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Answering China's Influencers: Opinion Leaders and the Gospel

Randy Kluver

As China has changed dramatically in the past two decades, there are a number of new dynamics in China's social transformation. As the party recedes into the background of political and social life, other groups are taking a larger role in shaping Chinese culture, society and worldviews. In spite of a long campaign against religion within these influential groups, however, there remains an openness to the claims of Jesus Christ.

These groups have sociological and missiological significance because of their unique role in society in both setting a public agenda and as gatekeepers to the society. Agenda setting refers to the role of these sectors in establishing social, political and cultural issues, building public sentiment towards issues, and ultimately creating a

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context in which political leaders must respond. For example, Chinese media have become increasingly important in setting an agenda for political leaders, regardless of the fact that, officially, the media are under the control of the government. News media responses to the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. forced the government to provide more information, and quicker, than they otherwise would have done. Gate-keeping, on the other hand, refers to the role of the knowledge class in "opening" or "closing" the door for new ideas, policies, attitudes and beliefs, thus legitimating or de-legitimating social movements. An example has been the way in which China's media have been deployed by the Party to undermine legitimacy for the *Falungong* movement. When the media continually criticize one's beliefs, it is harder to maintain them.

In the history of the church, there has often

been focused ministry directed towards the opinion leaders. For example, Paul's early ministry in Athens was directed towards the marketplace, representing the mainstream of society (Acts 17:17). Members of the educated elite, the philosophers, redirected him to the Areopagus, the place where new ideas were discussed, evaluated and either embraced or rejected, and where Paul led several to faith in Christ. Thus, there is missiological, theological and historical grounding for focusing ministry on these groups.

These groups are represented in China's urban centers among the educated, globalized elite who are now beginning to make a more direct impact on Chinese society. A recent analysis by *TimeAsia* magazine argues that China's future rests in its new middle class[1] (addressed in this issue by Carol Hamrin and Cindy Lail). Political theorists have long argued that this class drives political reform and revolution in developing countries, in that access to higher education, rising incomes, and higher aspirations for self-governance create pressures from below for political reform. However, the middle class represents a variety of occupations, outlooks and lifestyles. Is there a better way to segment this population of opinion leaders so that we might fully understand their influence?

In fact, there are four distinct elements of China's knowledge class that are strategic bridges for the gospel. Ministry that takes a long term view of both personal conversion and social transformation should be directed towards focused and strategic considerations of these four significant groups.

CHINA'S ARTISTS are attempting to reestablish their role as cultural critics, and their influence is not insignificant.

The First Element: China's Media and Arts Community

China's media professionals are rapidly adopting the outlook, as well as the professional standards, of their global counterparts. Although the government is not entirely happy that the media no longer dutifully "correctly guide public opinion" in line with party policy, there is little the government can do about the transformation of China's media, particularly among the new generations of journalists and media personnel. One of China's top universities has begun a program in journalism and communication that is explicitly designed to enhance media independence, professionalism in media practice and media responsiveness to the public. It is explicitly avoiding the model of journalistic education prominent in the past in which the media are viewed as tools of the state. In addition, the media have become more important to government officials in terms of understanding what China's population wants, as online news forums are regularly monitored to understand how China's citizens are thinking. Because of this increasing professionalism and transparency in China's media, it is likely to grow more influential, rather than less, as Chinese citizens will begin to trust it for more honest reporting.

Although their outlook concerning

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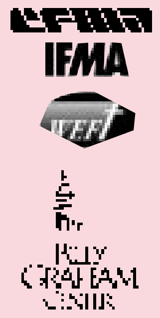

their role in society has changed, China's media personnel are still actively searching for solutions to the endemic problems facing China including corruption, rampant materialism and environmental degradation. I recently had a conversation with a top editor, who served for twenty years at an influential Chinese magazine, in which he urged more government concern about the growth of religious belief in China. Now a Christian and small group leader, he seeks to incorporate implicit biblical values into every article he publishes in a national magazine.

It is important to include within this group professionals shaping China's popular culture, including the worlds of literature, television and music. China's artists are attempting to reestablish their role as cultural critics, and their influence is not insignificant. These artists often have the same sort of influence as their counterparts in the Western world, using their art to present thoughtful commentary on society.

The Second Element: The Academy

Around the world, universities have always had a privileged position in terms of social influence. Not only is it the one sector of society where more critical and independent thought is most highly valued, it is also the one common experience of a nation's leaders, as university education is considered a prerequisite for leadership in politics, business or cultural activities. This has been evident in China for decades, as English teachers have sought to reach its students for Christ. Often overlooked in this strategy, however, are the faculty—the teachers, researchers and administrators who set the curriculum, who can typically deconstruct and de-legitimate religious faith. Generations of Chinese students have been led to conclude that atheism is the only viable worldview, typically through ill-conceived presumptions and questions raised by their professors.

However, among many of China's academics, there is a genuine openness to honest consideration of Christianity, at least as a social force if not as an alternative worldview. In fact, China's university faculty is more genuinely open to Christianity than most Western academics who treat religious faith with disdain. These professors, if presented with intellectually credible presentations of the gospel, then have a critical role in legitimating an approach to life grounded in Christianity. Even if they themselves never open their lives to Christ, their honest appreciation of the legitimacy of conversion can have an important role in establishing the credibility of the gospel in Chinese society.

The Third Element: The Globalized Professionals

With economic modernization and China's open door policy, a new group of globalized business and managerial professionals has become a factor in Chinese society. The members of this group think in cosmopolitan rather than national terms, have high skill and educational levels, travel internationally and are more secure in their jobs due to their abilities. Samuel Huntington calls this group the "Davos culture," and they reflect the aspirations, values and skill sets that evidence their value in the international economy.

The globalized professionals, currently in their twenties, thirties and forties, are often at the vanguard of a number of other social and cultural movements in China, including fashion, music and other elements of popular culture. They are more likely to drink coffee at Starbucks and have little difficulty in appropriating life-styles, fashions or desires from the West. They have normally attained their status by virtue of hard work and talent and are much more likely to influence the future shape of Chinese institutions, such as governmental bureaucracies, corporations and universities. They often have studied abroad, and many "returned students" are now moving into influential positions within Chinese society. In fact, it is this group of individuals that is at the heart of the "Three Represents" strategy of Jiang Zemin. Their significance for China's future is illustrated well by Jiang's attempt to incorporate them into the ruling party.

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THE GOSPEL MUST BE SEEN as authentic, and discipleship must be modeled by Christians who illustrate the compatibility of faith in God with professional and intellectual achievement.

Although they might have less appreciation or understanding of traditional Chinese culture than the intellectuals, the globalized professionals are more apt to adopt superficial symbols of Christianity or Western culture, such as celebrating Christmas, than others within China. China's globalized professionals are more likely to evaluate the gospel on pragmatic, rather than cultural grounds, and in many ways are the vanguard of global change, and particularly, cultural change in China. When they come to Christ, they often find little help within traditional Chinese Christian churches and their resources as these rarely reflect the worldview of the globalized elites.

The Fourth Element: The Government Technocrats

Although the focus of China's reform process has been on economics rather than politics, there has been a marked shift in the nature of governance in China. Although the traditional dictum of the Party as the vanguard of social change has not been dismissed, the ruling apparatus has undergone a marked transformation in recent years as the government has sought to become more technocratic and professional, rather than political. As part of this effort, more professional training and standards have been emphasized, often at the expense of political correctness. A new generation of leaders, often educated abroad, has been brought in to help professionalize China's government. At the same time, lower and mid-level officials are often sent abroad, to places such as Singapore, to get mid-career training in governance, policy and bureaucratic techniques. In addition, throughout China's bureaucracies including the judiciary, the police and the military, globalization is inducing a set of professional networks with foreign counterparts, which are likely to provide greater opportunities for access to these key groups.

This foreign exposure, along with the more professional and technical focus that accompanies it, is fundamentally altering the relationship of the government to the people. In a number of ways, the government is truly attempting to be more responsive to the people rather than imposing a political will on the population. This is the group that will ultimately shape the laws regulating religion, freedom of association and the civil society that, in turn, will define the contours of Chinese society.

In one of the ironies of history, Beijing's civil administration college was built on the site of the land that had been given by imperial decree to the Jesuits as a church and grave for missionary, Matteo Ricci, and foreign visitors today can visit Ricci's grave at the college on the west side of the city. Ricci's tomb, set among the buildings that house the primary governmental/bureaucratic training center in Beijing, serves as a silent testimony to the critical importance of reaching China's bureaucratic and governmental elite for the expansion of God's kingdom in China, much as Ricci himself sought to do.

Reaching China's Influencers

If these broad groupings reflect the new realities of cultural and social change in China, then long-term ministries in China should begin to understand the most appropriate ministry forms for these groups, and this is likely to differ significantly from what is effective in rural areas. For example, Christians in these groups often find worship within the government approved churches boring and irrelevant, and they have little in common with the believers in many of the house churches. In some of China's major cities, they have thus either joined fellowships of foreign Christians or begun to form their own churches, which are headed by pastors with full time jobs in secular positions. Leaders in these churches are calling themselves the "third wave" leaders, as they see themselves as distinct from both the officially approved churches and the house churches.

Perhaps most importantly, the implications of the gospel must be presented in such a way as to provide answers to the issues with which in-

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The Development of the Middle Hues

Carol Lee Hamrin and Cindy K. Lail

According to Mao, it wasn't supposed to be this way. To him, a nation filled with Mao-suit clad workers—proletarian "blue ants" with heads down and mouths shut—was the embodiment of the Communist dream. The "masses," under the direction of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), would drown the bourgeois oppressors in a "sea of revolutionary red" and usher China into utopia.

However, after Deng Xiaoping pointed out that "shared pauperism" was not exactly utopia, and China began to turn toward the market, the Chinese people began to cast aside their monochromatic sameness and put on a multicolored coat—both in thought and in lifestyle. New and colorful hues are now emerging across the middle of the spectrum—the rainbow colors of Chinese-style "market Leninism." These *xiao kang*, the "newly well-off" of the middle class, are neither poor nor rich; estimates of their numbers range from 100 million to over 200 million people, increasing by 20 percent per year.

In China, having a "comfortable life" means having an annual household income around US$14,000 in contrast to annual average rural incomes of $300 or urban incomes of $850.[1] Such households constitute the low end of the middle spectrum. The upper end includes those with $60,000, still considered in the middle when contrasted with Chinese entrepreneurs like Rong Zhijian, named by *Forbes Global Magazine* in 2002 as the richest man in China, with personal wealth estimated at $850 million.[2]

Being a part of the "middle class" means enjoying such amenities as nice living quarters, stylish clothes, color TV (Chinese-made), a personal computer, CD or DVD player, cell phone and family vacation (though perhaps not abroad) —amenities that make life more comfortable, regardless of the political environment. Their cravings are not all material ones, however. They are also wrestling with moral and spiritual issues as they explore religions, new and old, and blow out the barriers of sexual restraint.

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The very thought that there is a "middle class" in China makes the political leadership highly uncomfortable. For one thing, the middle class has no legitimacy within Communist ideology. According to Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought, after the revolution there should be no class polarization, only the proletariat, the "people," led by the Party as their sole representative. During the 1960s, anyone showing any manifestation of bourgeois aspiration—such as a foreign language or a Christian cross or even eyeglasses—was labeled an "enemy of the people."

Although Deng Xiaoping salvaged some space for income inequality and differences in lifestyle by allowing that China was only in the "initial stages" of building socialism, discussions about the middle class are still very controversial in China. Dialogue participants must refer to this group as "middle income," "white collar," "entrepreneurs," or "businessmen." Thus class terminology is replaced by more politically neutral terms of occupational strata, as set forth in the 2002 study by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). This study reported that Chinese society now includes ten occupational categories: state and social administrators; (enterprise) managers; private business owners; professional and tech-

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nical personnel; office staff; self-employed business people; commercial and service staff; industrial workers; agricultural workers; and the unemployed and semi-employed.[3]

There is a second reason why the CCP is nervous and considers the emerging middle class a potential threat to their continued one-party rule. Western development theory holds that as people gain increased material comforts, they will begin to demand social and political comforts, that is *freedoms*—and these the Party is not willing to meet. At a minimum, they will want laws to protect their new property, and they will want their opinions to be heard and heeded by the ruling Party.

Others, though, including China's "new conservatives," predict that China's middle class will agree to maintain the status quo and allow the CCP to continue its rule in exchange for the security to enjoy their material comforts. Lu Xueyi, a leading sociologist at CASS and editor of the 2002 occupational strata report, believes that the middle class is likely to identify with the ruling party's ideology and policies. It follows then, according to Lu, that "the larger the proportion of citizens with medium-level income, the more stable a particular country will be."[4]

The bottom line is that the Party must find a way to live with the middle class, because consumer spending is imperative to spur the economic growth and job creation essential for continued CCP rule.

The Rhetoric and Reality of Co-optation and Control

The Party is dealing with the (re)emerging middle class in a similar manner as it had attempted in the early 1950s—striving to co-opt and control them (and their resources). The methods are well established: the Party designates a link—a government and/or quasi-governmental agency—as the sole channel through which a specific social group can express its interests and concerns, and through which the Party can be the sole and final arbiter of those interests (such as the State Administration for Religious Affairs and "patriotic" religious associations for the religious sector).

Carrying out this "united front" approach with the resurrected economic elites, though, has demanded some adjustments of political theory. On July 1, 2001, in a speech to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the CCP, Jiang Zemin, then General Secretary of the CCP, announced that private entrepreneurs could be eligible to join the Party—a thought only remotely tethered to original Communist dogma. In Leninist theory, the Party represents the industrial workers. This theory was adapted by Mao to include peasants and soldiers, and then adapted again by Deng Xiaoping to include intellectuals as "thought workers." By introducing his concept of the "Three Represents," Jiang stretched this mental rubber band to the limits. He stated that the CCP should represent all "advanced productive forces" (read, the private entrepreneurs/capitalists as well as the professional elites), in addition to "advanced culture," (read, science and technology), and the "interests of the majority."

Workers are not allowed to form viable unions or other representative bodies, so their ability to influence decisions in the upper echelons of management is quite limited.

CASS's 2002 occupational strata study, the first official documentation of the new pluralism in Chinese society, was an effort at least in part to justify Jiang's "trial balloon" regarding bringing entrepreneurs and other middle strata into the Party. But his speech sparked criticism among more traditional politicians causing Jiang to openly rebuke his critics and close down journals that had published their articles. It was also received warily by the progressive educated strata who recognized the not-coincidental corollary: *only* the CCP can represent advanced social forces.

Graham Cousens

The goal of the "Three Represents" was to invite entrepreneurs and professionals into the political elite and then, through them, to infiltrate the non-state sectors. The operation of business associations for these purposes is the focus of current regime interest. The three largest associations are the Self-Employed Laborer's Association (for small businesses with small numbers of workers), the Private Entrepreneurs' Association (for slightly larger businesses), and the Industrial and Commercial Federation (which includes the

largest ventures). In addition, there are associations for specific professions, such as the (national) All China Lawyers' Association or the Shanghai Bar Association. Party and government officials oversee these associations, and the offices of the associations are often located in Party or government office buildings. It is through these associations that the professions and business interests are to express their concerns to the Party and the government and allow the Party to resolve the issues as the Party deems best.

With the business elite in the Party, the door is open for the Party to establish branches within individual businesses, including foreign-owned businesses in China and Chinese-owned businesses abroad.[5] With Party members in management, the Party has more opportunity to control decision-making—much more so than if the Party only had members among the workers. Workers are not allowed to form viable unions or other representative bodies, so their ability to influence decisions in the upper echelons of management is quite limited.

The need for inclusion in the Party is not all one-sided. Many Party members are leaving state jobs for the private sector and need a rationale to retain their Party membership. Given that the playing field is not yet level in China, many business owners feel that it is only by being in good graces with the Party, being close to the Party, indeed, being a part of the Party that they can get the necessary allowances—from registration to credit to property use rights—they need to succeed in their business efforts.

Adjusting as the Spectrum Changes

The "Three Represents" is the Party's awkward acknowledgment that the middle class is vital for China's survival and strength. This raises interesting possibilities as to what might happen if the government were to become less nervous about Christian believers and acknowledge the contribution they make to society. Would the Party be willing to do away with its rule that Party members be atheists? (Of course, all "patriotic" religious groups are led by secret party members, but changing this rule would allow for open membership by genuine believers.)

Just as the Party must adjust to growing social pluralism, so must the "color" of Christian ministry keep up with the new variety of hues. We must follow the example of the Apostle Paul who said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."[6] As Randy Kluver suggests and Chan and Yamamori illustrate in this journal issue, believers can find creative ways to reach and minister to the entrepreneurs and professionals—the IT engineers, advertising agents, realtors, financial advisors, industrial and service managers, medical personnel, educators, lawyers, NGO leaders and so on. Success or failure in this endeavor will make all the difference for whether the Chinese church is central or marginal in society and in the nature of that rapidly-changing society. The middle class will determine the degree of civil or "uncivil" society in China, and only as they are leavened with the gospel of Christ will there be any hope of stability, health, and strength in the civil sector.

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6. 1 Corinthians 9:22, KJV.

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fluencers grapple, including materialism, temptations to corruption and fragmenting personal lives. The gospel must be seen as authentic, and discipleship must be modeled by Christians who illustrate the compatibility of faith in God with professional and intellectual achievement. It must be apologetically grounded and practically relevant. The gospel must be seen in its power to deliver lives from the despair that is often one of the most visible outcomes of rapid modernization.

Finally, it is important to note the way in which the influencers approach relations with the government. Because of their status, individuals in these groupings often have privileged positions, in some ways shielding them from the difficulties many others in China face. Whereas previous generations of Chinese Christians have seen themselves as targets of government persecution, and thus see themselves as quite distinct from the official institutions in society, the influencers are much more likely to interpenetrate the official institutions. As media personnel, academics, globalized professionals and members of the official bureaucracy, they have common histories and common interests with government officials, and thus, see few permanent barriers to the expansion of the gospel in Chinese society. Likewise, because these Christian leaders are often highly educated and have roles of social influence, they are less likely to be viewed with suspicion by governmental bodies. The expansion of the gospel among this segment of Chinese society is likely to radically undermine the official hostility towards Christianity within China.

Endnotes

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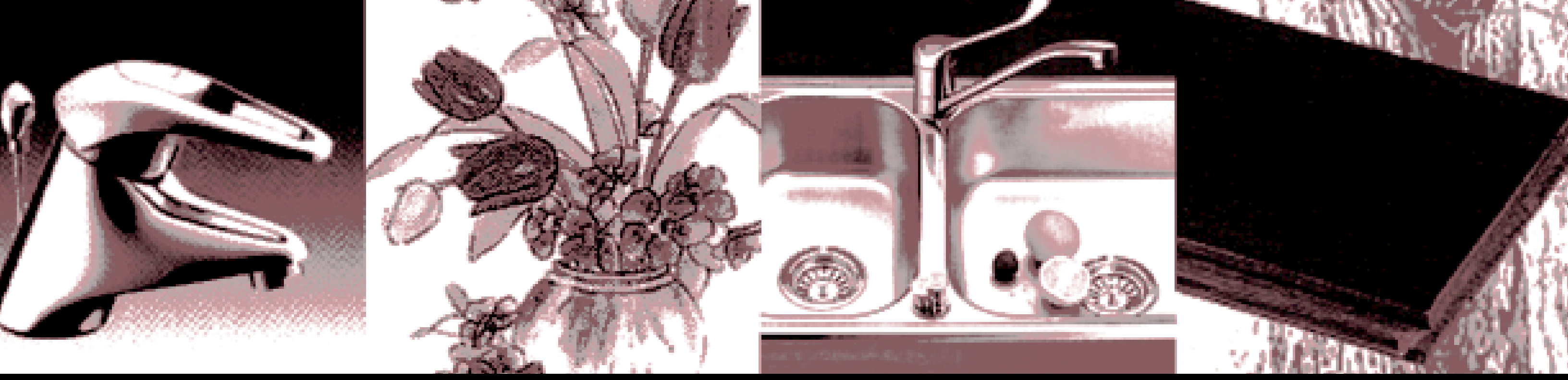

The Interior Decoration Tycoon of Shanghai

Kim-Kwong Chan and Tetsunao Yammamori

Images from www.525j.com

Because religious activities are restricted to government-designated venues, projecting Christian influence beyond the four walls of the church building is difficult. However, many Christians choose to bring their values and faith into their business practices. As their influence spreads, they become a beacon of truth to their colleagues. Beyond this, their ethical practices even influence the industries in which they work.

The Call

Mr. Jiang Jiexue's mother is a very devoted Christian from Suzhou near Shanghai. Mrs. Jiang introduced the faith to her son while he was very young. He had attended Christian meetings since he was a child, and he still reads the Bible and prays every morning. Now both Mrs. Jiang and her son attend the Shanghai International Church.

After he finished his schooling, Mr. Jiang went to Shanghai to seek employment. He first worked at Shanghai's Public Security Bureau (PSB) as an officer for 12 years. During his tenure, he suggested many innovative ideas and was able to streamline the resolution process of some cases. However, Jiang did not feel satisfied or fulfilled. He felt that the bureaucratic system was stifling his creativity. He felt that God had given him gifts in innovation and creativity, and that he should fully develop this potential in life. In 1988, he left the PSB and launched his own business.

The Entrepreneurial Launch

Jiang had taught himself interior design by reading books and by observation. In the late 1980s, Shanghai had begun to experience economic prosperity, and many of its citizens spent money on home improvements. In general, people still lived in tiny flats so storage space was at a premium. Jiang ingeniously designed hidden closets so that they did not obstruct the sense of space. He also pioneered a modular furniture system that was simple to produce. He moved to a flat and renovated it to demonstrate his talents. As potential clients walked into his home office, they immediately liked his design and began placing orders. In this way, Jiang started the first private home interior design and decorating company in Shanghai.

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Soon many people in the city became interested in redesigning their homes. Jiang expanded his service to include building materials, household fixtures, appliances, and other materials. He opened a large retail store in the central district and contracted suppliers to produce parquet flooring under his company's name (Qianxi). His parquet soon became the most popular choice on the market, and Qianxi became a brand name in its own right. Soon, Qianxi became the No. 1 interior design retailer for homes. Other companies then entered the market trying to capture part of this lucrative business.

The Business Plan

Sensing the growing demand for high quality home improvement in Shanghai, Jiang launched a supermarket to supply everything in home improvement materials—from nails to Finnish saunas. He purchased a shopping mall with 10,000 square meters in the center of town. Customers can get there easily using public transportation. Jiang then invited his five biggest competitors to join him in this supermarket. He theorized that customers would appreciate being able to get everything under one roof. They would have more choices, and the competing companies would be forced to search

for goods with better quality and lower prices. They would also have to improve their service. This was a bold approach in China where the market economy has just begun to take off. Jiang is years ahead of most other Chinese entrepreneurs.

All five of his competitors eagerly agreed to participate knowing that this supermarket would draw customers. Soon it became known as the place to go for home improvement-related goods. The various merchants also provided services such as interior design and renovation. The rent they paid to Jiang covered not only the mortgage but also provided a sizable cash flow. Together, these six companies captured most of Shanghai's home interior design market and controlled most of the brand name dealerships. In the year 2000, the sales volume of these six companies was more than RMB 500 million; Qianxi alone had more than RMB 100 million. There are now many booths rented to smaller companies that specialize in items such as lighting fixtures or curtains. These smaller stores complement the six main players.

Jiang did not stop there. Looking ahead to the WTO and to Shanghai's rapidly increasing wealth, he established a trade union for interior design and home improvement merchants in Shanghai. This trade union, with Jiang as deputy secretary, established industry standards and a system to protect consumers. He also set up a collective purchasing plan. All six companies can now bargain for better prices from dealers. Jiang invested in a warehouse, teams of logistical staff, and a purchaser to serve this trade union. In fact, he became the main supplier, able to get better prices than would be possible for individual companies. Needless to say, Jiang has become an interior design tycoon in Shanghai.

Jiang's latest dream is establishing a web-based interior decorating and home improvement market for the trade union. The web site <www.525j.com> (525j in Chinese sounds like "I love my home") connects all the companies in this trade union and lists their latest goods and sales. Further, customers can get exact price quotes on custom-made designs. They no longer need to go to the mall. However, that is not the end of Jiang's dream. He is now hiring teams of software engineers to do a virtual-reality home design program in three dimensions. Customers can create their own designs on the web and receive immediate price quotes. Jiang hopes that this approach can increase sales without increasing overhead.

Growth of Business

Jiang started humbly with a 13-square-meter home office. Thirteen years later, he owns a 10,000 square-meter shopping mall and a company of 370 employees with more than RMB 100 million in sales. Clearly, he has established himself as a successful businessman. He has also set the standards in the industry. Each time he has done something new, Jiang has increased his core business yet retained his focus.

Despite all of Jiang's talents, he has never received a visit from the pastoral staff of his church in Shanghai. The churches there seldom tap Christians like Jiang for church ministry. There are only about 40 to 50 full time pastors for every 100,000 Christians in Shanghai—a 1:2,000 pastor/member ratio. Although Jiang does not have many Christian friends, he is well known as a Christian among his business colleagues who are almost all non-Christians. Jiang has been looking for Christian teachings on business but has found none.

In business, Jiang bucks common practice and does not give bribes or participate in immoral entertainment. Instead, he focuses on improving his service and coming up with innovative ideas to maintain his advantage. He refuses to take business from the entertainment industry, such as nightclubs, because the Chinese mafia owns much of it. Jiang also eschews the traditional custom of setting up an altar for Chinese folk gods at any of his home interior renovation jobs. Sometimes, however, customers ask that Buddhist monks or Daoist priests conduct ceremonies. Mr. Jiang never sponsors them and makes sure he is elsewhere on such occasions. Because his clients know that Jiang is a Christian, they usually do not mind his absence.

Jiang has been fair to his staff, and the turnover rate is very low. His employees generally believe that the company has a bright future. They take pride in being associated with it. Often, he helps them as personal problems arise. Jiang discovered that one of his branch managers wanted to start his own business. He knew this talented man was being underutilized in his responsibilities with Qianxi. Therefore, Jiang lent him money and gave him enough credit to launch his own company. This new company now complements Jiang's regional branch.

Although Jiang does not have many Christian friends he is well known as a Christian among his business colleagues who are almost all non-Christians.

Jiang seeks not to defeat his business competitors but to join them in win-win situations. He looks beyond his own interests and focuses on the whole industry's welfare. His visionary leadership and concern for safe and healthy workplaces in the industry have won him respect from his competitors. He has successfully made alliances with competitors, and together they meet customer needs and enhance the quality of their services—signs of a mature service industry.

Evaluation

Jiang's concern for quality service, combined with his honesty and vision, makes him a successful businessman. He knows how to look beyond his present circumstances and see the

wider needs of the industry. He always makes customers his No. 1 priority. He does not feel threatened by competition, nor does he try to fight against it. He sees it as an opportunity to develop a win-win situation for all. His intuitive grasp of trends challenges him to go beyond the present situation even though he is already at the top of his profession.

His business performance is rather impressive, judging from his past 13 years. Jiang does not spread himself too thin by venturing into different fields. Within his area of expertise, he has excelled as the industry leader and the trend setter. Jiang's business has grown continuously, always with new ideas and products to set new industrial standards. With Shanghai continuing to grow rapidly, Jiang will most likely continue contributing innovative ideas. People like Jiang make Shanghai one of the fastest growing industrial cities in the world.

The church in Shanghai is in no position to offer assistance to Jiang or use his gifts for the kingdom. However, Jiang has volunteered and given money for orphanages, homes for the elderly, schools and scholarships. He has been looking for a fellowship for Christian business people in Shanghai, but since the local church is unequipped to provide such teaching or pastoral care, he and his business associates are lonely sojourners struggling through the complex business world with no spiritual guidance. If Jiang decides to form a Christian business people's network in Shanghai, given his track record, there is little doubt that he will pull it off. Such a fellowship would be the first of its kind in China.

***Rev. Kim-Kwong Chan**, Ph.D., Th.D., is the executive secretary for Mission and Pastoral Formation of the Hong Kong Christian Council and Senior Research Associate, Graduate School of Business, Regent University. **Tetsuano Yamamori**, Ph.D., is president emeritus of Food for the Hungry International and Distinguished Professor at the Graduate School of Business, Regent University. This article is excerpted from* Holistic Entrepreneurs in China *by Kim-Kowng Chan and Tetsunao Yamamori. William Carey International University Press, Pasadena, CA., chapter 5, pp. 59–64. Used with permission. To obtain this book, please see box.*

Resource Corner

INTRODUCING
Sky-Blue Literature and Art Quarterly

This new publication for Chinese intellectuals explores God's voice in the Chinese works of literature and art. Written in traditional Chinese script, it reveals the great influence of Christian truth on human spirituality and life. Since its inception in March 2002, it has been officially received by over 80 universities in Mainland China. Founder and editor-in-chief, Ningzi, is already well established as a writer of prose and novels among Chinese Christians, especially those overseas.

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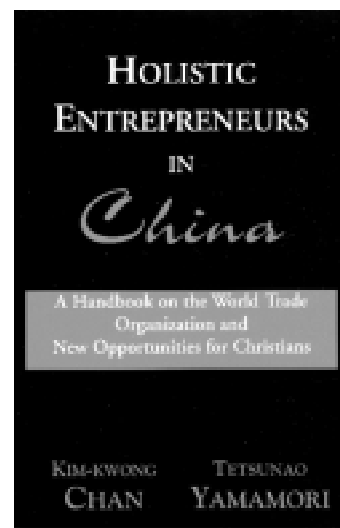
God in China's Marketplace

Holistic Entrepreneurs in China by Tetsunao Yamamori and Kim-Kwong Chan, William Carey International University Press, 2002, 110 pages. ISBN 0-86585-002-X. Cost: US $10.99 plus S/H.



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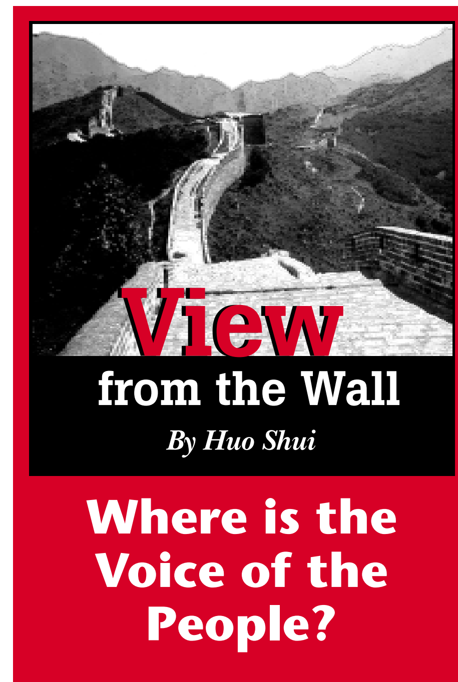
China's official name is the People's Republic of China. Its army is called the People's Liberation Army while the congress is named the National People's Congress. China's largest newspaper is titled the *People's Daily*, and the state run radio station is known as the People's Radio Station. Even the police are called the People's Police. However, ask any Chinese person in China who the real policy maker of China is, and almost no one will answer "the people" of China. The policy maker in the People's Republic has always been the Communist Party.

The Party has given the power of policy making to the Party's top leadership—the politburo. Chairman Mao once said "the Party leads in every aspect of Chinese society." During the Cultural Revolution, billboards in cities and villages proclaimed "the Communist Party is the nucleus of the Chinese people's affairs." As much as the Party propaganda portrays leaders as servants of the people, everyone in China knows the Party is China's ultimate and only policy maker. For more than 50 years this has been true. The Party has established numerous propaganda departments, newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations to control the information flow. It tells the state run media what they are supposed to say and what not to say to the people. Now we even have Party websites as the voice of the government.

Strictly speaking, the voice of the Party is loud and clear. No matter where you are in China, you can hear and see its propaganda. Nevertheless, despite the lack of civilian run newspapers, radio stations and TV stations, the Chinese people have developed ways to obtain and propagate information and express their opinions. When something major happens, "rumors" will travel faster than any state run media. "Little alley" rumors and political jokes are so common that regardless of how hard the government tries to prevent them from spreading, they continue to proliferate rapidly. Basically, these rumors are spread abroad by word of mouth. However, as China enters the internet age, many common people are learning to disseminate news electronically via email and inter-net chatrooms.

For generations, rulers of China understood the power of public opinion. They understood that "stopping the mouths of the people is harder than stopping a flood." For centuries, people's voices have frightened their rulers; the same is true today. To control publications in China, the government set up the News Publication Bureau to go through every single publication before it is published. To control the internet, the government created an army of internet police to sanitize its contents. Many websites are on the official ban list. Last year a 22-year-old female college student, named Liu Di, was arrested for expressing her political viewpoint on the internet. She was charged with "threatening national security." Since her arrest, many "Liu Dis" have appeared on the internet.



View from the Wall

By Huo Shui

Where is the Voice of the People?

Another major event related to internet censorship occurred last year involving the well- known search engine Google. Jiang Mianheng, son of Jiang Zemin, was outraged when he discovered a lot of anti-Jiang Zemin Web sites on Google. As a result, the government blocked Google from being accessed in China. This action created a huge uproar in China with great numbers of its "netizen" population protesting it. As a result, the government was forced to put Google back online two weeks later.

Although today's Chinese people can communicate through email, chat rooms and word of mouth, these activities by themselves are not sufficient to alter the control of the Communist Party over the public media, and they are not sufficient to change the Party's control over policies. There are times when the people are dissatisfied with an individual or an event, but the Party frequently ignores public opinion. For example, Li Peng has been largely unpopular in China ever since the Tiananmen incident in 1989. Nevertheless, despite his unpopularity, his position has not been affected.

After the 16th Party Congress, Li Changcun replaced Ding Guangen as the head of the Publicity Department. People thought there would be some reform coming from Li, but it did not take long for their hopes to be dashed. Shortly after taking his new office, the *21st Century Global Digest* was shut down by the government. Several other publications with tendencies to express opinions beyond the government's comfort zone were also forced to "close for reorganization." It seems that it is still a dream for anyone to use the public media to influence policy.

The Chinese people have developed a way to counter the Party; it is called "you have policy, I have strategy." Basically, this strategy is "you say whatever you want to say, I'll do whatever I want to do." They may not have control over the Party's newspaper, but they can choose not to read it. No matter where you go in China, you won't find the *People's Daily* for sale. Since no one buys it, no one will sell it. What is really happening in China—unemployment, environmental issues, drug trafficking, AIDS, corruption, bad loans—seldom makes it into the state run newspaper. The news and editorial sections rarely reflect societal reality.

Recognizing this serious disconnect, the Party conducted several social stud-

Continued on page 13

Peoples of China

A New Voice:
Trends in Chinese Pop Culture

Kay Danielson

Despite more than twenty years of "opening and reform" policy, three images of China continue to dominate the Western imagination. One is the "rich culture" of China—the grand architecture, the artistic tradition and the mystical landscape. Another is that of homogenized masses subsuming all of their dreams and aspirations over to the state. Yet another is the image of idealistic youth bravely facing down tanks in the hopes of bringing about a better, more just society. Having been conditioned to these images, we are not prone to think about popular culture in China for we tend to assume that popular culture, as we understand it, cannot exist in a totalitarian state.

In her paper, titled "Popular Culture in China," Lisa Movius defines popular culture as "the expression of the cultural tastes of the masses," or the common public, as differentiated from the academic and political elite."[1] In other words, popular culture is that aspect of society that is created by and for the masses, or that which is popular among the people. Popular culture includes the so-called "expressive" forms of a culture—books, magazines, movies, art, TV and so on.

When held up against this particular definition then, popular culture is a relatively new phenomenon in the People's Republic of China. To the extent that popular culture existed in China during the Mao years, it was a top-down affair. All aspects of expressive culture were dominated by the state, which dictated what people wore, sang, read and watched. There was one fashion—the "Mao suit." (Chinese actually call it the Sun Yat Sen suit.) Music consisted of revolutionary "praise songs" to Chairman Mao. There were only a dozen or so "state-approved" plot lines for all operas and movies, all with the goal of extolling the revolution and instilling class-consciousness in the masses. There was nothing spontaneous and nothing unapproved. It was popular culture only in the sense that all participated, but not in the sense of being a true expression of the cultural taste of the people.

Things have changed drastically in China since the beginning of the reforms in the early 1980s. While not relinquishing total control, the state has increasingly backed out of the spheres that are commonly considered to be part of popular culture, thus allowing it to come up from the people rather than be imposed from on high. The boundaries are still set by the state but, within the boundaries, there is in China today a flourishing pop culture scene.

As we survey the landscape of Chinese pop culture, what themes or characteristics emerge that we can see as both influencing pop culture and thereby influencing the society at large? The first characteristic is that Chinese pop culture is consumer-driven. For all the talk about the changes taking place in Chinese society, in effect it boils down to this: the fundamental shift that has taken place is from China being a communist society to a consumer society. In many ways, consumerism is a necessary pre-

Graham Cousens

Popular culture reflects the values and attitudes of consumerism—accumulation of wealth and instant gratification.

requisite for the emergence of pop culture in a society because, more than anything else, it is the marketplace that will both determine and reveal what is popular among the masses. Popular culture reflects the values and attitudes of consumerism—accumulation of wealth and instant gratification. A quick glance through the many life-style magazines on sale at kiosks in China will reveal article after article on fashion, balancing career and work, love and dating or getting ahead in the business world. Like their counterparts in the West, these magazines are full of glossy ads for all of the items necessary to achieve the sought-after success and status.

A second characteristic of Chinese pop culture is that it is global. Through the internet, satellite TV, international travel and China's economic integration with the world, Chinese can now participate in the global pop culture. In the wired world of the 21st century, urban Chinese no longer live in isolation as they did in the Mao years. Gone are the days when young people had no idea what rock music or dance clubs or TV game shows were. Rather, they know as much about Michael Jordon, Mel Gibson and Madonna as do their American counterparts. Participation in Chinese pop culture is now participation in global pop culture. Crowds line up to buy tickets for the Rolling Stones, weep at the death of Princess Diana, keep track of Bill Gate's billions and closely follow Michael Jordan's every slam dunk and retirement.

A third characteristic of Chinese pop culture is individualism. In a recent BBC News special report, the reporter described what he called the "me" generation—young people who are primarily interested in self-expression and personal gratification—and that is one of the messages of pop culture. Dye your hair. Slam dunk like Michael. Find your true love. Rely on no one but yourself. The BBC report quotes a young singer: "I really sincerely wish people would live hard, no matter what they do. Whether they're rich or they're poor, or they have complicated or simple lives, I really want people to take living seriously. What's important to me is myself. I think the first responsibility I have is to myself. And then you think about other people. You can do whatever you want, as long as it doesn't hurt any other people."[2] These stand in stark contrast to the messages emanating from the Party, namely sacrifice, communal values and welfare of the masses.

The fourth characteristic of Chinese pop culture is the absence of political themes, reflecting the political indifference that marks China's youth. Chinese pop culture is apolitical. In the early days of the Reform Era, musicians and artists did flirt with political expression and even dissent, but that largely dissipated after the Tiananmen Square Movement and subsequent crackdowns. While steering clear of politics outright, Chinese pop culture is increasingly addressing social themes. One of the most popular movies in 2000 was *Shower*, by director Zhang Yang. Set in a traditional bath-house in old Beijing, the movie explores the tensions between old and new in contemporary China, openly wondering what is being lost in the mad rush to modernization.

The significance of all this is that popular culture in China is a reflection of an increasingly pluralistic society, with the Party/state no longer being the only voice. The emergence of a popular culture has given the Chinese people an avenue of expression not directed by the state. To be sure, the voice of the state remains, and it is heard loudly and clearly through the nightly news, the official newspapers and the party propaganda machine. However, now it has competition and, given the choice, most would rather listen to the popular voice.

Endnotes

1. Lisa Movius, Introduction to her thesis, *Popular Culture in China*, April, 1998 at http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Harbor/6080/Thesis/Ch1.htm

2. *Young in China: From Mao to Me*, BBC News, Nov. 7, 2001 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/2410875.stm

__Kay Danielson__ has lived and worked in China for 14 years and currently works in the field of cross-cultural training.

Where Is the Voice of the People?

Continued from page 11

ies or opinion surveys to understand what people are thinking. This is an unofficial way of communicating with the masses, and the survey results influence China's policies more than most people realize. While foreign reporters in China often report based on official government statements, they rarely have access to the results of these government surveys. To control the free flow of communication, the government does not allow foreign correspondents in Beijing to conduct any type of survey, including marketing surveys.

Opening doors to the outside world and a market economy did not lessen the government's control over the media. After entry into the World Trade Organization, social and economic changes forced the government to alter how they manage media control. This does not imply willingness on the part of the Party; rather, it has been their only choice for survival. While there are more international exchanges, mobile phones, internet users, local elections and people with passports, in general, the government's tactics for media control continue to be effective. What they cannot do effectively is generate enthusiasm among the people towards government propaganda. While government propaganda expresses official government positions, it is the news or chitchat of the alleys that represent the true sentiments of the masses.

These two voices characterize two parallel lines of communication in China. Only after there is true freedom of speech, free elections and freedom of assembly can these voices intersect and become one. Then the people's voice will become a driving force behind government policy. As long as reforms are moving forward, albeit slowly, there are reasons to believe one day the people's opinions will appear in newspapers and on TV everywhere. Common people will not have to whisper to one another, but will shout aloud. The People's Republic will finally represent the people.

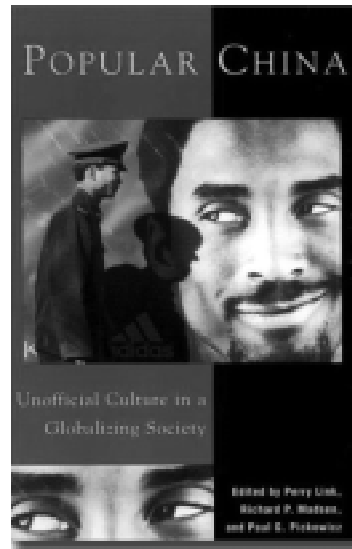
__Huo Shui__ is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Tian Hui.

Book Review

Globalization with Chinese Characteristics

Popular China: Unofficial Culture in a Globalizing Society *by Perry Link, Richard P. Madsen and Paul G. Pickowicz, editors. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002, 336 pp. ISBN 0742510794, paperback. Cost: $21.95 at <www.Amazon.com>.*

A Review by Glenys Goulstone



Popular China provides an excellent scholarly overview of diverse aspects of everyday life in China today. Contributions from a wide variety of scholars present valuable insights into popular culture and, at the same time, highlight questions and areas for research.

The characteristics of Chinese society today have been created by the interaction of two main factors. One, Party control and direction, remains significant—the one Party dictatorship continues unscathed—but the second, economic, social and cultural forces created by globalization (which are outside Party control), is powerful and irresistible. Together these key factors have forged a creative tension and unique social environment within which the members of China's social groupings play out their roles and look for meaning. Each chapter of *Popular China*, twelve in all, selects a particular social grouping or topic. Through description and analysis, the various authors help us to hear the voices and values of basketball fans, urban and rural women, young entrepreneurs, beggars, gay men and women and rural migrants. Chapters on tabloid newspapers, lifestyle magazines and popular sayings demonstrate the role of the media in revealing and shaping popular culture. An entire chapter is devoted to the issue of corruption—attitudes toward it and ways in which ordinary people deal with it. The real-life stories in these articles allow us to identify with millions of people, whether they are struggling with hardship and injustice, reveling in success and status or seeking to come to terms with their sexuality. Many of these personal stories are deeply moving.

Considering the deep influence that spirituality has on popular attitudes and values, it is surprising to find no articles on religion and its impact on modern China. After all, this is a major area in which the Party-State and forces of globalization have hit head on. Chinese believers (whether their faith is in Christ, *Falungong* or whatever) are just as much caught up in the moral and social confusion as gays and beggars and are just as numerous. This silence on religious issues is especially surprising in view of the fact that Richard P. Madsen, one of the editors, has written thoroughly on the subject of the Catholic scene in China and is part of a team of sociologists who have recognized the importance of religion in modern American life.[1] I do not know why this area has been omitted and hope it will be addressed in subsequent volumes.

However, in the areas it *does* cover, this book skillfully introduces and illustrates representative slices of Chinese life that those of us living or visiting in China will encounter on a daily basis. Even if you do not have the time or interest to read every article (and for the non-scholar like myself, some are more esoteric than others), I would recommend that you read the Introduction and the chapters concerning your own special interest groups. The chapters on women's issues and beggars are particularly enlightening.

In the Introduction, we learn that significant changes have come about since 1989 due to developments in mass media and the emergence of new themes. Before that crucial year, domestic tensions between state control and social change were central. Now we find that the forces of globalization have created new tensions, moving society away from conventional socialist characteristics towards more pluralistic and consumer-driven values. Global popular culture has, on the one hand, invaded the Chinese social landscape; on the other, it has been contextualized—is this "globalization with Chinese characteristics"? Almost none of the people portrayed in the book see local culture in opposition to the forces of globalization. [2] The chapter on basketball culture spends a lot of time on this question. We read that globalization either "traps you in a cage or gives

The real-life stories in these articles allow us to identify with millions of people, whether they are struggling with hardship and injustice, reveling in success and status or seeking to come to terms with their sexuality. Many of these personal stories are deeply moving.

you wings to fly."[3] For example, the workers who produce upmarket sports shoes are locked into their miserable factories, whereas the flamboyant slam dunk star is flying high.

Throughout the book we find references to "post-socialist China," "pseudo-Marxist neoliberalism," even "social Darwinist neoliberalism." What do these terms mean? Belief in authentic Marxism has long since collapsed,[4] and the authors propose these terms as a way of defining today's ideology. It is the new way to react to and deal with daily realities. For example, the beggars of today may not have benefited greatly from China joining the WTO, but they do not completely reject it either. At the same time, the spirit of social criticism is alive and well (not new in China but more out in the open today), and in chapter four, "*Shunkouliu*: Popular Satirical Sayings and Popular Thought," we find a powerful tool for gaining access to this criticism.[5] These sayings deal with such themes as materialism, corruption, the demise of socialist values, politics, retrospection concerning revolutionary days, regional differences and women's roles.

It is interesting how the stories in this book bring out personal tensions as well as social ones. As ministers of the grace of God, we can take careful note as interviewees share their individual aspirations, hopes, dreams and struggles though these stories. Aspiring basketball stars are a good example—they want fame and recognition, seeking to rise above their peers. Unlike the corporate glory and team spirit valued in the past, these ball players have far more self-orientated goals. At the same time, market forces and the thrust of global advertising stress personal image and status. Is the team more important than the individual star? This is a good question in a culture that has a strong group mentality and in which nationalism is growing stronger by the year. Global basketball culture makes Chinese young people more aware of outside possibilities, raising their hopes and expectations as they participate in this "virtual" global community.

The subject of corruption had to be included. As one of the main causes of the 1989 demonstrations and a serious threat to both China's economy and the Party's legitimacy, the authors set out to discover how people define and deal with corruption today. How angry are they? What can be done? They come to the conclusion that most ordinary Chinese citizens have half-formed, ambiguous views.[6] As economic crime committed by public officials, corruption is condemned and strong emotions are generated by press coverage. However, swindling, speculation, profiteering, counterfeiting or tax evasion are seen differently; they exist because the system "does not work" or "cannot be changed." There is a sense of inevitability and a survival mentality kicks in. The rule of man is, as ever, more powerful than the rule of law; dishonesty is seen, not so much in terms of personal moral failure, but as caused by structural pressures and temptations that are impossible to resist. Wealth creation by corrupt officials is "wrong," but public applause may be offered to successful entrepreneurs who have made the system work for them. Did not Deng Xiaoping himself start something when he said, "To get rich is glorious"? One thing we learn from this chapter is that the glory ascribed depends on how you chose to achieve it.

The rule of man is, as ever, more powerful than the rule of law; dishonesty is seen, not so much in terms of personal moral failure, but as caused by structural pressures and temptations that are impossible to resist.

Concerning rural women, in some respects the reform era has accentuated their inferior position in society. A magazine devoted to women's issues, *Rural Women Knowing All*, has been a rich source of data for this study. Due to the one child policy and resulting gender imbalance, poorer women are treated as commodities and arranged marriages are widespread because of this. Domestic violence and divorce are both increasing to an alarming pitch—be prepared for the horror stories. Little wonder the suicide rate among rural women in China is the highest in the world. Mass migrations of rural men have created a new category of "women who stay behind." They are responsible for children and parents and are vulnerable to abuse by other men.

Chapter Nine, "Beggars in the Socialist Market Economy" draws some surprising conclusions. Putting begging in historical context—going right back to the Shang dynasty—it makes fascinating reading. In some cases, beggars are seen to be "government controlled tax collectors" (raising funds for poverty relief), or a "chosen profession" (with recognized skills, allocation of locations and regulations of conduct). It can certainly be an easier and more lucrative lifestyle than that of sweatshop laborers in Guangdong, many of whom are cheated out of their wages. We read here of diverse groups, some of whom group themselves into companies for mutual support and protection. "Begging with Chinese characteristics" confounds the moral categories of both communist and capitalist ideologies; it represents the persistence of a premodern tradition in forms that have adapted themselves to modern political economies.[7]

I'm glad I read this book. Its stories, analyses and conclusions have opened my eyes to many key issues and my heart to many desperate needs.

Endnotes

1. Private correspondence with Dr. Carol L. Hamrin, March 31, 2003.
2. *Popular China*, p.5
3. Ibid., p.4
4. Ibid., p.7
5. Ibid., p.8
6. Ibid., p.39
7. Ibid., p.211

***Glenys Goulstone**, M.B., Ch.B., M.A., was involved with the placement and pastoral care of Christian professionals in China from 1995–2000. In 2001, she joined the staff of a U.S. based agency as a mobilizer and China advisor.*

The Greatest Story Never Told?

China perspective

Brent Fulton

In this issue of *ChinaSource*, we profile China's "influencers," the up-and-coming generation whose choices and decisions will significantly affect the course of China's future.

In terms of education, opportunity, status, and material wealth, the influencers have considerably more than the vast majority of people in China. Yet conspicuously absent from the worldview of most is a consideration of the spiritual side of life. China has seen decades of dramatic revival among peasants in the countryside. But among the influencers, most of whom are members of China's growing urban population, the life-transforming story of Christ has yet to be told.

Brent Fulton

Christians from outside China can have a unique role in introducing the "influencers" to Christ. To be effective in doing so, a paradigm shift must occur in four areas.

First, while much has been done to serve the rapidly growing church in rural China, we have much to learn regarding the needs and opportunities of China's cities. Assisting the rural church as we are able is important. However, for many from outside China the more culturally appropriate avenues for involvement are to be found among China's growing urban population.

Secondly, by focusing our attention solely within China's borders, we may miss some of the most obvious opportunities for service and witness among the future influencers, thousands of whom are currently studying or working in other countries. The question for many churches and organizations outside China is not how they can be effective in China, but, rather, how effective are they being right where they are. We need a global perspective as we consider how God is changing the hearts of those who will one day change China.

Related to this second point, we ought not to view our task among those living outside China as simply evangelistic. Many have already come to faith in Christ and are contemplating future ministry when they one day return to China. Some will go back as Christian professionals. Others will find a role in full-time Christian service. Now is the time to disciple and mentor these future leaders, who will play a significant role in the Chinese church of the future.

Finally, we should re-examine the current organizational sending model for those going to China. Many business and professional people have skills that are in demand in China today and, given the opportunity, would be willing to go. Their professional qualifications provide an entrée into the world of China's influencers. For these professionals, the lengthy training and support-raising required by traditional sending agencies constitute more of a barrier than a help in getting to China. Yet, very few alternatives exist to connect these individual with the opportunities in China, orient them before they go, and provide a support structure once they are there.

How Christians outside China, particularly in the West, make this paradigm shift will determine in large part how effective they will be in influencing China's influencers with the Gospel. The opportunities are here. The story is waiting to be told.

***Brent Fulton**, Ph.D., is the president of ChinaSource and the editor of the* ChinaSource *journal.*

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