1803–1886), Hu Yuan 鬍遠 (1823–1886), Deng Tiexian 鄧鐵仙 (–1896), Yang Borun 楊伯潤 (1837–1911), Zhou Yunfeng 週雲峰, Ren Fuchang 任阜長 (Xun 薰, 1835–1893), Xu Xiaochuang 徐小倉, and Shen Xinhai 沈心海 (1885–1941). Copies of this manual will be found, among others, in the East Asian libraries of the University of Toronto and Hong Kong University.

37 “Huagao zhenjia 畫稿真假” [On true and fake copies of the *Assorted Paintings*], *Shenbao*, December 30, 1885.

38 We actually do not know the exact publication date of *Cartoon Drawings by Famous Shanghai Artists*. The inscription and preface by Wu Gan 吳淦 and Xu Sangen 徐三庚 are both dated to the summer of 1885, but the *Shenbao* advertisement of the book did not appear until November 7, 1885. As for the second edition of *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*, the preface is dated to the eleventh month of the eleventh year in the Guangxu reign (December 6, 1885–January 4, 1886), the printing date is the twelfth month of eleventh year in the Guangxu reign (January 5, 1886–February 3, 1886), and the first advertisement for this new edition appeared in the *Shenbao* on March 5, 1886. If we take November 1885 as the publication date of *Cartoon Drawings of Famous Shanghai Artists*, there is roughly four months' difference between the publication dates of these two books.

39 Kishida Ginkō 岸田吟香, *Yinxiangge conghua* 吟香閣叢畫 (Tokyo: Rakuzendō, 1885). This work was first advertised in *Shenbao*, July 7, 1885.

40 The height of *Yinxiangge Assorted Paintings* is 12 cm, which is a little bit shorter than *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*, which is roughly 15.5 cm in height.

yet used copperplate engraving techniques imported from Japan. Judging from their formal similarities and also the fact that both painting manuals proclaimed to be based on the art collection of their owners, i.e., Ernest Major and Kishida Ginkō, this publication apparently was meant to emulate Major's *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*. Ginkō even hired Shen Jinyuan 沈錦垣 (1845–1900), the calligrapher who had written and designed the title pages of the chapters of the *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings*,<sup>41</sup> to assume the same duties for his *Assorted Paintings*.

The re-issuing of *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* after five years in the beginning of 1886, signals the effort of the Dianshizhai Studio to regain its leading position in art reproduction. Why did the Studio come out with a revised edition instead of simply inviting contemporary Shanghai School artists to contribute to a brand new painting manual to compete with *Cartoon Drawings by Famous Shanghai Artists*? It might have been extremely difficult to assemble enough images from contemporary artists in such a short time, i.e., within a few months after the compete two-volume set had come out, but after all this set only had 112 images while the 1881 edition already had more and a greater diversity. The Dianshizhai Studio put its bets on diversity of time and space by including Japan, on quality by only going for the very best, and on quantity by eventually including six hundred paintings, and on price by offering the eight volumes of the 1886 edition for one yuan against the 1.6 yuan asked by the competition for its set of just one fifth of the images<sup>42</sup>. At the same time, and perhaps most importantly, it reworked many of the Japanese images in the 1881 edition to suit Chinese customers' preferences.

### From the 1881 to 1886 edition: The invented "Chinese-ness"

The 1886 edition explicitly marked some differences from the 1881 edition. Its preface written by Major states:

[. . .] Years ago, the images in the Assorted Paintings from our Studio numbered no less than six hundred, and all of them are (as precious as) pieces of gold and jade. This collection already has been quite appreciated by the best authorities of our country. Now we have collected several more images and as it happened that the first edition has been sold out, we have inserted these one by one in

41 It almost became a kind of standardized format for the Shenbao guan publications to have the book title on the cover written by Shen Jinyuan in seal script, cf. Rudolf G. Wagner, "Advocacy, Commodification, and Agency," in this volume.

42 For the prices, see the advertisement for the *Dianshizhai conghua* by the Dianshizhai, *Shenbao*, March 5, 1886, 1, and for the *Haishang mingren huagao*, *Shenbao*, November 21, 1885, 4. It is noteworthy that even the competition had to rely on the Shenbao to advertise its products because this was the only Chinese language paper in Shanghai carrying advertisements (and willing to carry those of the competition).

the appropriate places while deleting those from the first edition we were not satisfied with to extent of twenty to thirty percent as we tried to make [this new edition] into the most beautiful among those that are good. There are other people with the same pursuits in the world, so I do not make statements that are too far-fetched to gain credulity. Preface written in the eleventh year of the Guangxu reign, the yiyou year, by The Master of the Zunwen Pavilion. Meicha (=Major) (seal).<sup>43</sup>

The new edition did not only delete twenty to thirty percent of the images as unsatisfactory, and added newly collected treasures, it also came to a completely new arrangement. The original twelve chapters were reduced to ten and while the naming style for these chapters remained similar, the new structure was arranged based on genre. This followed a long tradition of painting manuals canonized by Emperor Huizong's (1082–1135) *Xuanhe Painting Manual*.<sup>44</sup> Based on the postscript by the Shanghai painter Fu Jie 符節 in the 1886 edition,<sup>45</sup> who also worked for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, we know that he was hired by Major to do the editing of the revised version. His postscript reads:

This revised edition consists of ten chapters. They are divided into eight genres with "Miscellaneous Paintings," *za hua* 雜畫, coming at the end. This book has been popular for a long time and almost every household has a copy. However, it was rushed to completion at the time and still needs some amendments. Recently the manager [of the Studio] reviewed [the original edition] for further improvements. Everybody's masterpieces are all there [in this new edition] as planned, but they arranged along magnificent orderly genres. They have been reduced in size to fit into a napkin box for the convenience of carrying in a vehicle or boat [when travelling]. I am already for many years engaged with painting. Compared with suffering from hunger and my brush lying fallow, suddenly being engaged in editing is like unexpectedly meeting an old acquaintance. Han Qi (sobriquet Zhigui 穉圭, 1008–1075, high official in the Northern Song dynasty) once said: "As to judging a painting's art, [the issue] is only whether it is true to life. Those that achieve fullness of truth [to life] are exceptional. Those that achieve it more or less, are superior." Browsing through this painting manual, one could say [these paintings] are indeed true to life. Connoisseurs compete to see its light and luster. This is the year of Duanmeng

43 *Dianshizhai conghua* (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1886), preface, 1a–1b.

44 *Xuanhe huapu* 宣和畫譜 (Taipei: Guoli Gugong bowuguan, 1971).

45 Fu Jie, sobriquet Genxin 良心, was one of the illustrators for *Dianshizhai Pictorial* in the 1880s. See *Zhongguo meishujia renmin cidian* (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1987), 927.

(端蒙), and I wrote this in the tenth month. Fu Jie from Yaojiang did this postscript at the Dianshizhai Studio in Shanghai.<sup>46</sup>

Fu Jie emphasized the clear and sophisticated new arrangement of the images by genre and cites a classical comment on “truth to life” being the only criterion to evaluate the artistic merit of a painting. This corresponds to the emphasis Major put on realistic painting styles as in his preface to the *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* of 1881 we mentioned earlier as well as his preface to the first issue of *Dianshizhai Pictorial*.<sup>47</sup> It is interesting to note that, in contrast to the 1881 edition, in which Major consciously marketed his journey to Japan and the rarity of these sources in his preface, nothing about Japan or Japanese sources is mentioned in either Major’s new preface or Fu Jie’s postscript to this revision. Even more significantly, in addition to the rearrangement of the structure and the replacement of some images, the greatest change in the 1886 edition was in its recrafting of the originally Japanese images.

Already the 1881 edition had made several changes. Technically speaking, lithography allows for deletions or insertions. This is done by covering or affixing the relevant pieces on the woodblock print before photo-lithography. Afterwards these pieces can be taken off again. On the lithographic reproduction the intervention is not visible. One of these changes was to delete the *kana* 假名, or Japanese syllabary, and the *kunten* 訓点, the guiding marks for rendering Chinese into Japanese, on the Japanese images (Fig. 10). The decipherable Chinese characters were mostly preserved and the marks, which were meaningless for Chinese viewers, would be erased. Second, as discussed earlier, perhaps for the sake of creating the softness of hand drawing, some of the original woodblock carved images and calligraphy were transcribed by brush first before being photo-lithographed. Transcribing or even rewriting the calligraphy was the easiest way to create the impression of the immediacy of handwriting (Fig. 11). The transcription of images, however, mostly would result in simplification and distortion of the original images (Fig. 12).

A third change was to rearrange the layout of woodblock renderings of the Japanese works. Many cases show that the original single-page square format layout was rearranged to fit the two pages of the book by cropping the accompanying inscriptions and inserting them into a new frame on the opposite page as seen in its adoptions from the *Meishu Painting Manual* (Fig. 13) and *Kaisen’s Eighteen Ways of Delineation* (Fig. 14). This added volume and gave occasion to add exemplars of fine calligraphy. As the 1886 edition had new images to insert, some of the original arrangements were restored (Fig. 15).

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46 *Dianshizhai conghua*, “Postscript,” chapter 10, 60b.

47 For details, see Major’s “Preface” to the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, translated in Wagner, “Joining the Global Imaginaire,” 132–134.

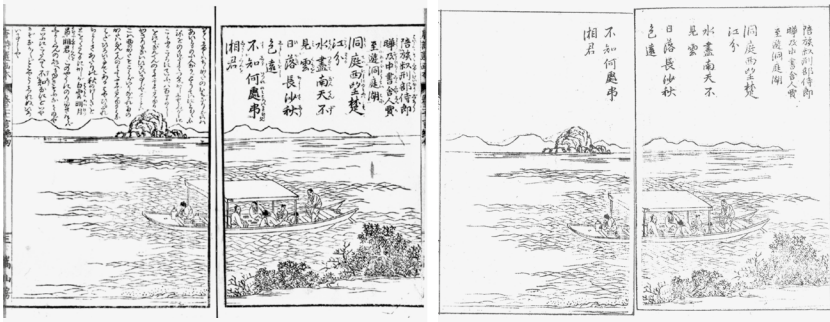


Figure 10: left, *Tōshisen eho*; right, The Chinese adaptation of *Tōshisen eho* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881).



Figure 11: left, The title page of *Bunrui nijūshikō zu* (Classified images of twenty-four exemplars of filial piety); right, The title page of *Ershi si xiao* (Twenty-four exemplars of filial piety) in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881).



Figure 12: left, *Tōshisen eho*; right, The Chinese transformation of *Tōshisen eho* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881).



Figure 13: left, *Meishu gafu*; right, The Chinese transformation of *Meishu gafu* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881).



Figure 14: left, *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō*; right, The Chinese transformation of *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881).



Figure 15: left, *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō*; middle, The Chinese transformation of *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); right, The Chinese transformation of *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886).

Fourth was the experiment of mechanically creating new images with the technology of lithography. As the first lithographic painting manual, Major or his executive editor seem to have been very keen in exploring the technological potential of lithography in not only reproducing but also creating new images from existing elements. For example, one leaf from chapter 10 of *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* of 1881, entitled Berthing at Xiangtan at Night, Xiangtan yebo 湘潭夜泊, is actually composed of the left part of the leaf Hayachine Mountain, Hayachine 早池峯, in Tani Bunchō's *Japan's Famous Mountains, Illustrated* and the lower left section of the leaf Fuzekama Mountain, Fusekamayama 臥斧山 (actually Kamafuseyama 斧臥山), in the same book (Fig. 16). A similar case can be also found in another leaf in chapter 10, entitled with a line from the Tang Poet Wang Wan 王灣 "The wind is straight, the sails all full,"<sup>48</sup> which is composed of the left part of the image illustrating the Tang poet Li Bo's poem "Song of the Moon Over Mount Emei" and the left part of the image on Li Bo's "Going Down to Jingmen in Autumn," both from the Japanese illustrated book *Illustrations of Tang Poetry* (Fig. 17). These two cases show that newly synthesized images actually do not appear to be very different visually from their original images respectively, which means that these re-makings were not for the sake of creating a new visual effect, but more for experimenting with creating new images through cropping and composing extant older images and finalizing by photo-lithography. The same technique had been used in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial* to create images of Western environments and fixtures with which the illustrators were not familiar. The sources were often advertisements in Western illustrated journals.<sup>49</sup> Major seemingly intended to march into the age of mechanically producing images, in which images were not necessarily created by hand, but by cutting-and-pasting. However, judging from the very limited number of cases found, this experiment must not have been very successful, visually or economically.

Another method of adapting the Japanese materials in the 1881 edition was re-contextualizing Japanese images from a Chinese perspective. For example, given the depiction of two people looking at a horse, then the image must be "Bole Appraising a Horse," *Bole xiang ma* 伯樂相馬, as titled in the 1881 edition (Fig. 18), although the Japanese original had no such title. The Japanese image of an old man riding an ox was considered to clearly refer to Laozi and a line from a poem by the Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) was inserted that referred to him, "An auspicious breath is coming from the East [as 老子 is approaching the pass where Yi Yin is serving as border guard], satisfaction is given to the [guard] of the Han[gu] Pass

48 *Fengzheng yifanxuan* 風正一帆懸.

49 For documentation, see Julia Henningsmeier, "The Foreign Sources of *Dianshizhai Huabao*, a Nineteenth Century Shanghai Illustrated Magazine," *Ming Qing Yanjiu* (Naples), (1998): 59–91. See also Wagner, "Joining the Global Imaginaire," 136–140.

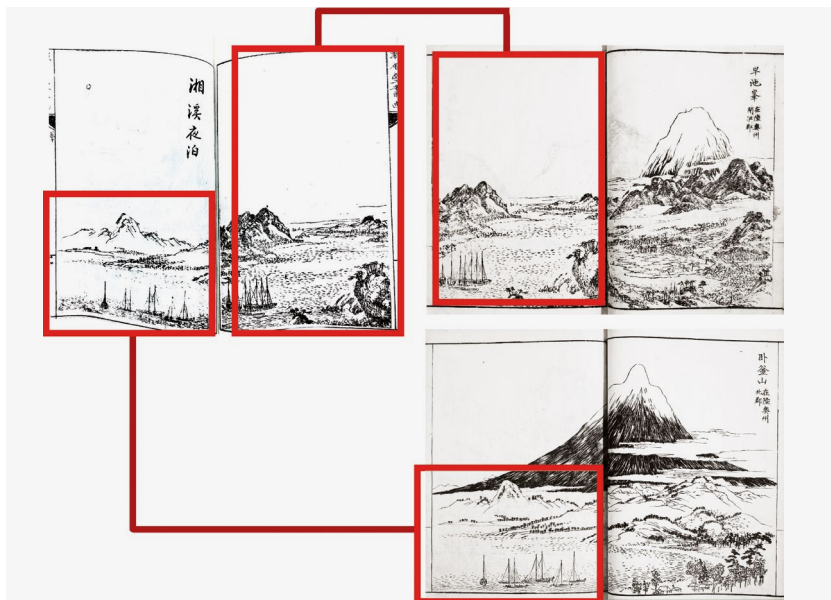


Figure 16: left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); upper right, Hayachine Mountain from *Nihon meizan zue*; lower right, Fuzekama Mountain, from *Nihon meizan zue*.

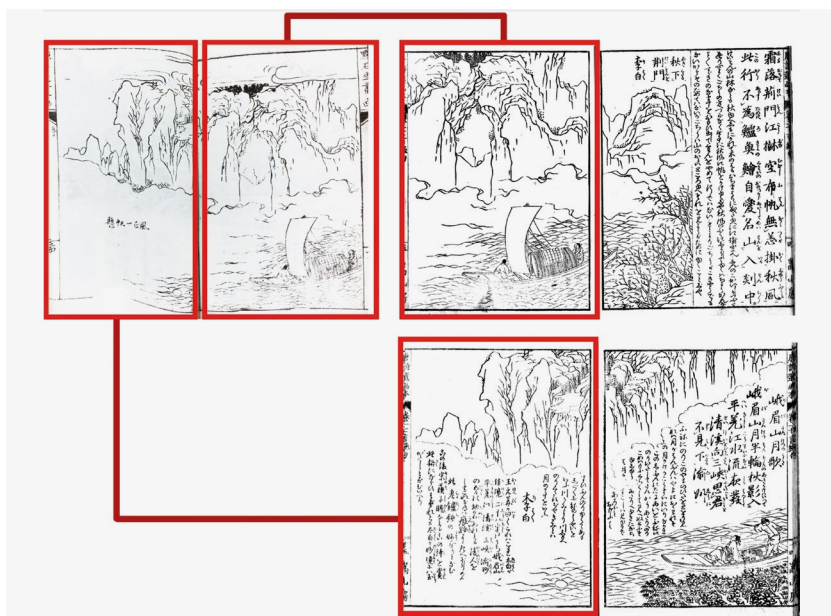


Figure 17: left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); upper right, *Tōshisen eho*; lower right, *Tōshisen eho*.





Figure 18: left, The Chinese rewriting of the image from *Tōshisen eho* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); right, *Tōshisen eho*.

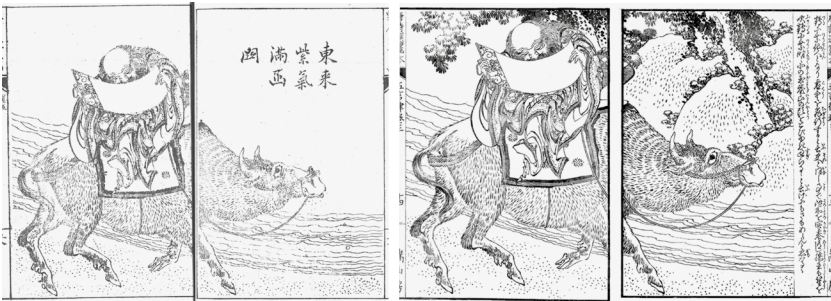


Figure 19: left, The Chinese rewriting of the image from *Tōshisen eho* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); right, *Tōshisen eho*.

[by Laozi writing the *Daode jing* as a farewell gift]"<sup>50</sup> (Fig. 19). However, the Japanese image with the horse is actually the illustration of another poem by Du Fu, "Journey of Protector-General Gao's Horse," *Gao duhu cong ma xing* 高都護聽馬行, which portrays the heroic horse that served in battle with its master, and the latter image with the old man riding the ox was meant as an illustration for Du Fu's poem "Yutai Pavilion," which describes the cloud-shrouded Yutai Pavilion in Sichuan province where immortals meet. Both are from the Japanese illustrated book *Illustrations of Tang Poetry*.

On the surface it might seem as if we were witnessing here a complex circular translation process between two cultures. When Komatsubara Suikei made the illustration for Du Fu's "Journey of Protector-General Gao's Horse" or Katsushika Hokusai drew his illustration for "Yutai Pavilion," they actually did not use images from the Japanese tradition as their prototypes, but deliberately drew on Chinese iconographic traditions to convey a sense of "Chineseness" for these illustrations on Chinese poems. However, Suikei and Hokusai drew on images familiar to them without being interested in

50 "Donglai ziqi, man Hanguan" 東來紫氣,滿函關.

keeping them linked to their original iconological context. Therefore, when they were appropriated in *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* for Chinese viewers, they went through the process of re-contextualization, and the dislocated semantic links were relocated, but the links to the poems referred to in the Japanese original were abandoned. The long journey of the re-signification of Japanized images imported from China reaches its endpoint in the *Dianshizhai* manual. Nevertheless, the actual process is probably even more complicated, if we realize the fact that it is actually Ernest Major from England who orchestrated the selection and adaptation. Then, we wonder how this “Chineseness” came about and whose “Chineseness” it was? This is maybe why after this long journey, these originally Chinese affiliated images actually have changed, they look different and refreshingly exotic too.

The 1881 edition did not hide, but stressed its Japan connection. Most of the alterations mentioned above were made out of economic considerations, such as multiplying the number of pages, for the convenience of making the images more easily appreciated by Chinese readers by removing the Japanese marks or annotations, or to re-contextualize the images in a more intuitively Chinese way. The 1886 edition went further along this road.

In terms of the range of Japanese publications from which images were taken, the 1886 edition is roughly the same, adding only one new work, *Illustrations of the Famous Scenes in Kumano*, *Kumano meishou zuga* 熊野名勝圖畫, by Suzuki Fuyō,<sup>51</sup> while dropping some unidentified genre paintings with Japanese motifs as well as the first set of the *Illustrations of Tang Poetry*.

There is a basic difference between the 1881 and the 1886 editions. The changes and adaptations of Japanese paintings in the earlier work were dictated by pragmatic concerns, those made for the 1886 edition seem driven by the desire to recapture the Chinese painting manual market by matching the competition in the “Chineseness” of the paintings and their organization, and outdoing it in the quality and quantity of the paintings offered and the price asked. Most significantly in this later edition, the painters of most of the Japanese images now remain unidentified and as most of the Japanese paintings in the 1881 edition that were included had Chinese topics and drew on Chinese visual traditions, they could be taken as Chinese paintings. In the 1881 edition there had been some Japanese figure paintings in distinctly “Japanese style,” *wayō* 和様, depicting beauties in recognizable Japanese costume or Japanese genre episodes or stories. These were not included into the 1886 edition. Many other images of Japanese origin have even been reworked or retouched so as to make them appear as Chinese paintings.

For example, one leaf from chapter 7 of the 1881 edition portrays a beauty with an oval face and an arched body, the emphasis being on the contrast between the black and white areas as well as the flat decoration on

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51 Suzuki Fuyō, *Kumano meishou zuga* 熊野名勝圖畫, ed. Kitabatake Kakusei 北園恪齋 (Edo: Suharaya Mohee, 1801).



Figure 20: left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); right, *Wakoku hyakuzo*.

the kimono. These features evoke the images typically made by the early Ukiyo-e master Hishikawa Moronobu 菱川師宣 (1618–1694) (Fig. 20). This kind of imagery with clear Japanese characteristics was expunged from the 1886 edition. The works of the Ukiyo-e master Hokusai still retained in the 1886 edition all picture Chinese subjects based on prototypes originating in Chinese images.

A similar process can be observed in the 1886 remaking of Tani Bunchō's *Japan's Famous Mountains, Illustrated*. In the 1881 edition, the inscriptions denoting the names and places of Japanese mountains are mostly left untouched. In the 1886 edition, however, these overtly Japanese texts are all replaced by Chinese poems, thus transforming the original place-specific Japanese topographical images with abstract poetic “Chinese” landscape paintings (Fig. 21).

Going beyond the simple deselection of Japanese motifs and addition of Chinese elements such as poetic inscriptions or seals, other pieces in the 1886 edition show a more radical stylistic reworking of Japanese paintings. The most straightforward way was to simply get rid of the more decorative elements of the original Japanese images. For example, in adapting a Hokusai illustration for a poem by Sun Di 孫逖 (696–761), the editor of the 1881 edition simply added a written Chinese title to denote the image, while the 1886 editor went further by deleting the flower-like pattern of pine needles and decorative dots in the background from the original Hokusai print and even adding a seal for “Traveler (*lüren* 旅人)” (Fig. 22).

These stylistic maneuvers make the Japanese images on Chinese topics almost indistinguishable from the local Chinese ones, especially when rearranged by genre and juxtaposed with Chinese images depicting similar subjects. In other words, as opposed to the 1881 edition, these Japanese images were no longer presented as foreign ones, but

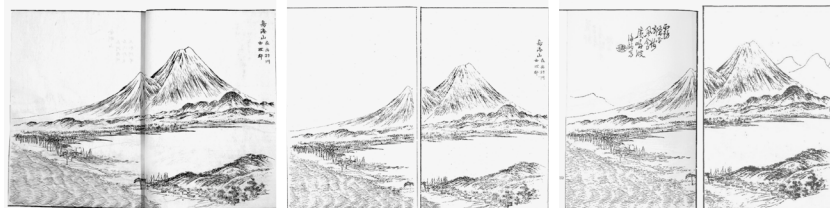


Figure 21: left, *Nihon meizan zue*; middle, The Chinese rewriting of the image from *Nihon meizan zue* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); right, The Chinese rewriting of the image from *Nihon meizan zue* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886).

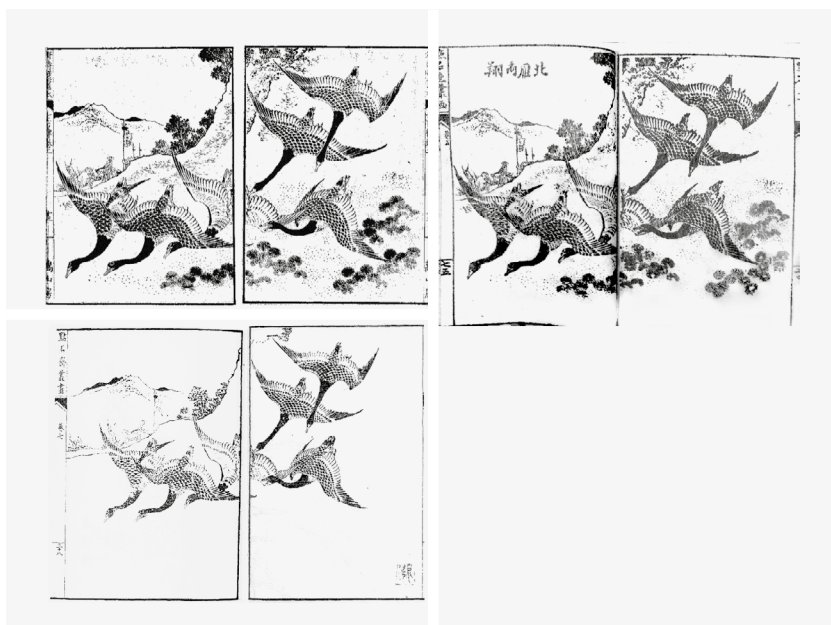


Figure 22: upper left, *Tôshisen eho*; upper right, The Chinese rewriting of the image from *Tôshisen eho* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881); lower left, The Chinese rewriting of the image from *Tôshisen eho* in *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886).

were recast as Chinese ones, though with some unfamiliar yet unspoken accent.

In sum, the new editorial strategy of the 1886 edition shows an assumption that what interested the Chinese community of readers were not really Japanese images, but unknown and unseen “Chinese” images. The *Dianshizhai* Studio and Fu Jie shifted the strategy of marketing the rarity of Japanese images in 1881 to a new one of offering something visually refreshing, yet still recognizably “Chinese,” to meet what in their judgment was their readers’ expectation. Apparently, their judgment proved to be accurate and successful, as the new edition has remained one of the best-sellers among traditional painting manuals ever since.

It should be noted, however, that the aim was not simply “Chinese-ness,” because there is a subtle balance between the authenticity of Chinese-ness and the thrill of the exotic. Taking the selection of images from *Illustrations of Tang Poetry* as an example, the 1886 editor chose to increase the number of images selected from sets six and seven as illustrated by Hokusai from seventeen images to forty while entirely dropping the images from set one drawn by Tachibana. In contrast to the works by Tachibana, which could actually be taken almost directly as Chinese without further modifications, those by Hokusai retain dramatic graphic differences with Chinese works even after with the stylistic reworking shown above. If pure “Chinese-ness” had been the goal of the 1886 edition, the opposite selection should have been made. Therefore, we see that, while the 1886 edition demonstrates an adjusted response to the assumed taste of the community of readers for images contained in Japanese illustrated books or painting manuals, the “Chineseness” on which the 1886 selection and reworking of these images was based was actually not a Chinese aesthetic conservatism but an invented tradition that was adjusted to a booming image market that was geared towards novelty,<sup>52</sup> the novelty of a Chineseness that was projected and mediated by a Westerner, Ernest Major. This is truly a product of a triangular negotiation of the three cultures, i.e., China, Japan, and the West.

## The changing visual landscape

The revolutionary lithographic reproduction technique was much less labor intensive and much faster than woodblock carving. This reduced the price of books significantly, which in turn increased the range of people able to buy them. The old woodblock printed *Album of Paintings from the Hall of Endless Laughter* was sold for one *yuan* by Rakuzendō,<sup>53</sup> while the lithographic reproduction by the Dianshizhai only cost a third, 3.5 *jiao* (0.35 *yuan*). At the same time, pricing of lithographic prints varied greatly. The eight volumes of the *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* with their 600 images cost one *yuan*, while the competition’s two-volume *Cartoon Drawings of Famous Shanghai Artists* with its 112 images cost 1.6 *yuan*, although it did come in a larger format.<sup>54</sup> The advertisement for this latter set criticized previous painting manuals in woodblock printing as being

52 The inventive approach to tradition was in vogue in various genres and media in this period. See, for example, Lothar Ledderose, “Aesthetic Appropriation of Ancient Calligraphy in Modern China,” in *Chinese Art: Modern Expressions*, eds. Maxwell K. Hearn and Judith G. Smith, 212–245.

53 Leshan tang zhuren 樂善堂主人, *Leshan tang fashou shumu* 樂善堂發售書目 [Catalogue of books on sale by the Rakuzendō bookstore], 31b.

54 The format of the *Haishang mingren huagao* was 29.5 cm in width and 17.5 cm in height, accessed September 11, 2018, <http://book.kongfz.com/77244/195304061/> (according to a different source 28×18 cm, accessed Sept. 11, 2018. <https://auction.artron.net/paimai-art0060702586/>), that of the

transcribed by vulgar hands or reduced in size for the convenience of carrying, thereby either losing their true appearance or being only suitable for child's play, while for this set "eight famous Shanghai artists" had been hired to offer their first-hand "fine drawings for lithography reproduction," and still the price was "moderate."<sup>55</sup> Copperplate printing was much more expensive because of the need for skilled craftsmen to do the engraving.

The advertisements for these painting manuals emphasize their use for people studying painting to copy painting from and, second, that "cultivated men" could "just open and enjoy them in front of a bright window on a clean desk." The advertisement for *Cartoon Drawings of Famous Shanghai Artists* even suggested that

in addition to taking those prints as painting manuals for copying, one could even use the printed leaves mounted as screens, zither-shaped hanging scrolls, or attach them on windows or lamps, all of which look very exciting. It is indeed one item with two functions.<sup>56</sup>

Lithography, it concludes is multi-functional, beautiful, and cheap and thus in all aspects superior to the woodblock prints. The Dianshizhai Studio actually started to use lithography to reproduce individual works of painting and calligraphy as early as 1879.<sup>57</sup> It even offered different prices for mounted and unmounted lithographs, printing on plain or colored paper, as well as with or without hand-coloring. Once painting manuals joined this mass-produced image-making of "painting" and "calligraphy" for display, the numbers of people who could afford "artwork" increased dramatically. Indeed, if we browse the various interiors depicted in the *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, especially those of entertainment quarters, almost all the walls, lamps, and windows are covered with various kinds of painting and calligraphy.<sup>58</sup> An 1883 guidebook for visiting Shanghai courtesan houses,<sup>59</sup> which provides all the information required to navigate the trendiest entertainment quarters in town,<sup>60</sup> mentions together with descriptions of the furniture, attire, accessories, food, tea, interior decoration, etc. seen in courtesan houses "lamps with calligraphy and painting":

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*Dianshizhai conghua* had a width of 13.5 cm and a height of 15.5 cm. The width in both cases refers to the opened volume.

55 See the advertisement Menghuai shuwu, "*Haishang mingren huagao* 海上名人畫稿," *Shenbao*, November 22, 1885, 5.

56 See Menghuai shuwu, "*Haishang mingren*."

57 See Roberta Wue, "Selling the Artist," 463–480.

58 Jonathan Hay, "Painting and the Built Environment," especially 75–77.

59 Zhimisheng 指迷生, *Haishang yeyou beilan* 海上冶遊備覽 (Shanghai: Jiyuexuan 寄月軒, 1883).

60 For courtesans becoming social celebrities and fashion leaders, see Jonathan Hay, "Painting and the Built Environment," 82, and most importantly, Yeh, *Shanghai Love*, chapter one.

The lamps hung in the courtesan houses deemed the most prized had previously always been made of glass. Later, lamps made of claws and adorned with beads were in vogue, and then lamps with calligraphy and painting took their turn as the most pervasively popular. Each room is equipped with four lamps. They are covered with white brocade written with poetry and painted with colored flowers or landscapes, which appears even more elegant. The frames of the lamps usually are made of mahogany and recently the more popular ones have been changed to use fine Xiangfei bamboo.<sup>61</sup>

This kind of the hanging lamp with small works of calligraphy and painting indeed became very popular, not only in courtesan houses but also in rich households, as seen extensively in the illustrations in *Dianshizhai Pictorial*. Although it says that the paintings are painted on the white brocade, judging from the advertisement for *Cartoon Drawings of Famous Shanghai Artists* mentioned earlier, we know that they could also be the printed paintings on paper.<sup>62</sup> How many of these works of painting and calligraphy that covered the walls, windows, and lamps in interior spaces depicted in *Dianshizhai Pictorial* were genuine? And how many of them were just reproductions? Are they lithographic printed images from painting manuals? And were there any disguised Japanese images among them? I wonder.

The Japanese illustrated books imported into Shanghai in the 1880s and 1890s were selected and dominated by networks of the Sino-Japanese art world. This trade rose and coincided with the expanding applications of lithographic printing. These cheap and mass-produced reproductions with their great variety made filling architectural spaces with high art, seasonal prints, images of leaders, and illustrated newsheets easier than ever before.

## Conclusion

As the most important Chinese hub of international networking and information, late nineteenth-century Shanghai functioned almost like a showcase of Chinese adaptations and appropriations of modernity. The consumption of images that circulated on a global scale was the key that facilitated and created these adaptations and appropriations on an unprecedented scale and in accessible ways. Browsing through image reproductions and their narratives from the last decades of the nineteenth century, we find instead of the conventionally assumed duality of “East versus West,” that they developed in a triangular relationship of China, Japan, and the West. The evidence from painting is confirmed by the practice of

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61 Zhimishen, *Haishang yeyou beilan*, vol. 2, chapter 4, 8a.

62 See *Shenbao*, November 22, 1885, 5.

newspapers, journals, and magazines. Although there were Chinese voices claiming at the time that Japan was just the West in an easier accessible (and less costly) way, the market success of recent Japanese cultural (rather than adapted Western) goods in Shanghai points to the fact that these could provide a modern stimulus for the leisure hours of Chinese gentlemen. Still, the importance of this Japanese element is severely underestimated and, as a consequence, understudied.

What was the role of Japanese imported culture in the Chinese accommodation of this new modern world? This study takes a most traditional, most seemingly unchanged leisure activity, the consumption and appreciation of painting manuals, a cultural practice that had been commonly conducted in the daily life of educated men. It shows, on one hand, how the new printing technology from the West expanded the group that could/would consume “artworks,” as well as the range of “artworks” accessible to the point of creating a new interior visual landscape in Shanghai. The initiative to make Japanese pictorial modernity accessible in China and to develop the distribution network to expand this accessibility across the country, and to adjust the Japanese images to a perceived Chinese sensitivity was with an Englishman from the “West”, Ernest Major. This brings the triangular relationship full circle.

The lithography technology also facilitated the hybridization of these works that were part of a rapidly growing global circulation of images. Therefore, the issue is less which foreign sources of images were available, but more which foreign images were selected and how their foreignness was toned down to facilitate their reception in China. The Japanese printed images imported to China during the late nineteenth century depicted mostly landscapes and figures of the perceived traditional cultural center of East Asia, but they did so with a particular style and flavor, which Major felt would suit his own taste for the “real” in painting and act as a healthy antidote to a Chinese painting tradition with little appreciation for the “real.” It is this flavor or style between the familiar and unfamiliar that made the Japanese printed images especially popular and well-received from the perspective of the Chinese painting manual tradition, and it contributed to a silent transformation of the mainstream Chinese styles in art circles. This will be seen in one of the most famous painters in Shanghai, Ren Bonian, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>63</sup>

This unrecognized adaption of Japanese images in China did prepare for the emulation of Japanese artistic modernity by Chinese artists after the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. For example, Lu Xun, who had studied in Japan for more than seven years and came back to China in 1909, time and again referred to his early acquaintance with Japanese images in *Dianshizhai Assorted Paintings* as a background to his own promotion of the Chinese modern woodcut movement. Just as Catherine V. Yeh has

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63 See Yu-chih Lai, *Surreptitious Appropriation. Ren Bonian and Japanese Culture in Shanghai, 1842–1895.* PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2005, chapter 4.



shown in her studies on Shanghai courtesan culture in Shanghai and the Shenbao Publishing House's publications of Chinese novels,<sup>64</sup> the field of leisure is a harbinger and testing ground for social change. Consuming visually attractive Japanese painting manuals, a seemingly insignificant leisure activity, brought about a long cultural and social process of accepting the previous protégé as a potential model for emulation. It also created a new aesthetic that pointed to a new direction for the Chinese traditional art world to engage with the promises and challenges of a transculturally shared modernity.

## Figures

- Fig. 1: *Dianshizhai conghua* (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1881), chapter 12, 23b–24a, in the collection of Rudolf G. Wagner.
- Fig. 2: *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 12, 22b–23a.
- Fig. 3: *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 12, 9b–10a.
- Fig. 4: *Liufa daguan* 六法大觀 (1887) vol. 1, in the collection of Shanghai Library.
- Fig. 5: Ren Xun, for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, no. 46, *ding*-10 (1885.8.1–1885.8.9), 73a, in the collection of Kansai University.
- Fig. 6: *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, no. 141 (1886.2.12–1886.2.21), in the collection of Musée Guimet.
- Fig. 7: *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, no. 141 (1886.2.12–1886.2.21), in the collection of the University of Tokyo.
- Fig. 8: left, Ren Xun, for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, no. 46, *ding*-10 (1885.8.1–1885.8.9), 73a; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1886), chapter 6, 1b.
- Fig. 9: left, Ren Xun, for *Dianshizhai Pictorial*, no. 46, *ding*-10 (1885.8.1–1885.8.9), 73a; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (Shanghai: Dianshizhai, 1886), chapter 6, 39b.
- Fig. 10: left, *Tōshisen eho*, serial two, chapter 2, 6b–7a; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 10, 12b–13a.
- Fig. 11: left, Oda Kaisen, *Bunrui nijūshikō zu* [Classified images of twenty-four exemplars of filial piety] (Kyōto: Yoshitaya jihyōe, 1843), vol. *ken*, front page; right, *Ershi si xiao* [Twenty-four exemplars of filial piety] title page, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 4, 1a.
- Fig. 12: left, *Tōshisen eho*, serial 4, chapter 5, 13a; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 1, 69a.
- Fig. 13: left, Ōhara Tōno, *Meishu gafu*, vol. *chi*, 43b; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 2, 2b–3a.
- Fig. 14: left, Oda Kaisen, *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō*, 3a; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 3, 27b–28a.

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64 Catherine V. Yeh, *Shanghai Love*; id. "Recasting the Chinese Novel."

- Fig. 15: left, Oda Kaisen, *Kaisen jūhachi byōhō*, 1a; middle, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 3, 26b–27a; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886), chapter 3, 80b.
- Fig. 16: upper left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 10, 11b–12a; upper right, Tani Bunchō, *Nihon meizan zue*, vol. di, Hayachine Mountain; lower right, Tani Bunchō, *Nihon meizan zue*, Fuzekama Mountain.
- Fig. 17: upper left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 10, 23b–24a; upper right, Kobayashi Shinbei annotated, Suzuki Fuyō illustrated, *Tōshisen eho*, serial two, chapter 2, 5a; lower right, Kobayashi Shinbei annotated, Suzuki Fuyō illustrated, *Tōshisen eho*, serial two, chapter 1, 15a.
- Fig. 18: left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 8, 34b–35a; right, Ranzan annotated, Komatsubara Suikei illustrated, *Tōshisen eho*, series 5, chapter 4, 7b–8a.
- Fig. 19: left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 5, 57b–58a; right, Takai Ranzan annotated, Katsushika Hokusai illustrated, *Tōshisen eho*, series 6, chapter 2, 13b–14a.
- Fig. 20: left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 7, 27a; right, Hishikawa Moronobu, *Wakoku hyakuzo* 和国百女 [One hundred Japanese beauties] (1698), National Diet Library, Tokyo.
- Fig. 21: left, Tani Bunchō, *Nihon meizan zue*, vol. ten, Umidori yama [Mount Umidori]; middle, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 9, 8b–9a; right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886), chapter 1, 13b–14a.
- Fig. 22: upper left, *Tōshisen eho*, serial 7, chapter 2, 14b–15a; upper right, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1881), chapter 5, 74b–75a; lower left, *Dianshizhai conghua* (1886), chapter 7, 37b–38a.

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Rudolf G. Wagner

## **Advocacy, Agency, and Social Change in Leisure: The Shenbao guan and Shanghai 1860–1900**

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**Abstract** This study focuses on the tension between on the one side the openness of leisure pursuits for transcultural imports and on the other the urge to secure an ultimate cultural authenticity even in the very international environment of East Asian treaty ports. It studies the strategy implied in the publishing practice of the British-owned Shenbao guan Chinese-language publisher in the Shanghai International Settlement. Principally a provider of Chinese leisure products from a settlement that was staging itself not just as a commercial center but also as a paradise of leisure, this publishing house still had to establish its cultural credibility by insisting that it was only guided by commercial motives. By stressing its commercial nature as opposed to offering free handouts, it dispelled any connection to religious or political propaganda. By developing a community of contributors and readers largely from Chinese elite circles and republishing many inaccessible or rare Chinese books it showed its Chinese authenticity. And by stressing the ultimate agency of the Chinese buyers and readers in deciding the fate of its products, it countered claims of outside imposition. In the forms chosen, however, the transcultural element dominated. Using highly adapted new printing technologies such as lithography and introducing transnational formats such as the newspaper and the illustrated periodical while promoting transcultural genres such as the novel made its products extremely attractive and competitive to the point of prompting other foreign as well as Chinese publishers to follow suit. This effort effective made Shanghai the media center of China.

**Keywords** Shanghai International Settlements, cultural broker, *Shenbao*, Ernest Major, Late Qing publishing history

## Introduction

As discussed in the “Theoretical Essay” concluding this volume, providers of leisure mostly do this for a living. Those enjoying their offerings live in a time/space following the rules of a gift economy. If they invite others to join them, paying the providers is done out of view, but it warrants some kind of reciprocity from the invitees on a different occasion. There is a point of friction between the provider and the beneficiary as they operate in two different economies and mindsets. As this is the livelihood of the provider, but an unnecessary activity for the beneficiary, the provider has to accept the beneficiary’s desire to keep the money aspect out of sight so as to maintain the fiction of a leisure space without constraints that is the condition for its full enjoyment. The pleasure of leisure hinges on the fiction that provider and beneficiary both operate in a gift economy.

This straightforward relationship is more complex in a transcultural interaction operating under an asymmetry of power. For Shanghai as an entertainment center and Chinese tourist site (besides being a trade and eventually industrial hub) that developed into a port as a result of a war with Great Britain, and for the Shenbao guan as a Chinese language and image publishing company with a wide range of leisure products that was owned and run by British citizens in Shanghai, the provider/beneficiary relationship in the domain of leisure developed against the background of such an asymmetrical relationship between the “West” and “China.” Both Shanghai the entertainment center and Shenbao guan the publishing company were clearly and very publicly committed to making money out of leisure, and worse, both could be suspected of a secret agenda to serve extraneous religious, commercial, or political interests. The provider’s commitment to profit and his possible hidden agenda were both anathema to the enjoyment of the leisure provided, but since both Shanghai as an entertainment center and the Shenbao guan as a provider of print entertainment were exceptionally successful, we will explore the question of how they managed to solve this double quandary.

The denial of the dominant role of foreigners that would have done away with the toxic extraneous agenda issue was not an option in view of the structure of the Shanghai International Settlement, with its manifestly foreign City Council, and the very evident role of Ernest Major (1842–1908) as the manager and visible owner of the Shenbao guan (the three other partners were silent shareholders). A public claim that there was no such agenda would not carry much weight. The second option, insistence on purely commercial interest devoid of any agenda linked to a foreign power or missionary enterprise, kept the money aspect very much in sight, but needed more proof than simple assertion. This study will explore how the city and the company made their case for the truth of the second option.

The attractiveness of Shanghai and the Shenbao guan rested on more than offering to fill the time/space of leisure. They came with the lure of what was then called “new” (*xin* 新), or “extraordinary” (*qi* 奇), namely

modernity in the broadest sense from material products and processes to aesthetics and mindset. Only success in solving the agenda quandary would create the mental leeway for those accessing the leisure offerings of the city and the company to explore this modernity as part of leisure enjoyment.

## The Shenbao guan, a commercial enterprise

Since the 1920s Chinese-language scholarship has denounced the Shenbao guan as a “for profit only” enterprise, with very few, and mostly recent, exceptions.<sup>1</sup> It is described as the cultural imperialism part of the imperialist exploitation otherwise associated with “unequal treaties,” Treaty Ports, and the strong role played by foreign, especially British, companies on Chinese territory during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The evidence is that the manager and main shareholder, Ernest Major, sold his share in 1890 for twenty times the amount he had originally invested.<sup>2</sup>

Unwittingly, however, this master narrative might have a point. By emphasizing the commercial orientation, it also said that the publishing house was not a subsidized advocacy institution set up to “guide” public opinion through some self-appointed authority, but rather a commercial enterprise aiming to fill the leisure hours of Chinese customers with interesting and entertaining print products.

The Shenbao guan was set up in 1872 as a joint stock company by two men from Scotland and two from London, with Ernest Major as the main promoter and eventual manager. He was a tea trader who had been looking for a good investment opportunity and had been advised by his Chinese comprador that Chinese-language papers were doing well in Hong Kong. It was agreed among the shareholders that he would be entitled to the lion’s share of the profits, but was also to personally cover any losses that would put the value of the company below the original investment.

The Shenbao guan started with a newspaper, the *Shenbao* 申報, in 1872, and directly added a literary journal and book publishing.<sup>3</sup> It tried to develop a feel for the Chinese market with a variety of forays that were further pursued if they worked, and abandoned if they did not. In 1878, it acquired lithography reproduction machinery and set up the Dianshizhai subsidiary to publish art and book reproductions as well as an illustrated journal, the *Dianshizhai Illustrated* (*Dianshizhai huabao* 點石齋畫報), launched in 1884.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ge Gongzhen 戈公振, *Zhongguo baoxue shi* 中國報學史 [History of Chinese journalism] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927), 78–79.

2 Fang Hanqi 方漢奇, *Zhongguo jindai baokan shi* 中國近代報刊史 [History of the modern Chinese press] (Taiyuan: Shanxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), 41–42.

3 The journal was the *Yinghuan suoji* 瀛寰琐纪 [Universal miscellany]; the first (quite sensational) book was the *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 [The Scholars], which had been unavailable.

4 On this journal see Rudolf G. Wagner, “Joining the Global Imaginaire: The Shanghai Illustrated Newspaper *Dianshizhai huabao*,” in *Joining the Global Public. Word*,

At the same time, it opened various branch stores in and around Shanghai and developed a national distribution network for its entire range of products. By 1885, one could order a globe, the reproduction of a Yuan ink painting, an edition of a novel, or a scholarly reference work from this company from anywhere in the Chinese-writing world.

The *Shenbao* was perfectly clear in stressing its commercial orientation. An early *Shenbao* editorial about the “Origins of our Company” starts bluntly: “As a general rule, the purpose of setting up a newspaper company is to sell newspapers with the general aim of generating commercial profit.”<sup>5</sup> The editorial directly went on to say, however, that the paper would put its commitment to the best interests of China first even if this was in conflict with its business interests. War, it said referring to the time when this editorial was published, would drive up newspapers sales, but if China was likely to lose as in the present case, the paper would come out against it.

In a separate daily column on the first page, “announcement from our company,” Major would offer readers information about the entire range of available products, call for suggestions of works to publish, and ask for help in locating rare texts that should be reprinted. All of these communications contained a commercial element: a high price would be offered for a good copy; someone who had written something the company might want to publish would receive a few copies as gifts for friends rather than having to pay for the printing, which was usual; the new map of East Asia was expensive because copper engravers had to be hired in England to secure high quality; the price of a book was set just to “recoup the cost of typesetting and printing.” New books were always announced here with a fixed price, which was another innovation.

## A product line geared towards leisure

The *Shenbao* guan product line was largely geared towards cultured leisure, including scholarly and literary pursuits, having entered the market at a particular time in the development of the Chinese time/space of leisure. The Taiping civil war had ended in 1864 and had left behind a scarred cultural landscape in the lower Yang-tze valley. Many of the famous book and art collections of this region had been destroyed. The same was true of printing blocks of publishing houses. This was a wasteland, where the cultural heritage of the country was threatened, along with the viability of the all-important Imperial Examination system, for which even the simplest books for preparation were now seen as lacking. Since the late 1860s,

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*Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870–1910*, ed. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany: SUNY Press, 2007), 105–173.

5 Meicha 美查 (E. Major), “Lun bengan zuobao benyi 論本館作報本意 [On the basic purpose of our company’s coming out with a newspaper],” *Shenbao* 1011, October 11, 1875, 1. It starts with the passage translated above: 夫新報之開館賣報也。大抵以行業營生爲計。

high Qing officials of Han Chinese stock, who had been instrumental in wearing the Taipings down, had started to set up official publishing houses to address the perceived shortage of books after the cultural devastation during this civil war, but they were not interested in publishing works for leisurely pursuits.

Major had spotted this market and had even called upon his Chinese publishing confreres to join in filling this lacuna, which threatened the survival of the Chinese cultural heritage, suggesting that they should go for modern publishing tools such as movable fonts and machine printing. The Company was not simply refurbishing a wasteland with plants that had been there before. As it was entering a market not determined by need but by desire, Major adopted a highly flexible approach to explore and develop the Chinese customer's desires, calling off unsuccessful or premature forays while relentlessly driving for quality.

The titles published indicate the company's assessment of the leisure market: A fair number of the Jiangnan literati elite had survived—often by moving to Shanghai—and had enough money at hand to rebuild at least some of their libraries, if only the books had been available. The leisure pursuits of this more traditional literati elite, many of whom would qualify as a “leisure class” or as retainers of members of the leisure class, included scholarly reading, reading literary works of high stature (poetry, brush notes) as well as (although surreptitiously) middling or low stature (novels), art appreciation and collecting, and poetry and essay writing. At the same time, a quickly growing number of them also saw a need for some dramatic change in the Chinese polity. This made them open to new things. To satisfy and stimulate this interest, the *Shenbao* published reference works about the politics, geography, and history of the world, as well as editorials that provided a platform for the discussion of social and political issues ranging from the need to set up a diplomatic service to women's education to developing a railway network to tearing down the wall separating the court from society.<sup>6</sup>

Shanghai merchants were a second group to which the company catered. The foreign settlements had boomed as the commercial hub in the cross formed by the Chinese south/north trade and that between the rich and productive Lower Yang-tze area and the international market. Chinese merchants who had moved to this settlement had done well, as it effectively protected them from many exactions from the Qing officialdom. They started to adapt to Shanghai's Western-style work week by fixing their leisure times on evenings and weekends;<sup>7</sup> had their own leisure spaces in courtesan houses, restaurants, theaters, and parks; and formed their own leisure interests, which interacted with their aspirations to social

6 See Rudolf G. Wagner, “The Free Flow of Communication between High and Low: The *Shenbao* as Platform for Yangwu Discussions on Political Reform 1872–1895,” *T'oung Pao* 104, no. 1–3 (2018): 116–188.

7 Catherine V. Yeh, “Shanghai Leisure, Print Entertainment, and the Tabloids, *xiaobao* 小報,” in Rudolf Wagner, ed. *Joining the Global Public*, 201–234.

and cultural recognition. While covering the ground where the interests of both groups—including, very importantly, those of the women<sup>8</sup>—overlapped, the company also provided materials of special interest to each.

After having thus laid the ground for our analysis, we will now probe the surprising relationship between the commodification of this package of Shenbao guan leisure goods and its success.

## Dealing with the counter-text: Religious and political agenda

The Shenbao guan was not entering virgin land, but a specific and densely inscribed landscape. It was keenly aware of this environment and reacted to it by consciously marking its distance from three other print endeavors, namely missionary, official, and pulp fiction presses.

Some of the subsidized missionary publications were using entertainment genres such as the novel for advocacy purposes. By dissociating the availability of print products from the willingness and interest of Chinese readers to buy them, the agency of the readers was curtailed and they were even under pressure to reciprocate for the gift (we have no evidence that the missionary novels were sold). The missionary agencies signaled this logic by quantifying the relation between the number of print products distributed and converts gained. By stressing its commercial nature and the ensuing agency of the Chinese audience to buy or reject its products, the Shenbao guan marked itself as a Chinese company that was advocating neither a foreign creed nor foreign interests. Anchoring their products in the (passive) agency of the Chinese consumer to buy or not became the key to the commercial success of this foreign company.

Marking the difference from the government publishing houses was easier. These publications were subsidized, remained within a narrow range of imperial advocacy, and came without any claim to entertainment value. The Shenbao guan offered a mix that not only contained a much more substantial body of reference and model works of use for the Imperial Examinations, but also writings and images for leisure hours, some of them including up-to-date information about China and the world. In a rejection of the official textual hierarchy, all of them came in the same format and with the same editorial care.

Publishers of pulp fiction and other low status works only made their comeback during the 1870s and 1880s. The genre of the novel was particularly associated with low morals as well as shoddy editing, printing, and paper. The company here marked its stance by selecting works that would “make one slap the table with excitement,” but would keep within

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8 See Rudolf G. Wagner, “Women in Shenbao guan Publications, 1872–90,” in *Different World of Discourse. Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, eds. Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 236–256.



the bounds of propriety. To ensure quality, it tracked down original manuscripts or editions of such works (some of them in Japan), hiring renowned scholars as editors, printing them with metal fonts in the same *de luxe* format on fine paper as works in the upper reaches of the textual hierarchy, and offering guides to their appreciation in advertisements, book catalogues, and commentaries.<sup>9</sup> Many of these editions have become the basis for modern scholarly editions.

The formal and prestige markers of the Shenbao guan books announced them as part of a new canon that now included books of learning, easy banter, useful contemporary matters, and elegant poetry by both men and women. The general customers (“elegant and rustic alike,” “women and young people”) were alerted that some of the more popular fictional works would have them just “split their sides and clap the table with laughter” and be “new and exhilarating,” let them sit at home while peeking into the fashionable courtesan houses they could never afford to visit, or browse through a racy *tanci* ballad that still stayed within the confines of decency. Others books offered games based on the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which had been made popular by courtesan houses.

The physical format and appearance of the Company’s publications combined markers of high status with suitability for leisurely perusal. The metal fonts allowed for imprints that were much smaller than woodblock prints, but even easier to read. This in turn accounted for the possibility to offer light, small-format books. As travelling for sights and business had become possible and popular again after the end of the civil war, the Company’s books filled the slot which the “railway library” was filling in England, and the advertisements were quick to praise the ease with which these books could be taken along.

The Shenbao guan used their Chinese customers (the “market”) as judges to decide whether the company represented some foreign interest. The judgement was delivered in two forms; in the sales of Shenbao guan products, and as participation in what might be called a “Shenbao guan community” of well over a thousand men of letters, mostly from the Lower Yang-tze region. From the outset, the Company also succeeded in getting its customers beyond the passive agency of buying and reading its products to an active agency of suggesting books for publishing, helping to track rare copies, contributing poetry and prose, and taking on professional roles of editor, calligrapher, commentator, or writer of editorials in the form of letters.

When the company announced a plan in 1882 to publish a selection of the poetry genre used for the imperial examinations and asked *Shenbao* readers to contribute, the offices were flooded within a week by well over twenty thousand submissions, a clear sign of the acceptance of the company as a force in Chinese culture. The *Shenbao* had to implore readers

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9 Catherine V. Yeh, “Recasting the Chinese Novel: Ernest Major’s Shenbao Publishing House (1872–1890),” *Transcultural Studies* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 171–289.

to please stop sending more. The extensive selection from these poems that was eventually published did not hide but emphasized the foreign connection. It was entitled *Poems Selected by the Master of the Cherish the News Studio* (*Zunwenge shixuan* 遵聞閣詩選). *Zunwenge* was Ernest Major's personal studio name.<sup>10</sup>

The explicit commodification of Chinese cultural goods by the *Shenbao* guan secured the ultimate agency of its Chinese customers, and the unified editorial care given to all publications laid the groundwork for their acceptance as cultured leisure by men of letters and those aspiring to their cultural status. The company had gained enough trust that some thousand Chinese customers were willing within a month to advance a very substantial sum—150 silver liang, the annual salary of a journalist at the time—per head to a joint stock company *pro tempore* that was publishing the first accessible print of the huge illustrated Chinese encyclopaedia *Gujin tushu jicheng*. The investment was returned in the form of a set of this new edition.

The company made great efforts to keep a low profile for the commercial purpose of the enterprise so as to prevent its interference with the enjoyment of the leisure products it offered. At the same time, it developed a whole set of cultural strategies to enhance acceptance and appreciation among Chinese readers, including emphasizing its commitment to preserve China's cultural heritage by republishing works that had become unavailable and encouraging other publishers to join in this endeavor. It added to the cultural capital associated with its products through the great editorial care given to all of them, and by setting them into the tradition of the high point of Chinese printing in technology, quality, and selection, the eighteenth-century *Juzhenban* editions from the court, but democratizing access to them through the market at very modest prices rather than through high official standing. Its selection of technologies was adapted to Chinese conditions, such as movable letter prints with metal fonts to reduce size and volume and allow for travel reading, and black-and-white lithography that was particularly suited for the reproduction of Chinese ink paintings and stone rubbings, but it continued and modernized the popular tradition of newspapering. In an early exercise of import-substitution, it used bamboo-pulp based Chinese paper rather than the imported Swedish paper used by other Chinese publishers at the time. It highlighted its commitment to accepted Chinese moral values rather than going for the cheap lure of sensational works. It also moved as much of the interactions with the *Shenbao* guan community as possible into the realm of gift exchanges; and publicly described its (generally very low) prices as a way of simply recouping the cost for typesetting, drawing, etching, printing, paper, etc., rather than boasting about profitability. The company's flagship publication, the *Shenbao* newspaper, with its mix of essays about the great questions of the time on the first page, its international and domestic news,

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10 *Shenbao* announcement, September 21, 1882.

its leisure tidbits of poetry, anecdotes, and the occasional translation of a foreign literary piece, and its daily reprint of the court's *Peking Gazette* (*Jingbao* 京報), defined its own role within the context of the idealized Three Dynasties of China's deep past, when sages had ruled, as a modern form to establish "the communication between high and low."

In both domains, establishing the credibility of the Shenbao guan as a company committed to the betterment of China, and establishing its products as goods of refined leisure, the company was successful, aided by astute management. It had steeply rising sales numbers of newspaper copies, books, journals, and image reproductions through its pioneering sales network, its newspaper provided the first and most important platform for public policy discussions for decades, its novel publications established the modern novel as legitimate reading matter, and its use of the Shanghai International Settlement to shield itself from the heavy hand of the Qing court as well as the nervousness of the British Foreign Office while making full use of treaty stipulations that allowed for the national marketing of Shanghai goods laid the ground for the Settlement's status as the media capital of China until WWII and even until the Communist revolution. Looking at the actual steps taken and the communications made, the Shenbao guan's policies for at least the first twenty years of its existence seem guided by a clear and consistent strategy. Interestingly, there is no single document from the hands of Major or one of his major Chinese collaborators that outlined or reflected on this strategy. Major's life was lived through practice, and the underlying strategy has to be extracted from it.

As the company shared the ambivalent position of the Shanghai International Settlement and was part of this paradise of leisure, the Settlement had a natural place in its publications. The *Shenbao* newspaper from early on published "Bamboo twig ballads" (Zhuzhi ci 竹枝詞), about the Settlement from residents and visitors,<sup>11</sup> the *Dianshizhai Illustrated Paper* illustrated sensational happenings in town, and in 1884, the Company presented the city's glories in an album, *Images of the Famous Sights of Shanghai* (*Shenjiang shengjing tu* 申江勝景圖).<sup>12</sup>

## Shanghai as a space of leisure and entertainment

The Shanghai International Settlement faced the same problem as the Shenbao guan. The commercial potential of the place had been discovered by foreign merchants and it was managed by foreigners, but to unfold this potential to the full, the city had to find Chinese acceptance beyond reluctant government toleration.

11 "Hu you zhuzhi wushi shou 滬游竹枝五十首 [Riding through the foreign settlements, fifty bamboo twig ballads]," *Shenbao*, June 11, 1876.

12 *Shenjiang shengjing tu* 申江勝景圖 [*Images of the Famous Sights of Shanghai*], ed. Shenbao guan (Shanghai: Shenbao guan 1884), 2 vols.

The Shanghai walled town had served as a shipping transfer point for north-south coastal trade and for the Lower Yang-tze tax grain shipments north. Once permission had been given to foreign merchants to settle and trade on a small barren strip of land outside the walled town, they started to develop the place into the main overseas trade linkage between the rich Lower Yang-tze region and international trading centers. The raging Taiping civil war proved a boon to the Settlement. As both sides were wary of complications with the foreigners, the Settlement became a safe haven to which large numbers of well-to-do and educated Chinese from the Yang-tze valley fled.

Once the Taiping civil war had ended in 1864, the advantages of this trading port, with its relative freedom from Court interference attracted Chinese merchants from all over the country, including Canton, which had previously enjoyed a monopoly role in overseas trade. The massive influx of Chinese into this settlement, which originally had been carved out by the Court for foreigners only, led to the unique social situation of a "mixed settlement" of Westerners and Chinese under a foreign administration. This cohabitation turned into an experiment in urban management of what was often referred to at the time with pride as the Shanghai "Model Settlement."

The influx of sojourners of diverse ethnic backgrounds from Europe and America, from inland China as well as from the British colonies, created a vast entertainment market, especially as most of these sojourners were single men or men without their families. Entertainers from courtesans to chefs and hoteliers, but also including the new urban literati (journalists, publishers, painters, educators, writers), moved in to make the best of these new opportunities; travelling entertainers ranging from the American Chiarini Circus to European music performers and Peking opera troupes put the Settlement on their maps. The resulting fame of the city as a center of entertainment greatly contributed to the attractiveness of the place for businessmen, which in turn boosted both business and leisure ventures.

Since the mid-1860s, the Settlement also began to attract tourists from inland China in a further boost to its Chinese theatres, courtesan houses, restaurants, and hotels, and with it to the city's coffers. Already in 1867, the *North China Herald* spotted the manifold advantages brought by this new development:

Attracted partly by the means of amusement and dissipation available, and partly by a desire to see with their own eyes the steamers and other foreign inventions whose fame is becoming noised through the empire, wealthy Chinese are beginning to resort to Shanghai for a month's trip, much as, in Europe, people visit Paris or London." [...] "The theatres which stink so in the nostrils of the puritan advisors of the Taotai [...] have attained a wide reputation, and offer a powerful attraction to visitors, who, in however small a

degree, lead to disseminate among their countrymen an acquaintance with foreigners and foreign customs. Reliance on the patronage of those customers, again, induces the establishment of places of amusement, whose proprietors pay in the shape of rental at least some interest on the large sums that have been given for the land they occupy.<sup>13</sup>

The article is right in noticing that for these inland tourists the journey was not a business affair, but a sightseeing trip “abroad” into the “world” to have fun and experience something sensational and new without having to leave a Chinese-speaking environment. At the same time, the tourists’ spending allowed the Shanghai City Council to finance the city’s infrastructure as well as further entertainment enterprises such as the race course, all of which enhanced the Settlement’s attractiveness. In short, the city’s explosive growth and steeply rising prosperity was due to a combination of trade and leisure industries, and both of these were instrumental in securing acceptance of the place among the Chinese gentry and common folk. Trade and leisure are the two mainstays of the modern urban contact zones.

The “Bamboo twig ballads” from these sojourners and tourists wasted no time on sites of natural beauty, of which there were none worth mentioning, but they gushed excitedly about the tall buildings, the wide streets, the restaurants, the theaters, and the stunning courtesans parading through town with their patrons in horse-drawn carriages. As the *Shenbao* published these ballads, other Shanghai publishers came out with Chinese city guides, such as Ge Yuanxu, with his 1876 *Notes on trips through Shanghai*.<sup>14</sup> In their description of the Shanghai Settlements, these works sometimes drew on a Chinese tradition of describing urban entertainment quarters such as Li Dou’s *Record of the Painted Boats in Yangzhou* (“painted boats” were used by courtesan entertainers for romantic lake outings with their patrons), a book that was republished by the *Shenbao* guan.<sup>15</sup> As Catherine V. Yeh has shown, however, Ge Yuanxu’s *Notes* focused exclusively on the International Settlement and left out the walled town of Shanghai. It used the language of Penglai/paradise to describe the Settlement as a big theme park with unending attractions, among which the “foreigners and the courtesans stand out.”<sup>16</sup> The spirit of this book is well captured by a Bamboo Twig Ballad it quotes:

On the flats north [of the walled town], all wild weeds are cleared;  
Millions of gold coins the ocean waves bring.

13 “Chinese Theatres,” *North China Herald*, January 5, 1867, 1.

14 Ge Yuanxu 葛元煦, *Hu you zaji 滬游雜記* (Shanghai: Geshi xiaoyuan, 1876).

15 Li Dou 李斗, *Yangzhou huafang lu 揚州畫舫錄* (Shanghai: Shenbao guan, 1875).

16 See the chapter “Guides to Paradise” in Catherine V. Yeh, *Shanghai Love. Courtesans, Intellectuals, and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 306–309.

The barren hills all made into sumptuous dwellings;  
Clearly a mirage city, with fantasy towers.<sup>17</sup>

The engine driving and financing the miraculous transformation of the Settlement from “barren hills” with “wild weeds” to a sumptuous urban center are the “waves of gold” brought in through the opening of international trade. (The historical background for the Qing decision to open these Treaty Ports—the Opium War—is left unmentioned).

With sojourners and tourists there was enough of a market for images capturing this strange place. Besides a flurry of single-sheet prints,<sup>18</sup> we see in 1884 alone two new publications on Shanghai leisure, Zou Tao’s (1850–1931) *Shanghai city lights*<sup>19</sup> and *Famous Sites of Shanghai, Illustrated and Explained* with forty-two woodblock (not lithography) illustrations, for which the publisher ran elaborate daily advertisements in the *Shenbao* itself.<sup>20</sup> The latter is the first such guide with illustrations accompanied by detailed explanations. While also including some sights of the walled district town, it followed the model of the *Huyou zaji*, presenting the Settlements’ sights itemized and without any visible hierarchy or structure as they might appear to a visitor or *flâneur*. The images range from the electric street lamp to the bell for the fire alarm; from Chinese bowling to Westerners horse racing; from Japanese geishas arranging flowers to Chinese courtesans playing the Chinese lute (*pipa*), riding in a carriage with their beau, or having their photograph taken (Fig. 1). It is an order that needs maintaining: Rickshaw coolies have a row, drunken Westerners start a fistfight, two robbers plunder a Chinese, but there is the Mixed Court, and Chinese prisoners are shown pulling a roller to prepare the ground for a pavement.

The counter-text is easily defined. This is a place of urban order and comfort for sojourner and tourist alike, from wherever they may come, not a foreign bastion nervously guarded against Chinese. The preface drives the point home, describing in an often repeated trope that “gentlemen and ladies, martial men and diplomats, farmers, workers and coolies” “from China’s eighteen provinces and the five overseas continents” have all congregated in “this little speck of land” and get along although “they cannot understand each other’s language, don’t share the same writing system, and have different feelings as well as a diversity in customs.”

This is so out of the ordinary that it must be called a “dreamland” (*mengjing* 夢境).<sup>21</sup> One has to see it to believe that it is real. This “dreamland”

17 Ge Yanxu, *Hu you zaji*, 52.

18 For these, see the study by Lai Yu-chih in this volume.

19 Xiaoxiangguan zhuren 瀟湘館主人 (Zou Tao 鄒弢), *Haishang dengshi lu* 海上燈飾錄 (Shanghai: Privately published, 1884).

20 Xiangguotoutuo 香國頭陀, *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* 申江名勝圖說 (Shanghai: Guankeshouzhai, 1884).

21 *Shenjiang minsheng tushuo*, Preface 1b. In this meaning, *mengjing* seems to be a new late Qing term. It was used frequently in stories and essays published in the *Shenbao*, sometimes warning of getting lost in this dreamland of Shanghai entertainment, see Chengchazi 乘槎子, “Meng yu shuo 夢喻說 [On the dream



Figure 1: Shanghai courtesans having their photograph taken. Note the modest artistic and technical quality of the woodblock illustration.

term translates the “model settlement” notion for which there is no other Chinese equivalent with similar utopian echoes. The Shanghai International Settlement is a place of urban leisure and sensational modernity that offers itself as a gift to the tourist’s gaze. While keeping the commercial character of the Settlement in the background so as not to deflect from the pleasures to be had, the manifest effort to please the Chinese customers also served as a reassurance that they were the ones who decided what they wanted to see and enjoy and that nothing was imposed on them, least of all a foreign creed or political agenda.

Very much like the *Illustrated and Explained Famous Sites*, the Bamboo Twig Ballads in the *Shenbao* had long highlighted a Chinese perspective and agency of defining what this place was and could offer, which also came with the heightened credibility of an authentic voice. These newspaper recordings of the impression the town had made on Chinese visitors made the place attractive to others. They conveyed the message that

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metaphor],” *Shenbao*, December 30, 1872, 3, or the long editorial on dreamland Shanghai, “Xi meng shuo 戲夢說 [On play as dream],” *Shenbao*, September 9, 1887, 1.

this was a place Chinese travelers found hugely attractive although—and because—it was utterly different from any other place in China. The foreign presence in these poems is not coyly hidden, but highlighted as a key to the attractiveness and interest of the place. The foreigners themselves had become attractive exhibits.

When the *Illustrated and Explained Famous Sites*, with its low quality woodblock prints, came out, however, Major saw that he could do much better. He would come up with his own selection of the sites to define the city. In this Shanghai the Shenbao guan itself, the Dianshizhai lithography print office, the building where the Shenbao guan reproduced the gigantic eighteenth-century encyclopaedia *Gujin tushu jicheng*, and even Major's home would become sites to see. He would use the new technology of lithography for better quality, and his newspaper advertising and distribution network would make sure that the book reached the inland Chinese market and with it potential further tourists coming to the town.

## The images of the famous sights of Shanghai

Black-and-white lithography was uniquely suited to reproduce Chinese ink paintings and rubbings as well as the new brand of newspaintings in the *Dianshizhai Illustrated*. Major found Chinese illustrators already familiar with lithography and capable of delivering drawings within the strict ten-day rhythm of the *Dianshizhai Illustrated*. The most skillful and prolific among them was Wu Youru 吳友如, who could do both the quick newspaper sketches and the more refined—and much better paid—illustrations for the free supplements to the *Dianshizhai Illustrated*.<sup>22</sup> This was all that was needed to meet the challenge from the *Illustrated and Explained Famous Sites*. Within a few months, the Dianshizhai printed the *Images of the Famous Sights of Shanghai (Shenjiang shengjing tu 申江勝景圖)* for the Shenbao guan. With its sixty-two illustrations by Wu Youru, the volume set out to offer a new perspective on the city, presented with the new standard for high quality image reproduction, lithography.

To overcome the prejudice about illustrated volumes as being “common” or even vulgar (*su* 俗), the book came with a very refined combination of a signed sealscript title by the renowned calligrapher Shen Jinyuan 沈錦垣 (Fig 2),<sup>23</sup> Wu Youru's illustrations (Fig. 3a and 3b), and poems or prose texts by “famous scholars” accompanying each illustration that were again done in a variety of fine calligraphic styles (Figs. 4a and 4b).

In the *Shenbao* advertisement for this album, Major introduced the city and the volume:

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22 The Dianshizhai illustrators were paid by the piece, and for these two types of illustration the payment was different. For details, see Wagner, “Joining the Global Imaginaire,” 131.

23 Shen calligraphed many titles for the Shenbao guan, but also for the Shanghai Arsenal and other Shanghai publishers.





Figure 2: *Shenjiang shengjing tu* cover page with signed seal script title by Shen Jinyuan.

This little corner of Shanghai is the epitome of all the [treaty] ports. It tops whatever human ingenuity can achieve and is capable of outdoing even the finest work of nature. With grand things that are stunning and hidden places that are alluring it is altogether bewitching the heart and getting the eyes all dizzy with its full splendor that still is fully at ease—even if one has gone through this place time and again one cannot get enough of talking about this travel experience. Finally, I as the Master of the Cherish the New Studio [E. Major] said: It will not do that this is not made known!<sup>24</sup>

While it was the most successful Treaty Port in terms of business, Major claimed, its real attraction was in the manifest and hidden man-made wonders. These would easily beat all that nature might have offered at traditional tourist sites on mountains or lakes.

Here we have a new city that owed its explosive growth to a technical innovation in shipping (the Clipper), a fortuitous geographic location, a peculiar international constellation, a unique political constellation in the midst of a civil war, a fiercely independent City Council composed of merchants determined to make this a livable place according to the most modern standards, the combined commercial energies of merchants from many backgrounds, and the attractions it provided for Western and Chinese tourists as a modern Western style urban environment on Chinese

24 Advertisement for the *Shenjiang shengjing tu* in the *Shenbao*, December 28, 1884, 1.

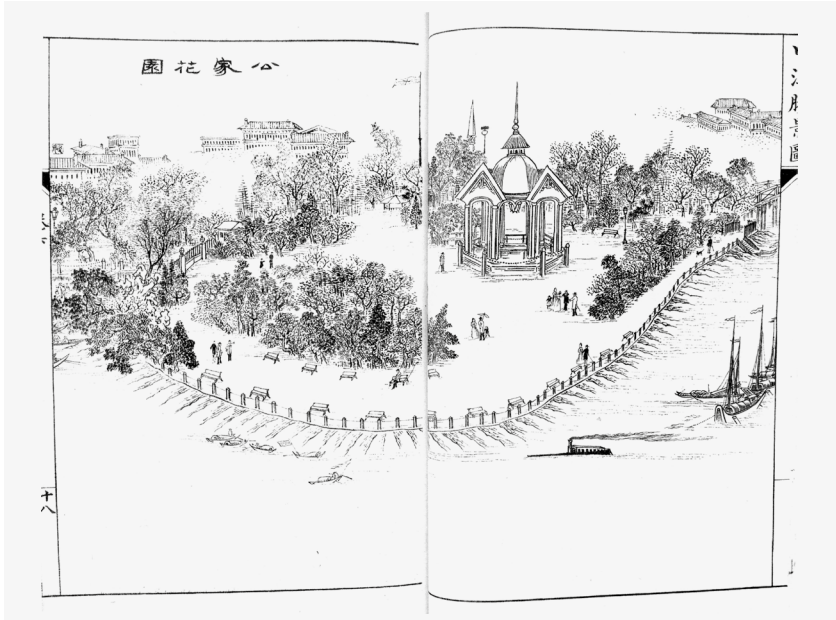


Figure 3a: Wu Youru, *The Public Garden* (Gongjia huayuan 公家花園).

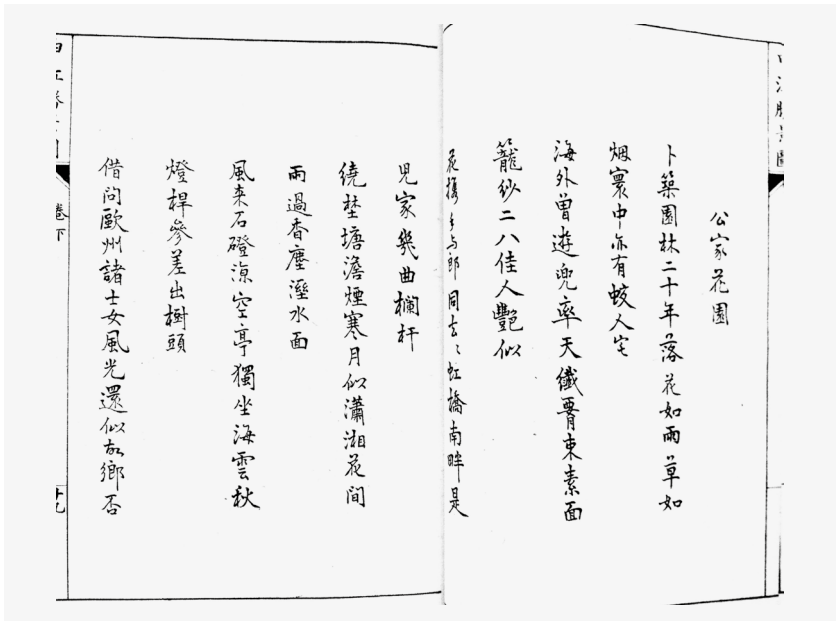


Figure 3b: *The Public Garden*, calligraphed sample of text from *Shenjiang shengjing tu*.

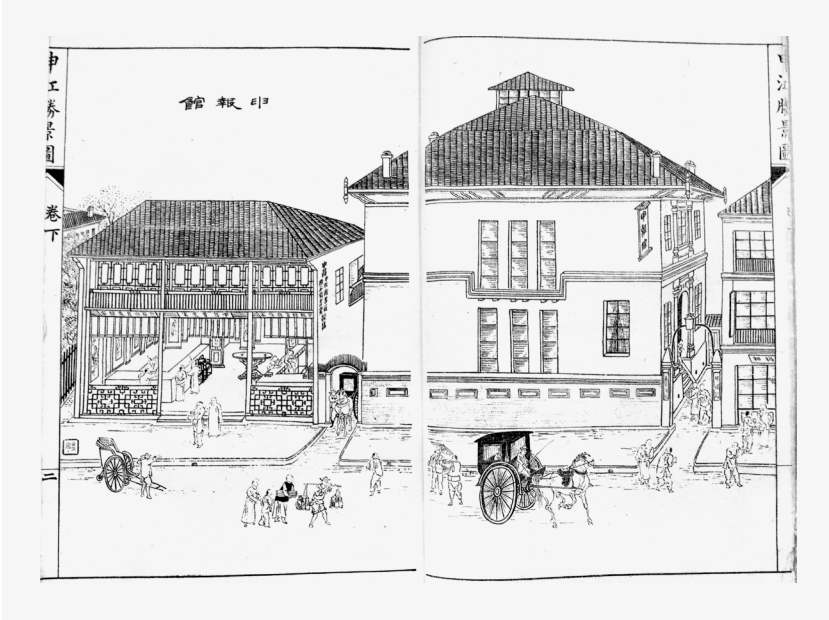


Figure 4a: The Shenbao guan.

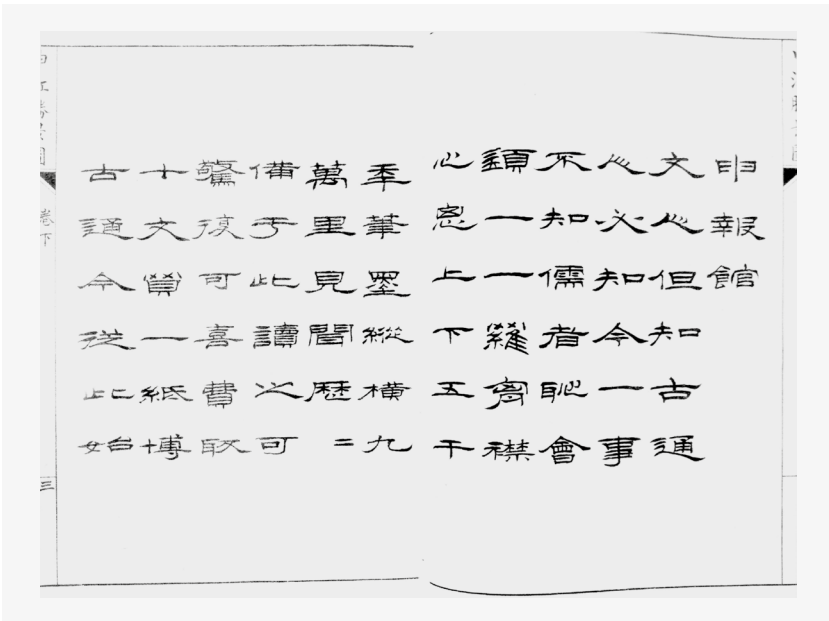


Figure 4b: Text for the image of the Shenbao guan office.

soil with a remarkable quality of life that included a truly international entertainment sector. But how could such a place qualify in Chinese eyes as having “great sights” that would make it worthwhile for people to travel there for pleasure? And what is a great sight (*shengjing*), anyway?

While the terms *mingjing* 名景 or *mingsheng* 名勝 were widely used for famous Chinese sites panegyricized in poems and described in travel books, the term *shengjing* 勝景 used in the title of the Shenbao guan book was a bit of an exception. Lai Yu-chih has documented its use since the late Ming, but for contemporary Shanghai she only found examples that were probably published after the Shenbao guan volume had come out.<sup>25</sup> I would suggest that its new popularity came from the fact that it had been used in Japanese publications of photograph albums, with the first documentation known to me being the title of an 1879 volume with photographs of “great Japanese sites” that had been published by the Japanese Finance Ministry.<sup>26</sup> This would in turn indicate that the older term *shengjing* was recast in Japan as a translation of a Western concept such as “scenes of interest,” “great sights,” or “great sites,” which was becoming popular with the development of photography for tourists and the beginnings of ocean-crossing tourism.<sup>27</sup> These photographs transferred routines to the East that had been developed for images of urban centers such as Paris, Rome, London, or Chicago. The new volume thus links up with the rise of urban tourism in China, and in particular tourism to Shanghai as a site to experience modernity, the West, and high-class Chinese entertainments in a leisurely and non-threatening environment.

Major’s comparison of Shanghai with nature’s wonders in the advertisement alludes to Huang Fengjia’s preface to the Shenbao guan album.

Ever since famous sites have been heard of in the world, one part of them was attributed to nature 天, the other to man. Unchanging sublime beauty, foaming waters stretching into the distance—this is something coming from nature. Adding a pavilion and encircling it with a railing—this is the share done by man. Once the interaction between nature and man is achieved, the tourist spot is perfect. If there is only a human part but it is not accompanied by [gifts from] nature, the vulgar might go for such sites, but the refined will avoid them.

The Shanghai International Settlement offered the exception to this rule.

25 See Lai Yu-chih’s article in this volume, note 5, and Fig. 2.

26 *Nihon shōkei shashin chō* 日本勝景寫真貼 [Photographs of great sites of Japan] (Tokyo: Ōkurashō Insatsukyoku, 1879). The copy in the national Diet Library in Tokyo has been digitized on the NDL website, accessed April 28, 2017, <http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/762379>.

27 For a study of early Western and Japanese photographers dealing with Yokohama sites, see Mio Wakita, “Sites of ‘Disconnectedness’: The Port City of Yokohama, Souvenir Photography, and its Audience,” *Transcultural Studies* 2013, no. 2 (2013): 77–129.

However, as to [man-made] things which are utterly different and stunning with features completely out of the ordinary and the expected such as never existed in Chinese lands since oldest times, namely things of utmost human ingenuity and heaven-like craftsmanship—even the most refined scholars will consider it a pleasure to be the first to set their eyes on them and will not press the requirement of an endowment by nature. The sights of Shenjiang (=Shanghai) are of this kind.

Huang now offers a glimpse of the history and gushes about the present state of the place.

Shenjiang is in a corner of the Songjiang commandery. When at the transition from the Daoguang to the Xianfeng emperor [around 1850] the commerce between China and the external world was opened and the [merchants from] various Western countries were crowding in, our [honorary space] Court carved out a tiny speck of land next to the [Songjiang] river to let them have a place for trade, but within the shortest possible time it became a great metropolitan center in the Chinese lands. The splendor of its halls of learning and its ancestral temples, the majesty of its port, and the strength of its geographical position are without match in the world. As to the high masts and strong paddles crowding along the river—these are the ships from the different nations! As to the lofty buildings and outstanding works of architecture mingling in their splendor—these are the offices of the Westerners! As to the routined gallop on the left and the easy trot on the right [of the street] in rain and shine—these are the pleasure carriages! As to curved eyebrows and full cheeks, sweet sounds and pleasant music bewitching the soul and getting the heart all dizzy—these are the gatherings of the fashionable and sophisticated! And there is more, electricity is supplied for lamps [in houses], [gas] pipes have been laid underground to deliver fire [to lanterns] so that high and low illuminate each other and in the depth of night it is bright like day—all of which assists in spreading out the magic and gathering the elegant youth.

These fine accoutrements and exceptional devices create a scenery of unusual beauty where the wealthy merchants with their decked-out retainers enjoy themselves to their heart's content wherever their fancy takes them without any regrets—this all one might truly call splendid!<sup>28</sup>

Here we have the Settlements becoming in the nick of time a “great metropolitan center in Chinese lands” with advantages “without match in the

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28 Huang Fengjia 黃逢甲, “Xu 序 [Preface],” in *Shenjiang shengjing tu*, n.p.

world.” The economic mechanisms of this spectacular rise are mentioned as a matter of fact, but the focus is on the visible urban amenities and innovations which this city has brought to the Chinese lands. After mentioning that Major personally engaged the artist, the poets, and the calligraphers, the preface returns to the original argument.

Alas! As a general truth, what was the situation of this speck of earth in the past? White bones exposed to the sky, yellow grass all over, a place where hawks were crying and will-o'-the-wisps were flying about, truly desolate and abandoned. And, lo and behold, in just a few decades it became all crisscrossed with streets crowded with people, wide avenues have been opened up that are filled with precious goods in a glory and splendor that ranks first in the world—how could anybody say this was all made by nature with man only adding some embellishments?! It is rather human agency that has brought things to this perfection.<sup>29</sup>

This place, which a short while ago was uncultivated wasteland with a few tombs, was now a great place to visit. In one programmatic illustration, we see a Chinese paddlewheel steamer—sailing under a Qing flag and obviously owned by a Chinese company—packed with Chinese tourists approaching the Shanghai port (Fig. 5).

This image provides first-hand evidence of the Chinese “market” success of the International Settlement. People did not see this as hostile occupation, but as a settlement that brought interesting wonders to China.

But how else but through images, Huang continues, can one remember all these sights:

However, as things have changed with breathtaking speed and are transient like fleeting clouds, how could one be able to fix the appearance of things [in one’s memory]? And how should someone stuck with normal phenomena ever have been able to anticipate all this? Thus it is only with the help of the brush that a selection of the most beautiful and exquisite can be preserved so as to make the heart rejoice and give pleasure to the eye.

Fixing the sights in reproducible illustrations and adding a commentary with the information necessary to identify them thus creates a virtual tourist universe that allows the buyer, as the advertisement said, to ride through the city with his eyes while reclining in his chair, apart from offering topics for conversation with friends—and all this for eight *jiao*, not even one Chinese dollar.<sup>30</sup>

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29 抑人力所為有以至斯極也。

30 This is actually a surprisingly high price, but it came with much better quality. The *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo* only cost four *jiao*.

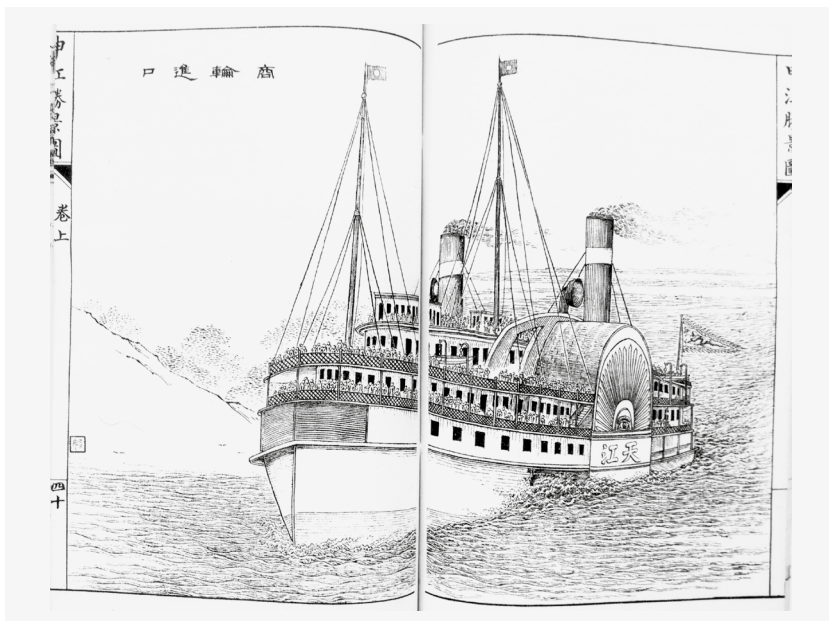


Figure 5: Wu Youru, *Commercial paddlewheel entering port (Shang lun jinkou 商輪進口)*. Chinese travelers arriving in Shanghai on a paddlewheel steamer owned by a Chinese company and sailing under a Qing flag.

Taking its cue from the competition, but also developing its own stance, the volume presents a gorgeous and fun city without a hierarchy and a center in a loose sequence of images as they might be encountered by a tourist in one of the rickshaws or horse-drawn carriages shown in the illustrations.

This is model settlement Shanghai, however. In an enlightened rejection of the mutual denial of the Chinese walled city and the foreign settlements,<sup>31</sup> this volume shows “famous sights” in both. It highlights the city’s (actually still unimpressive) educational institutions by starting off with the Shanghai xueguan 上海學館 in the walled city, but then includes the entire range of Shenbao guan subsidiaries such as the Shenbao guan office, the Dianshizhai lithography workshop where the book had been printed (Fig. 6), and even Major’s own house on Bubbling Well Road. This was not just self-aggrandizing because the Shenbao guan had indeed become an attraction for travelers, as the diaries of many literati and officials show, and it was the model emulated by the new publishing houses set up by Chinese merchants from the early 1880s.

31 Catherine V. Yeh, “Representing the City: Shanghai and its Maps,” in *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception*, ed. David Faure, 166–202 (Oxford: Palgrave in association with St. Antony’s College, 2002).

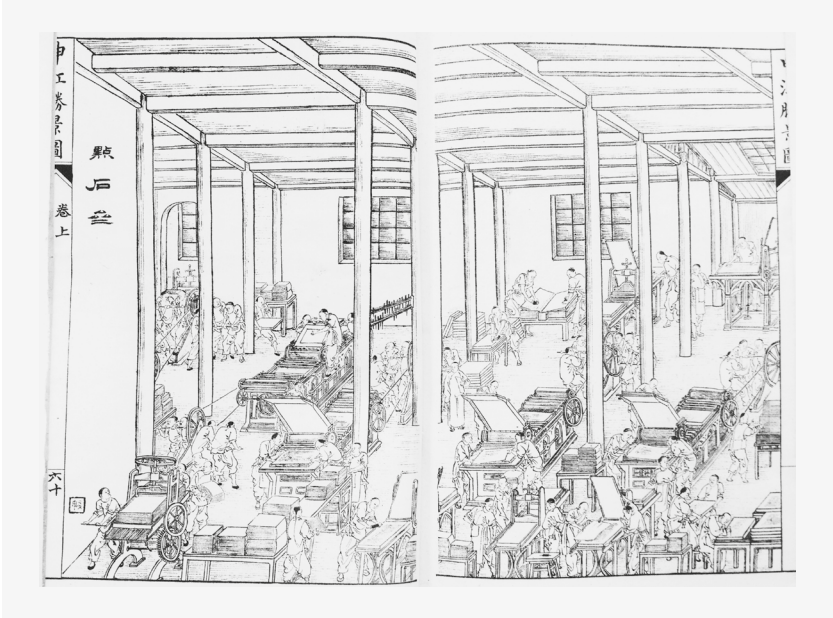


Figure 6: Wu Youru, *Dianshizhai* print shop (*Dianshizhai* 點石齋).

The volumes show Shanghai as a place where people of different nationalities and regions cohabitate in an orderly environment and where even Chinese women can go to the theater or circus and the race course is open to all.

The model settlement idea of peaceful coexistence of different sojourners within a regulated and prosperous urban environment informs the volume in both its depictions and in the items it leaves out. The *Shengjiang mingsheng tushuo* had quite a few scenes with rickshaw coolies in fistfights, robbers, and other scenes of conflict. None of this will be found here. What we find are peaceful street scenes with people of different ethnic backgrounds, sitting side by side enjoying the American Chiarini Circus or fretting at the race course over whether their preferred horse will win (Fig. 7). The Shanghai leisure pursuits here have taken on a distinctly transcultural character and make sure to include women (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9). And, needless to say, technical wonders such as the train to Woosung could be experienced here (Fig. 10).

*Illustrated Famous Sights* includes many items that might surprise as tourist attractions but are crucial for the functioning of Shanghai as an attractive modern city. Among them are the factory that produced the gas for the street lamps and eventually the apartments, the paved streets, the Arsenal, and the firefighters. At the same time, the album makes sure to include particular leisure preferences of Chinese and Westerners ranging from theaters, courtesan houses, restaurants, and elaborate opium dens



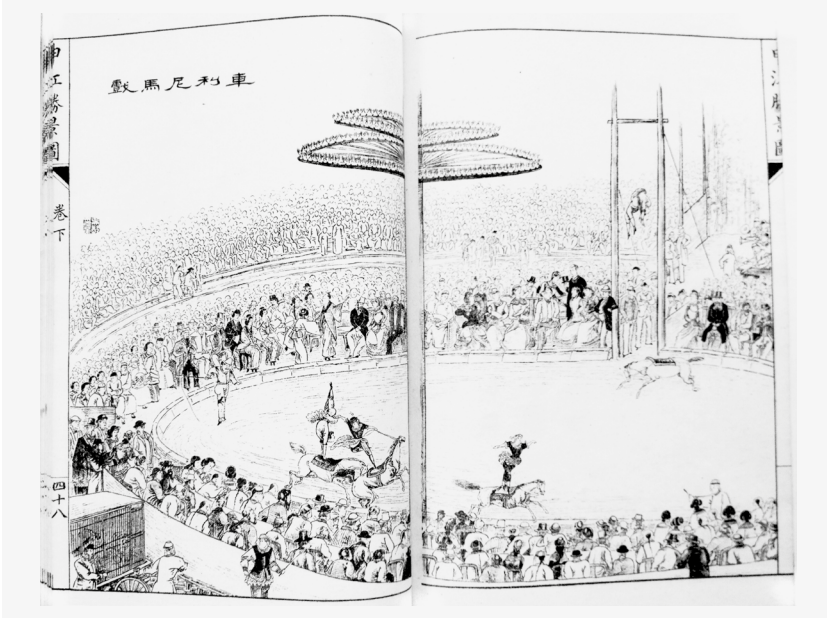


Figure 7: Wu Youru, *The Chiarini Circus (Chelini maxi 車利尼馬戲)*. Note the audience with Chinese, Westerners, and Japanese freely mixing and a strong presence of women from all three groups in the detail below.



Figure 8: Detail of Fig. 7. Chiarini circus audience with Chinese, Japanese, and Western men and women mixed in the audience.

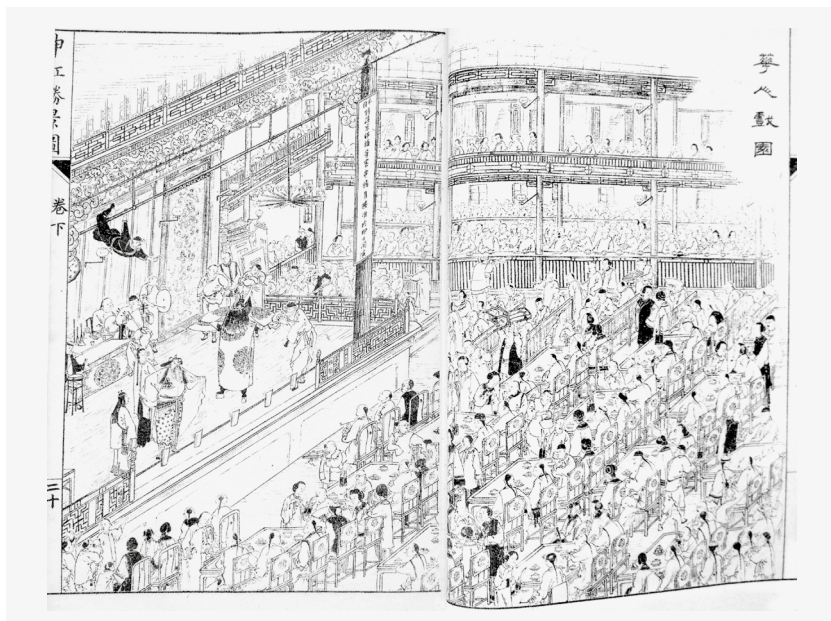


Figure 9: Wu Youru, *The Chinese Theater* (*Huaren xi tu* 華人戲園). There are many women in the audience at all levels. Elsewhere in China access to theater was barred for women.

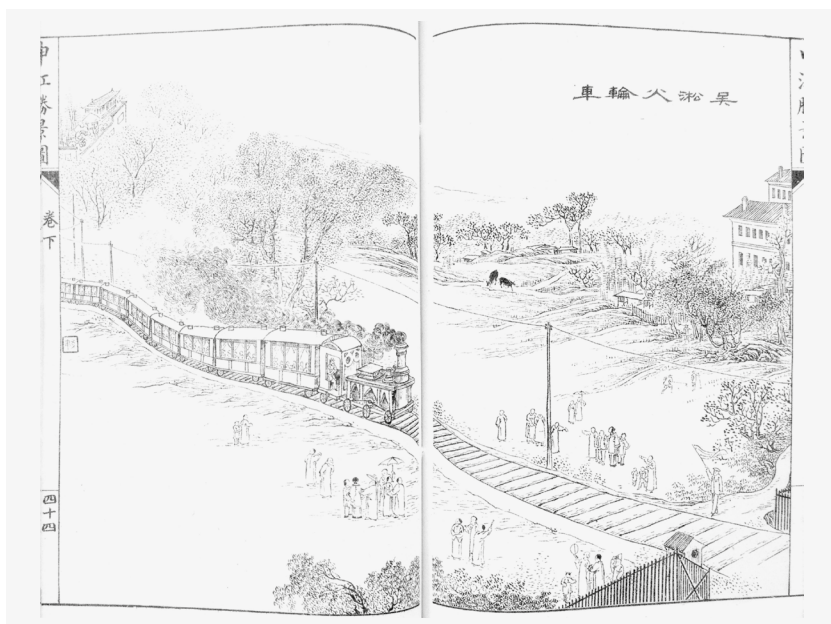


Figure 10: Wu Youru, *The Woosong train* (*Wusong huolunche* 吳淞火車輪).

frequented mostly by Chinese sojourners to seemingly quaint but often public strenuous sport exercises of foreigners of a kind not (yet) associated by Chinese with leisure (Fig. 11 and Fig. 12).

An 1867 article in the *North China Daily* newspaper from Shanghai describes this difference in attitude well:

It seems to be an unfortunate rule that Foreign amusements are regarded, by the Chinese, as so many types of insanity. Whether paper-hunting, insect-hunting, rowing or fishing be the pursuit, it is regarded by the Chinese as rank folly. Active exercise of any description is work; and—though the Chinese are industrious when industry is necessary to livelihood—they cannot be accused of liking work for the mere sake of physical exercise.<sup>32</sup>

This did not prevent a lively spectator's interest in these exercises as seen in the Chinese observing Westerners engaged in a rowing race (Fig. 13).

The album has an agenda, but it is that of the city itself as a model settlement, not as the outpost of some foreign power. The illustrations react to a double counter-text, one that emphasized the warlike, bullying, and uncouth nature of these foreigners, the other that emphasized their total cultural incompatibility with China. By presenting them as the creators of much of the urban quality of life offered by the Settlements and appreciated by Chinese sojourners and tourists alike and showing people of different cultural backgrounds and both genders rather innocently going about their amusements and exercise, these counter-texts are both rejected.

At this time, the work/leisure time divide common among Westerners with their weekly and daily rhythm had only started to be adapted by Chinese working for or with them.<sup>33</sup> A new Chinese periodical coming out in 1897 under the title *Leisure (Xiaoxian bao 消閒報)*, still found it necessary to introduce this "Western" divide to its Chinese readers.<sup>34</sup> Chinese tourism at this time was still a highly gendered and generational affair. Women, children, and probably the aged were not (yet) part of it. The advertisement for an 1884 *Famous Shanghai Sites Illustrated and Explained* discussed above suggested another attraction of such albums: the illustrations would allow such hitherto excluded groups a virtual tourist visit to the Settlements. "If womenfolk and children wish to see the great sights of Shanghai, they in all convenience can open these volumes and inform themselves, and browse through the illustrations, and it is as if they had

32 "Shanghai Amusements," *North China Daily News*, Oct. 9, 1867, 284.

33 A *Shenbao* editorial in 1874, "Disputing that the Shanghaiens were discarding Buddhism and following Western religion" [Huren she fojiao er cong xijiao bian 滬人捨佛教而從西教辨], *Shenbao*, December 11, 1874, 1, reports the impression of a visitor to the town that the seven-day week had been adopted by many Shanghaiens working with Westerners, from which this visitor concluded that they had all become Christians.

34 See C. Yeh, "Shanghai Leisure," 203–204.

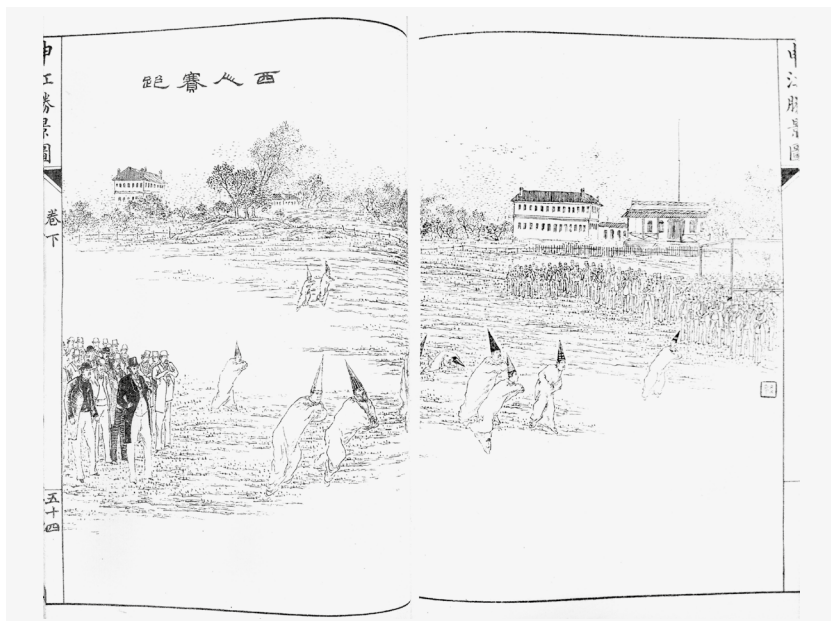


Figure 11: Wu Youru, *Sack race by Westerners (Xiren saipao 西人賽跑)*. The spectators seem to be mostly foreigners.

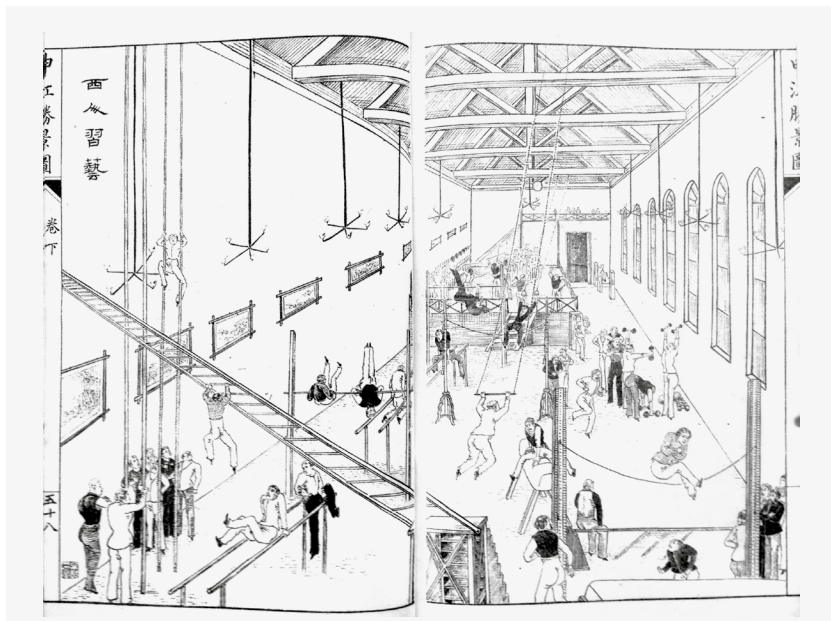


Figure 12: Wu Youru, *Westerners exercising (Xiren xi yi 西人習藝)*.

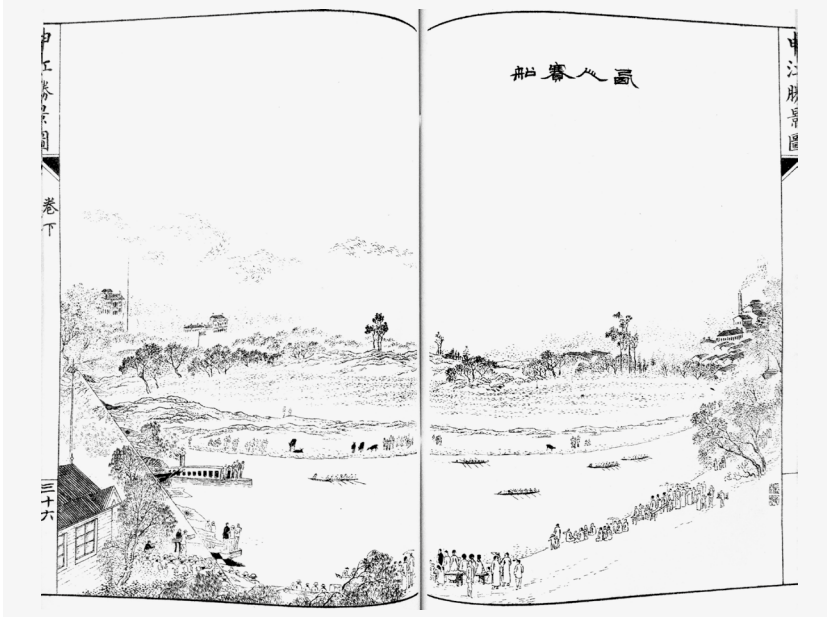


Figure 13: Wu Youru, *Westerners in rowing competition* (*Xiren sai chuan* 西人賽船). Note the presence of both Chinese and Western spectators.

gone in person to Shanghai.<sup>35</sup> In the illustrations to this work as much as in the *Shenbao guan* volume, women are very much present, be it in the theaters, restaurants, billiard rooms, or temples. These women, however, are courtesans, either alone or with their patrons, not the wives of visiting tourists; they are part of the sights, not visitors.

The city seems to have carried the main point, namely that Shanghai was not pushing some foreign agenda but was driven by an innocent “business only” attitude that was open to all regardless of their background. The evidence was the acceptance of the city, indicated by the large and growing number of Chinese sojourners and visitors, including some of the highest-ranking Chinese officials, who obviously did not consider this enemy territory. But we also have the pervasive and peaceful presence of Chinese sojourners in the illustrations, including venues such as theater or circus performances. This proves the point already made earlier for the *Shenbao guan*. The existence of the place is visible in its market success and in the active participation of Chinese in developing the place, which is similar to the cooperation between the *Shenbao guan* community and the company.

35 “Jingke xinhua *Shenjiang mingsheng tushuo*” 精刻新畫申江名勝圖說 [On the finely cut and newly illustrated *Famous Shanghai Sites Illustrated and Explained*] *Shenbao*, May 18, 1884.

The illustrated volumes thus present Shanghai as a gift of leisure and entertainment. Their focus is on the sights that may be seen or visited, in tune with the visual focus of the newly developing tourist industry. The business and money side of the Settlements remains in background, only visible as providing the backdrop for the quality of life offered by the Settlements, but important because it clears the settlement of the suspicion of an ulterior agenda. The volumes frame the tourist visit as part of an economy where the city offers its sights as a gift, and the tourist might engage in a free exercise of his whims that is not restricted by the hard laws of commerce, but rather comes with the freedom associated with tourist visits to places where one has no business, or “shopping” in the luxurious environments for goods one does not need.

The images serve to retain the memory of places seen, to offer the lure of places one might want to see or to replace the arduous or socially awkward personal visit with armchair travel. They are not simply passive realistic reflections of things seen. They fix the “sights” and make them into a collective knowledge as well as topic of conversation well beyond the circle of people who had already visited the town. The images heighten the attractiveness of these “sights” as well as fixing the image of the place as indicated by these sights. The album’s images are an even purer version of Shanghai as leisure and entertainment than a visit to the Settlements itself. They convey the city’s gift of its sites, and binds them together into an album that in its own turn will become part of the domestic gift economy of entertainment, being there for guests and members of the household to enjoy and for all to chat about.

These images were produced in the midst of a global turn towards the image as a conveyor of information with the reproducible image increasingly becoming the key medium to experience far-away places or sudden events elsewhere. There was a fierce competition between different kinds of reproducible images, fueled by a race for the latest technical advances, which gave these inventions stellar international careers. In the Chinese case, the woodblock print offered the traditional variant. Lithography, spreading slowly since the 1850s and then in great style once Major opened the Dianshizhai and other competitors joined in, all but replaced the woodblock print for newspaper illustrations and realistic illustrations after the 1880s. At the same time, Major spotted the potential of black-and-white lithography to offer high-quality reproductions of Chinese ink paintings and calligraphy and then inserted art reproductions into the company’s distribution network. Photography, the next competitor, was already waiting in the wings, with many efforts being under way to allow for its mass reproduction.

The Shenbao guan is part of “dreamland” Shanghai. Its production of this glowing image of Shanghai, the model settlement of sojourners from many different places living in prosperous peace, is itself part of the leisure and excitement the city offered. While it could serve as an album of images for visitors to reminisce, it carried these images and their implied message

far beyond the city and its male visitors as a gift to the parents, wives, and children who were eager to get a glimpse of this exciting place. All of this would have been cheap and ineffectual propaganda had it not been backed up by the actual attraction of the city for many of the most active and innovative minds, whether in business, in education and journalism, in the arts, or in politics, as well as for those most apt to assess the attractions of the city, China's own leisure class.

## Conclusions

The lifeline of culture is enrichment through transcultural interaction, and leisure is the soft spot where the new and exciting might be playfully tried out. This is true for social relations as much as for objects, activities, and thoughts. The Shenbao guan publishing strategies were not opportunistic. The Company did not assume that there was a settled desire out there that just needed to be discovered and satisfied. It learned from its interaction with Chinese men of letters and merchants, as well as the familiarity of its manager with developments elsewhere in the world that in these times of rapid and often tumultuous transition and change, people coming to places such as Shanghai were increasingly, if haltingly, open to and interested in the new. The Settlement itself pursued a similar if equally unarticulated policy. It assumed that the Chinese sojourners coming to the Settlement were open to change and offered a modern and exceedingly attractive urban environment while largely accommodating the values and traditions of the Chinese sojourners, as long as they were compatible with this environment. The Settlement thus offered a Chinese environment where modernity could be explored in a process of gradual accommodation and change for which leisurely pursuits provided a good testing ground.

The Shenbao guan company, as much as the city, had a clear and explicit commercial focus, and both were commercially successful. However, as the purveyor of "unneeded" goods and venues for leisure, the visibility of the commercial nature and interest had the effect of dissociating the company and the city from enterprises of foreign cultural advocacy and highlighting the exclusive agency of the Chinese readers, tourists, and sojourners in the success of the enterprise. The factual commercial nature of these offerings freed the customer from the burden of gift reciprocity and allowed him to do as he liked. In its depiction of Shanghai, the Shenbao guan was not shy about the commercial background of Shanghai's prosperity and the attractiveness of its sights, but the focus was not on commercial Shanghai, but on Shanghai as an interesting, entertaining, and ultimately modern visual feast gifted to the inland Chinese tourist.

In China, history is hard to predict. After many years of languishing in Mainland Chinese textbooks as the outpost of imperialist exploitation and domination, Shanghai has been officially redefined as the engine of China's modernization. Following this change in official policy, the Shanghai book

market is now full of nostalgic descriptions and images of the leisure glories of pre-1949 Shanghai, and many of the forms of leisure available in the city during these earlier years are being reintroduced in the context of a new affluence that is again fueled by another round of transcultural interaction.

## Figures

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Fig. 4 a–b: *Shenjiang shengjing tu* (Shanghai: Shenbao guan, 1884), 2:2.  
Fig. 5: *Shenjiang shengjing tu* (Shanghai: Shenbao guan, 1884), 1:40.  
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Fig. 12: *Shenjiang shengjing tu* (Shanghai: Shenbao guan, 1884), 2:58.  
Fig. 13: *Shenjiang shengjing tu* (Shanghai: Shenbao guan, 1884), 2:36.

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Rudolf G. Wagner and Catherine V. Yeh

# Frames of Leisure: Theoretical Essay

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**Abstract** This essay tries to delineate some of the general frames that define leisure. A frame marks a border between inside and outside. It signals a particular cohesiveness of what is inside as well as a marked difference towards the outside. In the case of leisure, these frames such as time, space or forms of exchange are not hard but are determined by both subjunctive and extraneous factors. Their malleability and contested nature is the common theme of this book. The purpose of this theoretical inquiry thus is not to define the multiple historically changing forms of human leisure, but the constitution of the framework within which they are pursued. While engaging with the rich Euro-American scholarship on leisure, for the delineation of this framework, this essay tries to overcome a Euro-centric bias in terms of theoretical concepts and historical sources. It focuses on case studies in different Asian historical environments in which new features come to light. Two examples stand out, the role of state and religious authorities in defining legitimate leisure, and the importance of the transcultural nature of leisure, which accounts for it being the major source for cultural innovation and social change.

**Keywords** leisure theory, government regulation of leisure, providers and consumers of leisure, gift economy, space and time of leisure

This essay tries to delineate some of the general frames that define leisure. A frame marks a border between inside and outside. It signals a particular cohesiveness of what is inside as well as a marked difference of this inside to what is outside. In the case of leisure, these frames are not hard but are determined by both subjunctive and extraneous factors. Their malleability and contested nature is addressed with the title of this volume of case studies, *Testing the Margins of Leisure*. The purpose of this essay thus is not to define the multiple historically changing forms of human leisure, but the constitution of the framework within which they are pursued.

While engaging with the rich scholarship on Euro-American leisure, for the delineation of this framework, the essay tries to overcome the Euro-American bias toward theoretical concepts and empirical data by referring to the case studies on leisure in different Asian historical environments in this volume and drawing on the discussions in which all of the contributors to this volume as well as a number of other Asian scholars took part.<sup>1</sup>

The frames presented here take up the critical questions about a methodology that considers the Euro-American experience as the natural representative of humankind's common experience. They are not a polemical counterpoint but rather a first effort to draw on a much broader base of evidence to develop general conceptual frames for leisure that take up the key elements from all sides. As it turns out, the Asian experience—some cases of which are documented in this volume—highlights not only the pertinence for Asia of some of the conceptual generalizations made on the basis of Euro-American data, but also the importance of issues not addressed in these generalizations.

We were faced with strong horizontal and vertical asymmetries in the research we could draw on. On the horizontal axis, there is a regional asymmetry, with comparatively little published empirical work on Asian leisure. On the vertical side, between theoretical and empirical research, the asymmetry is even sharper, as most studies of Asian leisure simply draw on a selection of theoretical concepts offered by studies on Euro-America. Our own essay here might be seen as a first step to address these asymmetries on the conceptual side. Its arguments, the reader should be warned, are presented as straightforward propositions for the sake of economy and provocation. They should be read, however, as so many hypotheses in need of much further research for their veri- or falsification. The best this essay can hope to do is to help set the stage for further research that overcomes the asymmetries.

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1 We have especially benefitted from the critical input of the two other editors, Robert Weller and Eugenio Menegon. While much of the potential merit of this essay is due to these discussions, the ultimate responsibility especially for those parts that might not hold up is, needless to say, with the authors of this essay.

## Space and time

### SPACE

Leisure creates its space. This space is set off by “heterotopy” as a different space of its own against other spaces, but no space is intrinsically tied to leisure. Such a destination depends on the subjunctive mode<sup>2</sup> (of playfulness) among those engaged in leisure pursuits in that space.<sup>3</sup> Competing uses of space such as ritual (as in Robert Weller’s study), work (as in Sarah Frederick’s study), war, or state coercion (as in Tim Oakes’s study) also largely depend on the subjunctive mode of the participants. Temporal or permanent spaces of leisure are framed by markers (architectural features, decoration styles), which set them off against other spaces. Availability of and access to leisure spaces varies with social rank (including race) and gender, with higher ranks and males, as a historical rule, being privileged.

The appropriation and transformation of spaces for leisure purposes may be temporal (playing ball on the street), seasonal (using the town square for a fiesta), or more permanent (playground, summer palace). More permanent leisure spaces might historically be public, such as the Roman arena, or exclusively for rulers and their entourage, such as the Summer Palace or the Yuanmingyuan garden in Beijing, the Kashmir summer residence for the Mughal, or the Caspian Sea retreat for the Safavid rulers. They might be hidden within, or be attached to, places for official functions, such as the “peasant village” Le Hameau in Versailles, which allowed the ladies of the court to circulate in a protected bucolic environment, or what is known as Qianlong’s Garden in the Forbidden City in Beijing. In modern times, more permanent leisure places might be publicly accessible venues such as the Tivoli, the sports arena, restaurant, theater, museum, or the seaside resort of modern tourism. They also might be private spaces such as the urban living room, the exclusive club, the courtesan house, or the backdoor gambling site.

The relative strength of leisure’s claim to heterotopy is reflected in its low standing in the hierarchy of pursuits when its space becomes contested. Youths playing soccer on the street have to make place for cars

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- 2 The notion of “subjunctive” has been developed for ritual by Adam B. Seligman et al., *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). It avoids the notion of “subjective” as being too tightly connected with the historically specific development of individual “subjectivity.” It takes up earlier discussions of leisure space and time not being an objective fact, but constituted on a “discursive level” that is predicated by historical conditions such as social formations. See Chris Rojek, *Decentering Leisure. Rethinking Leisure Theory* (London: Sage, 1995), 1.
  - 3 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949); and Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961). Originally published in 1938 and 1958 respectively in Dutch and French.

with people going about serious purposes. A sports stadium will become a mass shelter or mass prison in times of crisis.

The subjunctive mode is not intrinsically unified in its take on a given leisure pursuit, but might involve different elements for different participants. For a king, it might be to get away from the rigors of protocol; for a courtier, to have an informal occasion to be near the king; for a member of the *nouveau-riche*, to display his wealth and standing; for an ostracized schoolchild, to be accepted by the group to play; for young people to find love; and for a shady character to find the weak spots of potential victims.

From a perspective outside its frames, leisure tends to set its own rules and does not necessarily obey rules imposed from outside by the state or social convention. This “anomic” potential of leisure (see further down) might be realized by rejecting a space, time, or practice of leisure that has been determined by authorities to be acceptable and desirable and opt for another, as discussed by Tim Oakes, or to accept the legitimation of a space/time/practice for leisure, but infuse its pursuit with implications that might be critical of the authorities legitimizing it in the first place, as studied by Catherine Yeh.

This anomic potential becomes more pronounced in private or secluded spaces such as the home, a gambling den, or a gathering place for users of illegal drugs. This is in part due to their being regarded as private and of no concern for public order, and in part due to the difficulty of regulating such spaces.

## TIME

Leisure creates its time. Leisure time is set off as a different time of its own, against other times (daily routines such as work, state affairs, religious practice, study, sleep), but no time is intrinsically destined for leisure.<sup>4</sup> The definition of a time span as leisure depends on the subjunctive mode of participants, a mode that is conditioned by the anticipation and expectation of pleasure in a leisure time that has been sanctioned (Sundays, holidays) or is considered safe from outside controls. A frustration of such an expectation—a regular experience associated with boredom, empty time, disturbing interference from outside, and hectic activities<sup>5</sup>—will lead to the search for other occasions rather than the abandonment of leisure pursuits.

Leisure time is marked in its temporality through symbolic gestures (whistle at the beginning of a game, going somewhere else for a time on holidays). These gestures reflect the sociable nature of leisure as they establish a common frame, and they mark the period when rules and

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4 Rojek and others have been instrumental in showing that the earlier assumption by sociologists (Dumazedier among others) that there were time/spaces intrinsically devoted to leisure were ill-founded.

5 See Ralph Glasser, *Leisure—Penalty or Prize* (London: Macmillan 1970).

routines accepted for other time/spaces do not apply. As this subjunctive mode is at the core, the “free” time someone has who is unemployed, sick, or rich does not in itself qualify as leisure time, while the busy time of someone who enjoys his paid or unpaid concentrated work without a feeling of alienation might very well qualify as leisure, as discussed by Robert Weller.

Depending on historical context and individual occupation and rank, leisure time is more concentrated in specific time periods (evenings, weekends, holidays, early childhood and old age, winter) and it may depend on institutional arrangements (public/religious holidays, labor rules). The time-span theoretically available for leisure generally depends on the time left after securing the means for survival. This means that individually it depends on wealth while collectively it depends on the level of productivity. The latter changes over time and is different for different environments. This means that the time-span available for leisure is historically conditioned. With modernity, increased leisure time has become available to a much larger segment of the population in developed and developing states.

Given the anomic potential of leisure pursuits,<sup>6</sup> state and religious authorities see the need and assume the right to regulate the times (and spaces) for the legitimate exercise of these pursuits, sometimes differentiated for different classes of people.<sup>7</sup>

The relative weakness of leisure's claim to heterochrony reflects its low standing in the hierarchy of occupations when it is contested. It will have to cede its claim to higher-ranking claims (state, religion, workplace, individual work priority) especially during crisis modes when its subjunctive support also tends to weaken.

## SPACE/TIME

Leisure space/time attempts to create a temporary/local utopian environment. Across the world and with a variety of specific rationales, people have developed narratives of utopian time/spaces, in many cases paired with their dystopian counterpart. These utopian time/spaces reflect on the pleasure associated with leisure by being permanently characterized by it. The dystopian counterpart, whether it is a form of hell, prison, war, or life outside of Eden, is above all characterized by the severe restriction or complete absence of leisure. The narratives about

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6 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (1965), trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

7 Henry Fielding, *An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Increase of Robbers etc., with some Proposals for Remediying this Growing Evil* (London: Millar, 1751), has provided a detailed history of these state regulations in Rome and England. For the PRC after the Cultural Revolution, see Jing Wang, ed., *The State Question in Chinese Popular Culture*, special issue of *positions: east asia cultures critique* 9, no. 1 (Spring, 2001).

these fantasy worlds connect them in a projection of ultimate justice to earthly leisure by largely linking the post-mortem fate of an individual to the moral pitch of the type of pursuit engaged in during leisure times while alive.

The narratives about paradise show in a pure form the aspirations people associate with their earthly leisure times, namely a space/time with "autotelic" pursuits that have their end in themselves, without the social (hierarchies), economic (creation of surplus), political (asymmetries of power), and psychological constraints (gender, age, values) of "normal" life, at least for a time. State authorities follow the same logic on the opposite end by penalizing activities that are largely associated with anomic forms of leisure through a pale image of dystopian hell in the form of a system of prisons and forced labor accompanied by the controlled elimination of the time/space of leisure for the inmates. The voluntary forfeiture of the time/space of leisure in an ascetic religious life is advertised as an investment in the moral economy that will secure the permanent enjoyment of leisure in paradise.

## "Autotelic" and "heterotelic" pursuits

### AUTOTELIC CONSUMPTION OF LEISURE

Leisure pursuits of the consumers of leisure have their aim (telos) in themselves (auto), they are "autotelic." This sets them off against pursuits that are driven by the aim for a positive or negative ulterior (hetero) aim (telos) such as getting a salary for making tires; they are "heterotelic."<sup>8</sup> While leisure pursuits may have benefits such as improved skills which might translate into status improvement, as discussed by Sarah Frederick and Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, or lead to professional advancement, or even result in a product (Weller), and while they may have downsides such as injuries, drunkenness, addiction, or legal prosecution, these results are not driving the leisure pursuit itself.

Participation in leisure pursuits is voluntary. The voluntary nature of leisure is based on its autotelic nature. Imposed participation in leisure undercuts or undoes the pleasure associated with it and removes the pursuit from the field of leisure.

Leisure lives off the surplus value of heterotelic pursuits. This is true for space, time, and expenses, most evidently in people saving money from their work to pay for leisure expenses. In social reality, however, the leisure of one—such as a member of Veblen's leisure class—might come

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8 This argument goes back to an observation by Herbert Spencer. It has been more recently explored for animal behavior in Rick W. Mitchell, "A Theory of Play." In *Interpretation and Explanation in the Study of Animal Behavior*, vol. 1: *Interpretation, Intentionality, and Communication*, eds. Marc Bekoff and Dale Jamieson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 197–227.



from the surplus of someone else's heterotelic occupation—such as the added value of the labor of people in his employ. The consequence of these asymmetries in access to disposable added value is an asymmetry in the quantity and quality of leisure that is at the disposal of different individuals for example as a consequence of inheritance or power asymmetries.

The consequence is that leisure has to defend itself against charges of being self-indulgent hedonism, that it is a waste of resources economically and a lack of commitment to communal benefit morally.

In the moral economy, leisure has to be deserved, and in the money economy, it has to be earned. The ensuing defensive posture shows up in claims even by plutocrats to have once worked hard and for the public benefit to deserve extensive and luxurious leisure as well as by claims that, autotelic as they may be, many "rational" or "serious" leisure pursuits objectively contribute to culture, education, to developing the mental and bodily potential of those engaged in them, and to restoring body and mind after heterotelic exertions.

The subjunctive expectation of the pleasures associated with leisure pursuits in turn puts pressure on heterotelic occupations to match its pleasures or to be infused with leisure elements. This is especially true if a high degree of engagement and creativity in these heterotelic pursuits is considered desirable. On the individual side, this tension between the autotelic pleasure promise of leisure and the heterotelic need to secure a livelihood might lead to a conscious choice of a type of heterotelic pursuit that promises a high degree of pleasurable identification even though the material rewards might be relatively low or unstable. Scholars, writers, and artists of the kind discussed by Robert Weller and Lai Yu-chih often pride themselves on having accepted this bargain. On the side of employers and patrons ranging from Ming dynasty merchant patrons of painters to Count Esterhazy's patronage of Viennese composers, as well as to universities, research institutes, noble courts, Google, or Microsoft, encouraging this kind of creative engagement has taken the form of offering environments with a maximum affinity to autotelic leisure pursuits (such as "pure research") and of reducing the visibility of the underlying asymmetrical social relationships (such as those between a patron and his "guest") as well as the pressures coming with it.

The dividing line between auto- and heterotelic pursuits is not hard, as either one might be the way to the other. Learning the piano as a leisure pursuit might end up in a career as a professional musician, or it might be the way to acquire the sophistication and taste to qualify for entry into elegant leisure environments, while being a professional musician might in turn lead to membership in a class committed to serious elegant leisure. These real and potential trajectories are discussed in the studies by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Sarah Frederick.

## The economies of leisure: The gift and money

Leisure involves two sets of actors, those doing the heterotelic work of providing for the consumption of leisure (entertainers, servants), and those in the autotelic consumption of leisure. The first operate in a money economy with the second, the second in a gift economy among themselves. The gift economy has been mostly treated as a precursor of the money economy,<sup>9</sup> and the money economy as simply facilitating reciprocal exchange. The gift economy, however, is not simply an element of the deep past, or of societies without a money economy. It continues to play an important role to this day in a close and tense relation with the money economy. Gifts are bought as goods in the money economy, but they are then transformed into gifts geared towards the time/space of leisure.

The gift economy of leisure operates with a pretense of equality. This pretense is crucial for the enjoyment in consuming leisure. The equality is most clearly articulated in the voluntary (although often ritualized and reinforced by expectations) exchange of gifts.

Leisure marks one of the points of transition between the two economies. A visibility of features of the money economy in the gift economy of leisure would undercut the egalitarian pretense, and with it the pleasure. The tense relationship between money-bought goods and services on the one side and their gift form on the other shows up in practices designed to prevent the money economy from visibly interfering with leisure pursuits or in the transformation of money-bought goods and services into gifts. As examples of preventing interference from the money economy, one might mention paying for drinks or a dinner out of view of one's guests; ritual banter among Chinese about the privilege to invite others; the British routine for groups of beer-drinking men in a pub to invite each other in turn for a round with the payment coming after drinking is finished; invisible "public" financing of leisure venues such as playgrounds or parks; or accounting for Chinese courtesan house services by the majordomo in a separate process at another time and space so that the make-believe of an egalitarian gift relationship between patron and courtesan is maintained.<sup>10</sup> For the transformation of products from the money economy into those of the gift economy, the manifest form is the elaborate gift packaging in shops or at home.

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9 Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés primitives" (1923-1924), has laid the foundations for the anthropological study of the gift economy. Since its publication, sociologists and economists have joined in what has become a wide-ranging and highly diverse discussion.

10 There are many other areas where the gift economy prevails, such as relations between lovers, within a family, or with divine authorities and their earthly representatives. For the latter, see Rudolf G. Wagner, "Fate's Gift Economy: The Chinese Case of Coping with the Asymmetry between Man and Fate," in *Money as God? The Monetization of the Market and the Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics*, eds. Jürgen von Hagen and Michael Welker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 184-218.

For the providers of leisure, supporting the gift economy aura of leisure has the additional benefit that real money becomes “funny money,” giving goods and services a subjunctive value rather than a hard market-determined goods/price relation, an issue discussed by Robert Weller. This subjunctive value is skewed in favor of the provider. The use of services and goods as gifts replaces most of the parameters valid for regular purchases in a market (usefulness, price/material value ratio, competition) with others (luxury, difference to everyday goods and services, beauty, rarity, packaging, finish, reflection on the taste and standing of the donor) while securing a momentary monopoly to the provider.

Inserted into the time/space of leisure, money itself changes character. It acts as a fun-enhancer in the same way as playing for points does in a friendly squash game. Examples are gambling or playing Majiang or Poker for money. The normal constraints (cost/measurable benefit relation) are giving way as money assumes a new identity in the leisure environment (pretense of immeasurable wealth/time/space, which takes away the penny-pinching of the regular money economy).

The anonymous abstract reciprocity of the money economy contrasts with the personalized reciprocity of the gift economy. Situated at the interface between the two, leisure providers may assume that the reciprocity implied in leisure economy exchanges serves their particular interests better than pecuniary remuneration. This is especially true if what they aim for cannot be bought with the money they might earn. Eugenio Menegon’s case study in this volume shows that the aim of the Catholic missionaries in gifting and maintaining leisure goods for the Qing court and high officials was not to exact a price that would leave them a profit, but primarily to have the court and the officials reciprocate with the toleration of their missionary efforts. In a similar strategy, a Chinese courtesan might go out of her way to woo a particular patron in the hope that he might buy her freedom and make her his second wife.<sup>11</sup>

On the other end, as studied in this volume by Rudolf Wagner, a provider might emphasize the commercial nature of his leisure products to shield himself from suspicions that he is distributing propaganda material at prices subsidized by religious groups or a foreign power, which would deprive his print products of their pleasurable nature and with it, their market success.

## The social relations of leisure

Leisure is social. Leisure pursuits privilege sociable engagement. This sociability is most evident in temporary gatherings for feasts, parties, or celebrations and in the establishment of more permanent leisure venues for many participants such as theaters, casinos, tourist resorts, sports

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11 Catherine V. Yeh. *Shanghai Love. Shanghai Love: Courtesans, Intellectuals and Entertainment Culture, 1850–1910* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 110–118.

arenas, the public squares discussed by Tim Oakes, or the malls discussed by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner.

Leisure favors egalitarian sociability. The social relations prevailing among leisure participants are set off against the hierarchies prevailing in other space/times. They are performed on an assumption of equality among the participants. While this equality does not in principle include providers and professional service staff, for whom providing leisure is work, the principal entertainers (such as courtesans, singers, or literati enjoying patronage) will be included in the make-believe of egalitarian sociability. The commercial element of the relationship with the patrons will remain out of sight.

The pretense of egalitarian sociability comes under stress if in real life the social distance is too great. For state rulers and their entourage, for example, it is well-nigh impossible to shake off the stiff hierarchies separating them outside the leisure time/space. This is the Midas touch of power, and it makes for the difficulty of figures such as rulers to establish a true leisure time/space for themselves and for their ever-renewed efforts in this direction.

To enhance the semblance of egalitarianism, participants make efforts to give it symbolic expression, for example through leisure attire or informal speech that will visibly contrast with the hierarchized official dress and speech codes. A classic case of the former is the change from the starched woolen official dress to the easy flowing silk dress worn by third-century Chinese literati in their private leisure space, as visible in depictions of the "Seven Sages from the Bamboo Grove." The spillover of leisure dress (jeans, sneakers) into modern work places and venues of elegant leisure such as opera performances, a spillover pioneered in the United States, signals the pressures on heterotelic pursuits mentioned above, and the tendency to stress the egalitarian rather than the hierarchical element in leisure pursuits.

Space, time, and content of leisure are negotiated on the assumption of equality among participants. Infractions will undercut or undo the pleasure aspect of leisure. The result of the negotiation is not a dependent variable of power, money, or cultural capital, although all three may come into play if accepted by the participants. This acceptance hinges on those disposing of any one of these three to maintain the voluntary character and the pretense of equality.

## Leisure and social change

Leisure is the most suitable platform to test and adapt social change.<sup>12</sup> The time/space of leisure is the privileged environment for the "new." Free from the restrictions of heterotelic activities, leisure facilitates playful pursuits of alternative roles, thoughts, practices, and values. Given the anomic

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12 This has been suggested by Nicole Samuel, "The Prehistory and History of Leisure Research in France," in *Leisure Research in Europe: Methods and Traditions*,

tinge of the leisure environment, these playful pursuits might go in many different directions, ranging from role-playing characters identified with foreignness, wealth, libertinage, or the criminal underworld, to breaking free from inherited concepts and forms to make scientific breakthroughs or cultural innovations.<sup>13</sup> Leisure is the privileged space for love-making.

Because of the openness of this environment and its commitment to the excitement of the new—both a function of leisure's not being bound by heterotelic constraints—leisure is a privileged contact zone that easily accommodates features from other cultures as well as from other groups (such as prostitutes, courtesans, stars, or royalty) that might otherwise be out of reach or acceptability in the estimation of the given participants. This openness and craving for the new and foreign will be most graphically seen on the elite level in imperial collections for leisure in courts across Eurasia, with their commitment to find the most refined and interesting objects from around the world; on the more popular level in the Tivoli or Disney entertainment parks, with their efforts to reach across the world for entertainment offerings; or in the pervasive presence of foreign performers, artists, and genres in leisure venues from the Mughal, Qing, Ottoman, or European courts to modern concert halls. The key role of leisure in facilitating innovation through transcultural interaction is addressed in most of the essays in the present volume.

Leisure's openness to the new is due to the fact that it largely sets its own rules. Leisure's autonomy is a function of its being an autotelic pursuit. The autonomy comes with the threat of anomy from the perspective of authorities regulating and/or monitoring the space/time/action outside the leisure realm (state, religious authorities, family, charities). This anomy expresses itself in all directions, from consensually breaking laws banning certain leisure pursuits to exploring innovative ideas and activities without heterotelic constraints. The consequence is that social change (cultural, technical, criminal) is largely generated in the subjunctive mode of leisure.

With the increased proportion of leisure time in recent history, innovations geared towards leisure have become dominant economic factors. The ten companies in the world's largest economy with the highest market value at present are without exception anchored in the leisure economy. This moves leisure pursuits to the center of the money economy, which in turn forces state and religious authorities to recalibrate their effort to regulate leisure. These efforts were originally based on the notion that the anomy inherent in leisure pursuits put them in constant danger of

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eds. H. Mommaas, H. van der Poel, P. Bramhan, and I. P. Henry (Wallingford: CAB International, 1996), 12.

13 While there are few studies about the place of leisure in transcultural interaction, its role in cultural innovation has been discussed, possibly beginning with the Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper's 1947 argument that leisure was the condition for both culture and religion, which joined the English-language discussion in 1964. Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis for Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru with an introduction by T. S. Eliot (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).

becoming economically wasteful, morally reprehensible, socially destabilizing, and legally questionable.

Given a changing understanding of the importance of leisure pursuits for the economy and for desirable innovation, states have begun to decriminalize certain pursuits originally criminalized (sexual practices and preferences, drugs for recreational use), while expanding prosecution of others (child pornography), and have largely stopped the regulation of times legitimately set aside for leisure. Highly invasive states such as the People's Republic of China have created a legitimate domain for leisure pursuits considered beneficial (consumption, health) while actively blocking or outlawing others and proactively promoting healthy leisure pursuits, as studied by Tim Oakes. In a similar manner, religious bodies have abandoned the moral opprobrium attached to leisure and developed forms of integrating "healthy" leisure pursuits into a religiously acceptable life, as discussed by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner. Many new religious groups or trends have begun to include consumerism ("shopping") in the activities offered by their centers as a way to attract newcomers to their religion, generate funds for their institutions, and keep people away from forms of leisure deemed unhealthy.

## The pursuit of leisure

Leisure has its own types of activity, but there are no intrinsic leisure pursuits. Any activity might be associated with leisure as discussed in Robert Weller's study, but only if it is subjunctively engaged with in that mode.

Leisure has its own behavioral, moral, and aesthetic code. This code is characterized by a conscious abandonment and even rejection of the strict rules (dress, language, body posture, gender relations, social hierarchies, sumptuary rules, consumption patterns, moral precepts) prevailing elsewhere, and its playful and temporary replacement with a separate code, which allows much greater leeway. Carnival is a classical example. The availability and access to such a leisure time/space in tense industrial, urban, or court environments might be instrumental for sustaining the viability of "normal" life.

There is a stratification of leisure pursuits for a given time and place that establishes, in the perception of elites and authorities, a hierarchy from elegant to crude. While loosely related to social hierarchy, the leisure hierarchy is not a dependent variable of social hierarchy as it comes with its own demands on qualification. In terms of participation in leisure pursuits of other social layers, there is conditional symmetry of access. Those in the higher echelons might participate in the leisure pursuits of those in the lower echelons by adapting to their behavior, while those from the lower echelons might participate in elegant leisure if they adjust their taste and behavior to its aesthetic standards. Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Sarah Frederick address these adjustment processes. The function of

these adjustments is not to disturb the egalitarian homogeneity of the group.

Leisure's tendency to anomy opens the way for different types of new norms. These might range from agreeing on rules for a friendly game to the development of a vast shadow economy of leisure by providers (such as gambling houses, brothels, or porn sites) that in many cases openly contravenes the laws and regulations presumably valid for all activities. Between these two extremes there are endless variations such as the illegal stalls on the public square, discussed by Tim Oakes, or the private parties attended by young Muslim men and women, discussed by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner. The shadow economy of leisure is often accompanied by efforts to protect its anomy by setting up spaces of leisure that are shielded from the enforcement of these laws and regulations. The shadow economy of leisure also comes with its own transcultural entanglements in its organization, personnel, finances, and contents. Notwithstanding its huge and growing importance, it has received little attention in specialized leisure scholarship.

The anomic tendency of leisure pursuits has in turn led to efforts by state and religious authorities to delegitimize at least this aspect and to proactively promote behavioral models, values, and venues deemed compatible with social order, to infuse, to use their own terms, leisure with "civilizing" or "healthy" features. The studies by Tim Oakes, Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, Robert Weller, and Catherine V. Yeh in this volume address these efforts.

The delegitimation of leisure pursuits does not only pertain to the lower orders. The most extreme case might be the nearly total delegitimation of leisure pursuits of the ruler as incompatible with his government duties in the normative canon administered by Chinese scholar-officials.<sup>14</sup>

Leisure is the time/space where many of the otherwise accepted and/or enforced social rules do not apply or are seen as not applying. This is true for sexual relations or drug use, including alcohol. These tend to be handled more casually in this time/space. It is also true for a much wider range of activities such as gambling, reading, or viewing salacious works or works focused on violent action.

With the growth of urban centers with workers and industries, cohabitation within the same urban space of people from different classes became the norm. The anomic element of leisure activities among the participants (especially of the lower orders, but not restricted to them), among the providers (the gang-and-lawyer-ridden shadow economy of leisure that is pushed out of the mainstream commercial activities by the liminization and/or outlawing of many leisure activities), and among petty criminals prowling the pockets of unsuspecting revelers, led to efforts to contain and civilize this space-time. We see these efforts in the studies of

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14 Anne Behnke Kinney, "The Anxiety of Leisure in Early China," *The Chinese Historical Review*, 23, no. 2 (2016): 96-103.

Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Tim Oakes. In urban centers, this came with a new institution with its own transcultural career: the urban police. The 1829 Police Reform Act (Peel) typically targeted London (with the exception of the City, where local government strongly objected to power being taken away), and it was from here that the new institution of police gradually spread to other urban centers. In one of the first essays suggesting the establishment of such a police force, which was written by none other than Henry Fielding (the author of *Tom Jones*) in 1751, a police force was proposed as an instrument to prevent robberies, gambling, and unregistered accommodations for travelers, prostitutes, and refugees from prosecution, but also to regulate and civilize the leisure behavior of the urban working people. This institution for regulating and controlling came at the same time as efforts in England to replace leisure reading of "scrap books" of questionable morals mostly among working people. The scrap-book format had already been used by people such as Thomas Paine (*Rights of Man*, 1791, *Age of Reason*, 1793–1794, *Agrarian Justice*, 1797) to spread revolutionary ideas. Betterment advocates such as the Clapham Sect in London set out to crowd out such salacious or incendiary works with healthy and edifying tracts, and with compendia of "useful knowledge" such as the Penny enterprise from the Chambers brothers in Edinburgh. At the same time, the "rational leisure" advocates in England, Germany, and elsewhere, discussed by Tim Oakes, were pushing for healthy bodily exercise and the public venues needed for it, an idea of guiding leisure that had its own international career.

Leisure has its own aesthetics associated with particular literary and artistic forms. Leisure aesthetics is characterized by asymmetry and irregularity as opposed to the symmetry and regularity in the aesthetics of political and religious orthodoxy. The Jesuit missionary Jean Denis Attiret (1702–1768) writes in his 1743 description of the Yuanming yuan garden in Peking, which became the model for the layout of environments of leisure in Europe (gardens, parks), "on admire l'art avec lequel cette irregularité est conduit [one admires the artfulness in which this irregularity is executed]."<sup>15</sup> These aesthetics leave their imprint on the genres associated with leisure, such as ritual music versus music for entertainment; documentation and essay versus poetry; or official political or religious portraiture, with its emphasis on symmetry, versus painting and drawing for leisure enjoyment.

The taste in leisure aesthetics is stratified with the claim of the upper classes to have more refined tastes and forms of behavior. As discussed in the studies by Nancy J. Smith-Hefner and Sarah Frederick, acquisition of these tastes and forms of behavior is a relatively stringent condition for members of the lower echelons to be accepted in the upper classes. Among the successful strategies for the foreign-owned Shenbaoguan in Shanghai

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15 See Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 32, no. 1 (1933): 1–20.



discussed by Rudolf Wagner was the explicit association of most of its print products with leisure and the merger of traditional aesthetic forms (ink painting, calligraphy) with modern technology such as lithography.

Leisure is signaled by particular styles and goods. The architectural frames and/or interior decoration of spaces of leisure will have their own markers. The foodstuffs and drinks of leisure time/space are set off against the daily fare. The difference may be marked by palatial luxury, or by Arcadian simplicity, but it will be marked.

## Agency in leisure

The commodification of leisure products and services gives ultimate agency and responsibility for their consumption to the customer. As leisure goods and services are not needed for the regular livelihood of the consumers, the customer's subjective freedom to make use of them (or not) is absolute. This translates into the formalized deference to the patron of the providers and the advertisement language for leisure products. The deference to the ultimate agency of the patron diffuses irritation about the fact that many leisure products are marketed by huge and wealthy enterprises that may otherwise be seen as imperialistic and exploitative.

This deference is particularly relevant for leisure goods and services that have crossed national and cultural borders. Their commodification publicly and visibly counters the assumption underlying many postmodern as well as nationalist critiques that the agency in their spread is with the providers rather than with the patrons, and thus counters apprehensions about a cultural or leisure goods imperialism that is mainly intent on spreading its own "foreign" agenda in values and ideology. The focus on the purchasing authority of the patron and the interest of the provider to make money clears the goods and services of the suspicion of being subsidized products designed to transmit an outside agenda that, if spelled out, would actually be rejected by the customers. Lai Yu-chih's and Rudolf Wagner's studies explore this aspect.

Leisure is a gendered time/space. While there are leisure spaces and times more strongly frequented by men or women respectively (soccer, massages), in time/spaces with joint activities, the egalitarian utopia of leisure gives women more prominence in determining content than in other decision-making fields. This is also due to a division of labor prevailing in families or the ongoing path-dependency on such a division.

Both men and women contribute with their heterotelic work to make leisure possible. But as in most societies natural (childbirth), physical (strength), and ideological (patriarchy) factors have led to women being in charge of providing the immediate leisure conditions for the family while men are in charge of securing the surplus needed. As a strong path-dependency prevails even after some of these causes have become irrelevant or nonexistent, women are seen as more attuned to

the conditions for pleasurable leisure, as shown in the films discussed by Sarah Frederick. In this limited sense, leisure time/space has a closer affinity to women.

## The historicity of leisure

Human leisure is subject to historical change. Although aspirations to leisure are a constant among higher organisms, human leisure changes over time. These changes involve the standing of leisure in the hierarchy of values, the proportions of time and energy people are able to invest in it, shifts in the places and times primarily associated with leisure, the role of leisure in the overall economy, the degree of professionalization among both providers of leisure and those engaged in its pursuits, the importance of leisure pursuits for the articulation of identity, the range of access to leisure pursuits for different segments of the population, the development of the roles of state and religious authorities in regulating leisure, and the size as well as the importance of the grey economy feeding the anomic as well as mostly illegal trends in leisure.

In the process of such historical changes, the relationship of the space/time/practice of leisure to space/time/practices in other realms (religion, politics, or gainful work) or in other domains, such as in foreign cultures or the past, changes as well. This change not only affects the relative proportions of these domains and their interaction as distinct entities, but impacts the character and standing of these other domains such as work (see above) and religious activity, as discussed by Robert Weller.

The entrance into the leisure time/space is marked by the transition from the subjunctive to the subjective mode. With the growing importance of leisure in modern times and increased spillover from leisure routines in clothing, behavior, and social relations to other realms, the subject that makes its leisure decision based on subjective preferences enters these other realms. It does so not as a neophyte, but with the substantial routines acquired during leisure pursuits, and it encounters others who are familiar with the same routines from their own leisure pursuits.

The big historical shifts in leisure history follow those in the productivity of labor. The move to sedentary agriculture brought one such shift. It reset the calendar for leisure time and freed a segment of the population for other pursuits (religious, political, military, commercial), which included a larger share of time and means that could be devoted to leisure pursuits.

The second big historical shift came with the move to industrialization. Its key features are urbanization, monetarization, commodification, and "democratization." The key variable for leisure is urbanization. Although for all forms of modern leisure earlier precedents can be found, these

four produced a qualitative shift. Premodern urban centers such as London or Kaifeng prefigured these modern developments. Samuel Pepys's (1633–1703) diary gives a lively protocol of the leisure activities of a Restoration Period London urbanite without the credentials of nobility, going to the theater often several times a week, and seeing there the King as well as ladies of ill repute. A similar situation will be found in the suburbs of Cambaluc during the Yuan or in Paris under Louis XIV. The definition of leisure aspirations for the general populace, as well as many practices in provider/patron relations in modern times, are modeled on these pre-modern precedents.

Urbanization concentrated the overwhelming majority of the population in urban centers. This made entertainment enterprises sustainable year round, allowed for a broad professionalization of providers, and provided broad access to leisure activities for the urban populace. Monetization was part of the urbanization process, as it brought large swaths of people into the money economy and established access to goods and services for all who could pay. Commodification hinges on monetization, as it transforms the previous barter and gift economy, which stratified access to leisure goods and services. Democratization—used here not in a political sense but as a shorthand for access to leisure time/space and goods not based on social hierarchies—is a consequence of the previous factors. The studies by Lai Yu-chih, Catherine V. Yeh, and Rudolf Wagner discuss this transition.

History does not stop during these long periods, and developments are not homogenous for different regions as well as segments of populations. During the sedentary agriculture phase, it took a long while until an entire class developed that lived off the agricultural surplus and focused its heterotelic activity on administration (state), securing divine protection (religion), management (trade), and security and power projection (military), while having the largest share of leisure time. In the same manner, the inner dynamics of industrialization led from a draconian separation of labor time and leisure time to a dramatic decrease of the former relative to the latter.

Given the ensuing change of the character of work altogether, state and religious authorities have moved to come to grips with this development by adjusting their standards and strategies. This shift is visible in the recognition and acceptance of the primordial economic importance of leisure pursuits, which has moved them from being economically wasteful and morally questionable to a largely recognized anchor of the economy and individual identity. This is most clearly visible in economic statistics, where two new items have appeared: leisure and service industries, with the latter partly connected to providing leisure. Scholarship has followed this shift through an increased focus on leisure research and has tried to conceptualize the new situation with terms such as “post-industrial age.”

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