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CORRUPTION AND INDIGNATION



WINDOWS INTO
POPULAR CHINESE VIEWS
OF RIGHT AND WRONG

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How is it possible to know what Chinese people think and feel about their government? Western naiveté shows its strongest colors in the belief that one can just go over to China and ask, get people to say what they think, then compile the answers. Groups like World Values Survey, Asia-Barometer, and the Pew Survey on Global Attitudes have been using this method and getting some startling results. Large majorities of Chinese support their political system, these surveys find, and virtually everyone finds it “legitimate.” When Pew asked people around the world “Are you satisfied with the state of your nation?” 81 percent of urban Chinese said “yes.” This put China first in the world in positive answers to this question. Fewer than 30 percent of Americans, when similarly surveyed, answered “yes.”¹

The problems with using the “do ask, do tell” method in China are as layered as an onion. The first problem is that it is valued in Chinese culture to give “the right” answer (rather than a frank answer) whenever one is asked any formal question in public. I first learned this in 1979 while doing a purely literary survey on reading preferences among university students in Guangzhou. Nearly every student said *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a classic eighteenth-century Qing dynasty novel, was his or her favorite work of Chinese fiction. Later in the survey, it emerged that few had read the novel.² They just “knew” that it was the best, and that it was the “right answer” to the question. Such problems are compounded when the question is asked by a foreigner, or the representative of a foreigner, because that introduces the issue of national “face,” making it is even more important to give the right answer. When topics are politically sensitive, the fear factor enters and indeed dominates: Would I dare say that I oppose the Communist Party, even if I felt that way? Would my family (who would join me in suffering the consequences of a wrong answer) ever forgive me for being so stupid? And in addition to these psychological impediments to gathering accurate survey research, government rules add practical barriers: no foreigner can do surveys in China without an approved Chinese partner, and all results must be

reviewed and approved by Party officials before publication.

If we interpret the word “legitimacy” rigorously—to mean not just “Do I like what my government is doing?” but “Do I recognize the right of my government to be my government?” then the average Chinese citizen has probably never asked himself or herself the question and might even have trouble understanding it. In daily life, the Communist Party is like the weather: you deal with it, but you don’t—you can’t—entertain alternatives.

But people do have feelings, opinions, and complaints—and how! There are a number of ways that one can discover and study them.

Popular Political Thought in China

If Alexis de Tocqueville could visit China today, he might find that his simple method of watching and listening to people, then inferring their thought from their behavior, still works quite well. A few months ago a distinguished Chinese writer named Sha Yexin wrote an essay that might be viewed as borrowing Tocquevillian method.³

Sha tells of an incident that occurred on a public street in the Wanzhou district of Chongqing city, Sichuan province, at 1:00 in the afternoon of October 18, 2004. A coolie named Yu Jikui accidentally bumped a woman named Zeng Qingrong with his carrying pole. The woman’s husband, Hu Jieao, became incensed, seized the pole, and began beating Yu Jikui’s legs in what appeared to bystanders to be an attempt not only to hurt the man but to deprive him of his future livelihood as a coolie. When a few onlookers tried to intervene, the irate husband yelled, “I am the chief of the Housing Bureau! Even if I kill him, to me it’s only a 200,000 yuan fine!” This brazen comment added fuel to the flames. A mob surrounded Zeng and Hu, trapping them until a passing policeman helped them into his police car and whisked them away. The spectacle of “officials helping officials” only further incensed the crowd. Word of the incident spread, by word-of-mouth and by telephone, and in the following days more than thirty

thousand people arrived at the government building in Wanzhou to protest and demand that the offending official be punished. Authorities assigned a column of policemen to protect the office building. Protesters overturned some cars and burned them. The Communist Party Committee of Chongqing city went into emergency session and produced a three-part plan to “quell the riot”: First, send an official out to the protesters to promise them a full investigation of the carrying-pole incident and a heavy punishment for the offender; second, wait until late night to send one thousand armed police to deal with any lingering protesters; and third, run a story in the press saying that protesters “did not understand the true facts” and were being manipulated by people with “ulterior motives.” This ended the protests.

In his essay, Sha Yexin notes the government’s cynical tactics but goes on to ask an astute question about the popular mentality:

The bumping of one person by another with a carrying pole is a tiny event, about as weighty as a chicken feather or a garlic skin, and it happens every moment of every day across our land. So what exactly caused this particular incident in Wanzhou to flare up so extraordinarily? The trigger was Hu Jieao’s announcement that he was “Chief of the Housing Bureau.” Hah! An “official”! For the people on the street this changed everything. It led to a surge of pent-up anger against officialdom generally. When the police intervened to protect Hu, and when Hu took refuge in government offices, it only confirmed the whole issue as one of people-versus-officials. By no means was a bump with a carrying pole, or even beating someone on the legs, the cause that brought 30,000 people to the streets ready to burn cars.⁴

Sha then quotes government statistics to show that such flare-ups are not unusual. There has been a steady rise in recent years, all across China, in the number of “incidents” that police have had to repress: in 1993, there were ten thousand such incidents involving 730,000 people, and by 2003, the numbers

had risen to sixty thousand incidents involving more than 3 million people. In July 2005, the minister of public security acknowledged a six-fold increase in “mass incidents” over the past decade and noted that they were larger, more frequent, more violent, and “reached more realms”—that is, involved more kinds of people in society—than before.⁵

Why do ordinary Chinese resent their officials, and, in the absence of effective polling, what means do we have of uncovering their thoughts and feelings? The issues that bring people to the streets in China have included confiscation of land, forced relocations, firings from state-owned enterprises, and arbitrary fees and taxes. Officials are blamed not only because they are the ones who order these actions, but also because they are seen as profiting personally: when land is confiscated, it is because officials and their cronies are “developing” their own projects; when workers are laid off, it may be because an official has turned a state factory into his private enterprise; when arbitrary taxes are levied, it is because officials want to squeeze more money from citizens. What grates on ordinary people is not economic growth per se, nor even the large income disparities that it creates, but the perceived unfairness and moral impropriety of how things happen. Sha entitles his essay “The Culture of Corruption.” This word “corruption” is probably the best umbrella term for popular Chinese complaint about officials. It is usually rendered as *fubai* in Chinese, although *tanwu* (graft), *duoluo* (dissolution), *buzheng zhi feng* (improper tendencies), and many other locutions are available.

Talk of corruption is extremely widespread in China, and one might study popular attitudes about it simply by listening to taxi drivers, barbers, or whomever one meets, paying special attention to people who, like Sha, have a Tocquevillian talent for inference. In addition, though, there are several kinds of materials that one can study, and I would like to introduce three of them—“anticorruption” novels, blogs, and popular ditties called *shunkouliu*. I will explain how each of these sources reveals popular sentiment—despite government repression—and then move on to what the sources can lead us to conclude about civic culture in China.

Anticorruption Novels

China has a long tradition, dating from the eighteenth century, of fiction that satirizes officialdom. In the mid-1990s, during the gloom and repression that followed the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, this tradition was revived as a way of giving at least some expression to popular complaint about government. Dozens of *fanfu xiaoshuo* (anticorruption novels) appeared between 1995 and 2002. Some were *romans à clef*, telling true stories only thinly disguised. Others used imaginary plots but with sociological details that rang true—and which often were true, but stitched together in fiction. The most popular titles, such as Zhang Ping's *Choice*, enjoyed sales as high as a million—and certainly even higher numbers in their total audiences, since each copy of a book could have several readers, and profitable works are pirated as well as made into television versions.⁶ In 2002, the government clamped down on anticorruption fiction, but punchy works have continued to appear from time to time.

All books in China must be published at presses that are licensed, and technically owned, by the state. Authors who write about corruption, therefore, need to think of clever ways to step around censorship. Although certain things just cannot be written, and others slipped in only if surrounded by layers of innocuous padding, in general one can get away with describing almost any kind of outrageous behavior so long as one implies that it is a local problem and that higher-level leaders are clean. Lurid details can still be exposed, as long as an official from the Central Discipline and Inspection Commission appears, *deus ex machina*, to set things right at the end. (Readers and writers have a silent pact that this is window-dressing.) Another tactic of sidestepping party censorship has been to put the most incendiary comments into the mouths of characters who are clearly classified as “bad.” An author can write that the Communist Party is a private membership group and that the People's Armed Police is its band of hired thugs, describing in detail how the whole mafia-like web hangs together, as long as the character who furnishes the analysis is a hoodlum or confessed criminal.

Blogs

Amnesty International and others have estimated that there are at least thirty thousand police assigned to monitor the Internet in China.⁷ As part of a bureaucracy that, like regular offices of public security, has central, provincial, and local levels, they block websites, filter e-mail, and punish people who do not “cooperate”—that is, do not monitor and censor themselves. They ban the use of pseudonyms and impose collective responsibility on Internet users if anything goes wrong, thereby inducing people to police one another. They offer rewards to snitchers. But despite all this, the Internet lives on as the most intractable medium the Communist Party of China has ever faced. Bloggers play cat and mouse and can still win, putting out messages that, even if they need to be scaled back a bit, leave no doubt in readers' minds about what is being said. Sites that expose official corruption can get tens or hundreds of thousands of hits before being closed down.

Shunkouliu

Shunkouliu are popular sayings—often rhythmical, sometimes rhymed, and invariably satiric—that are passed around in society more or less as jokes are in the West. Official corruption is their most frequent topic by far. An example follows. (In translating *shunkouliu*, I try to preserve rhythm and rhyme as well as meaning.)

Officials are addicted to money
While the people labor and sweat.
If something else counts, then it's funny
That no one's run into it yet.

Like jokes in the West, *shunkouliu* have no known authors. In recent years they have expanded from being a purely oral medium to text-messaging, but there, too, authorship has been anonymous. This is important in a repressive context. It means that no person can be held responsible for their content, and that fact, in turn, means that they are wonderfully

free of censorship. The government bans them, but it also collects and circulates them for its “internal” purposes in order to understand what people really think. Perhaps because *shunkouliu* occupy such an unusual space—the only tiny corner in which one can be truly uncensored in public—they tend to be unremittingly negative. To understand popular views, one needs to place them within larger patterns.

Corruption in the Popular View: Hypocrisy, Dissolution, and Plunder

Chinese cultural tradition assumes that literary learning brings improvement in personal character, which in turn qualifies a person to lead a family and to govern society wisely and fairly. When the scholar-gentleman-ruler adheres to morality and learning, all will be well at the level he serves. If, however, he fails in his role by falling into idleness (enjoying teahouses, storytelling, wine, and song) or into more serious vices (gluttony, inebriation, frequenting prostitutes, gambling), then society will suffer. If he descends even further, into downright dishonesty (bribery, embezzlement, fraud, cheating on exams), then his role in society itself becomes pernicious. Much depends, in short, on whether officials are clean or corrupt.

Despite the tremendous impact of the modern West on China, and despite the legacy of more than half a century of revolutionary Communist rule, these fundamental attitudes about the importance of official rectitude have persisted to the present day. At the same time, China’s tradition of satiric fiction, briefly noted above, has grown ever more hard-hitting in its exposure of corruption. Wu Jingzi’s eighteenth-century novel *The Scholars*, a landmark in the genre, is whimsical in approach when compared to today’s anticorruption novels.⁸ The major vices in Wu’s novel are stupidity and hypocrisy; one official advises another, for example, on how to be a sycophant: “[E]ven kowtowing when it is not strictly necessary will do no harm.” At the turn of the twentieth century, a series of “castigatory novels” by Li

Boyuan, Wu Woyao, and others were less gentle. In these books, corrupt officials stole the country’s wealth and sapped its strength “with the trickery of wolves.” *Chi he piao du* (eating, drinking, whoring, gambling) dominated their thinking.

Today’s anticorruption novels and *shunkouliu* are even more pungent. A *shunkouliu* describes the “princeling” generation of new leaders this way:

Dance all night until the dawn,
Throw back booze and don’t feel gone,
Bed eight girls and still feel brawn,
Never touch what they’re working on.

Corruption and Sex

Sexual misbehavior in particular is disapproved of more sharply now than it was two centuries ago. In traditional Confucian culture, the main reason for frowning on sexual indulgence was that it was a dalliance, an improper diversion of one’s attention and energies. Now, after the arrival of Western attitudes and, in particular, Communist strictness, the notion has crept in that sexual excess is definitive depravity, not just a waste of time. When Mao Zedong’s physician, Li Zhisui, published his memoirs, which exposed many details of betrayal, blackmail, and cruel indifference to death and suffering in the thinking of the “Great Helmsman,” it was nevertheless the image of Mao escorting dancing girls into his bedroom that seemed to grab the most attention in China’s rumor mill.⁹ That was the detail that showed his iniquity. The intersection of sex and power draws popular denunciation of a special intensity, as can be seen in the following *shunkouliu*, which takes the viewpoint of an honest prostitute:

First, I don’t pilfer;
Second, I don’t rob;
I just embrace Communists;
That’s my job!

A novel packed with sexual innuendo and sarcastically entitled *Serve the People*, by Yan Lianke,

was published in Guangzhou in 2005.¹⁰ It was promptly banned but immediately found wide circulation and elicited enthusiastic commentary on the Internet. Set in the later years of the Cultural Revolution era, it tells of the bored young wife of a general in the People's Liberation Army. The wife craves sex, which her older (and apparently impotent) husband does not provide. A strong, young soldier-attendant indulges her. Whenever she is ready for action, she hangs a sign reading "Serve the People" outside her door, and the young man arrives to carry out Mao's slogan—under a whole new interpretation. The couple achieves special ecstasy when they copulate after smashing plaster busts of Mao and ripping up his photos and Little Red Book. The high-ranking husband, meanwhile, is off in Beijing at a meeting on how to prepare for nuclear war with the Soviet revisionists and smash the Nationalists on Taiwan. The relevance of his impotence to his bravado is left for readers to ponder.

In general, though, sex has not been the top item in recent popular views of official corruption. Money has. Officials grab money illicitly, hoard it jealously, and use it selfishly. A *shunkouliu* sketches a money baron this way:

He's got the finance system on his left
 And the banking network to his right.
 He taxes all of industry
 With all his beastly might.
 He's the king of electric current
 And prince of the water pipe,
 But what's he care for kids at school?
 Not a piece of tripe!

New Corruption

Many kinds of evidence show that—in fact as well as in rumor—corruption in China's urban economy has grown dramatically in recent years. A main reason for the pro-democracy protests in 1987 and 1989 was the popular perception that while the agricultural economy had become much freer in the 1980s, the urban economy was still held back by the

iron framework of Soviet-style "work units." After the Beijing massacre, Deng Xiaoping took the radical gamble of opening the urban economy to private enterprise, but this move also opened the way for people who held political power to use that power in order to convert state-owned resources to private use. This pattern was a vast and breathtaking new kind of corruption. It was so brazen that it made the garden varieties of corruption (bribery, gift-giving, graft) seem minor by comparison and thus all the more acceptable. He Qinglian's 1998 book *China's Pitfall* documents this great plunge into new corruption in considerable detail.¹¹ In 1996, Transparency International, surveying international business opinion on corruption around the globe, ranked China fifth from last, ahead only of Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan, and Nigeria.¹²

In popular opinion, the most-resented aspect of the new corruption seems to be its flavor of larceny. When officials grab public property, it is wealth that rightfully belongs to the people. A *shunkouliu* says:

I worked my whole life for the Party
 And had nothing at the time I retired.
 Now they tell me to live off my kids,
 But my kids one by one have been fired.

As if expanding on this ditty, a laid-off worker named Chen Hong, in the city of Changsha, Hunan province, began in July 2006 to post some incisive views on his blog. In less than four months the blog received more than a million hits, so we can infer that Chen's views had considerable resonance among others. "To us workers," Chen wrote, "economic 'reform' has meant lay-off and unemployment; it has meant that the wealth and benefits born of our labors of yesterday have been plundered by the privileged elite. . . . [Back] in the era of the planned economy, the entire production and profit of our factory went to the state, while we workers got only nominal monthly sustenance." We were supposed to be "masters of the state," and the surplus value we produced was supposed to be saved for our pensions. Now our pensions are practically zero. You managers lay us off to make the work units

more efficient? That might be fair if you had been capitalists in the first place. But you weren't and you aren't. You are managers of state enterprises owned by us workers. You don't own the factories—so where do you get the power to fire us? Chen concludes: "This [rip-off of labor] is a classic political process, not a market mechanism, and maybe it is only this wild force that has created the economic miracle in our country."¹³

In another essay, Chen addresses party leaders. The Communist Party "won" in the 1950s when private wealth was converted into public property; now, he says, the party "wins" again when public wealth is converted back to private. "Communism and the planned economy were both brought to us by the Communist Party," writes Chen, "so you in that party should take responsibility. If there is a price to be paid, you should pay it; you should not ask ordinary people to pay it."

Another recent blogger, writing as Liu Yide (presumably a pseudonym), cites a report from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences that showed that, in March 2006, there were 3,220 people in China who had assets of at least 100 million yuan; of these, 2,932 (91 percent) were family members of senior officials.¹⁴

Hidden Corruption

The covering up of evidence of corruption seems as widespread as corruption itself. Since corruption remains technically illegal as well as socially embarrassing, the techniques used to carry it out are covert and sometimes subtle. Fiction and blogs are full of interesting examples of disguised bribery. For example, gift-giving—of food, liquor, appliances, cars, vacations, and so on—happens without either side of the transaction articulating the *quid pro quo* that both know to be at stake. Another device is to invite the person whom one is bribing to a game of mah-jongg and "lose" large sums by playing badly on purpose. Who can fault that? One needs to be able to trust the partner in the bribery, but relations of trust build up over time as each side not only benefits but also knows that he is vulnerable to exposure by the other side.

A story reported in a blog in Sichuan last year told of a factory manager who was offered a bribe and reported the offer to his superior, the party secretary, who urged him to take the money, not because the party secretary would get part of the bribe, and not because he had the best interests of his subordinate's pocketbook in mind, but because he himself was already corrupt and wanted his underling to be corrupt and thus not be in a position to expose anything. This factory manager is not alone in taking bribes, according to the blog, but others in number-two positions face a similar dilemma: if you take bribes and your boss does not, you are vulnerable; if you refuse bribes and your boss does not, you are vulnerable. The solution is to follow the boss's example. Even workers in factories, however resentful they might be of private takeovers, can have ambivalent feelings about the day-to-day corruption of their bosses: corruption is bad, yes, but if the boss pulls in large amounts, illicit or not, some of it will trickle down to the rest of the factory's workers.

In short, corruption has become such a pervasive—perhaps even necessary—part of daily life that it can seem futile to try to avoid it. Stories abound of how one needs to bribe in order to get things done. If you want to get your child into a good school, the principal will receive your sealed envelope. If you want to water your field, the irrigation officer awaits your visit. If you want a competent surgeon to do your mother's appendectomy, the nurse will be your go-between—and quickly, if the price is right. There has been a growing sense in recent popular thought that ordinary people should not be blamed for engaging in this level of corruption. One has no choice. Moreover, with those at the top so rapacious, why should the "little folk" have scruples? A *shunkouliu* offers a primer for the ordinary citizen:

A cigarette gets you in the door,
And with the wine you hear the deal,
But if you want the problem solved,
It's gotta be a great big meal.

The tone here is still satiric, to be sure. Bribery is wrong. But the bribery is understandable; the main

problem lies with the system. But what can observers conclude about the values and attitudes of China's civic culture based on the satire in fiction, blogs, and *shunkouliu*?

Chinese Indignation and the Notion of Rectitude

It would be a great mistake to view the flood of complaints about corruption in today's China as adding up to pessimism. Tocqueville would not make such a mistake. The corruption is real and egregious, to be sure. But the complaint is actually a sign of hope. The most depressing situation, after all, would be one in which an ugly reality marches forward and everyone accepts it in silence. The numerous and spirited ways in which Chinese people are objecting—despite repression, risk, and sometimes their own involvement in the problems—show that popular ideas about social morality are still alive and well.

Indeed, it has long been the case in China that muckraking cuts both ways: the bad news is that the news is bad, but the good news is that readers, writers, and others feel indignant. Sometimes a voyeuristic mood takes over and citizens enjoy a tour of dissolution among the high and mighty, partly because it boosts their own egos. But more fundamentally, the exposure of wrongdoing interests people only if the exposed behavior is clearly *wrong*—only if, in other words, onlookers are upholding standards of what is right. The muckraking therefore indirectly strengthens notions of rightness. When Yan Lianke, author of *Serve the People*, was asked how he could choose a title that derides a Mao slogan so sarcastically, he answered that “my intention was to satirize not the phrase, but those who fail to serve the people.”¹⁵ This answer, given inside China, may have been offered in part to defend the author from political attack. But it is also quite true that the basic thrust of Yan's satire is to uphold values, not to tear them down.

The best way to understand how complaint can imply values in China is, once again, by reference to habits that are deep in the Confucian tradition and that continue to undergird China today. Confucius

taught that social harmony results when people play their social roles properly. The father must be a proper father, the son a proper son, the husband a husband, the wife a wife, and so on. The values that made a Confucian system work were private values in the sense that every person needed to internalize them; but they were public values in the sense that they applied to everyone, everyone knew what they were, and anyone was subject to criticism if he did not play his role properly. “Equality” was not a Confucian value. In all the basic human relationships, one pole in any dyad was superior to the other (father to son, husband to wife, sovereign to minister, and so on). But, crucially, each side in a dyad had its duties to the other, and each was subject to private and public criticism if the duties were not performed correctly.

Chinese fiction and storytelling are full of examples of how the weak side in a social relationship could issue complaints about misbehavior of the strong side. A peasant dies from overwork trying to pay rent and taxes; his widow resorts to begging to try to feed her small children; the children die; the landlord still comes to demand rent; the woman gives up and commits suicide. The widow—poor, humble, illiterate and female—is on the weak side of the relationship with the landlord on every count. But now comes the telling detail, one that Tocqueville surely would notice: she decides to commit suicide at the landlord's door, thus calling public attention to his misbehavior. This happens a lot in Chinese storytelling, and the little fact tells us that she feels she has the right to protest: You are strong, she says, and I am weak; you are rich, I am poor; you are educated, I am not—but I still have the right to tell you that you are wrong. Moreover, I do it publicly, at your doorstep. This shows that we both know that the values you have violated are public values. Others will notice your violation and judge you. Finally, the concluding twist shows that the woman believes her values to be higher than any individual human life.

During the years of high Maoism in the mid-twentieth century, public truth-telling in China took on an added layer of significance because of repression. Until the time Mao died, a number of facts about society could not be said in public,

although they were obvious to everyone: that tens of millions had starved during the Great Leap Forward, that the Cultural Revolution had been cruel and violent, that corruption and special privilege had pervaded ruling circles, and that a prescribed falsity dominated in official language. In the “scar literature” years that followed Mao’s death in 1976, a number of writers skyrocketed to popularity when they dared to put forbidden truths onto paper. Readers loved their stories not because they learned anything new from them but for almost the opposite reason: they could finally see in print—in public—things that they had known for years but had never dared to say themselves. The experience was called *jiechen* (releasing resentment). In the relative relaxation of the post-Mao decades, *jiechen* has become less important than it once was, but the sting of a good *shunkouliu* still comes more from getting it just right than from telling the listener anything he or she does not know.

The values crisis in China today comes not from the demise of the moral impulse in the Chinese people or their culture. The plethora of their complaints shows that the impulses themselves are still healthy. There is, moreover, abundant evidence that people are trying to reestablish some kind of value system that might do for China today what Confucianism used to do: provide a set of values that are private in the sense that one can adopt them as one’s own moral compass and public in the sense that one can rely upon the fact that others will be similarly guided.

The major obstacle to this quest is the Communist Party, whose leaders fear and therefore repress

any “thought”—political, moral, or religious—that they believe could give rise to a rival organization. Hence the party crushes groups like the China Democratic Party, unauthorized churches, popular Chinese religions like Falun Gong or Yi Guan Dao, or any autonomous Uyghur or Tibetan groups. The party’s own moral teachings, such as Deng Xiaoping’s “Five Pay-Attentions, Four Attractivenesses, and Three Adores” (*wujiang simei sanreai*) or Hu Jintao’s “Eight Prides and Eight Shames” (*barong bachi*) have the fatal flaw that, in the public ear, they have the artificial ring that official language in China has had ever since Mao began to insist in the late 1950s that the Chinese people mouth official phrases, even if their meanings departed radically from the evidence of daily experience. Today, schoolchildren memorize certain liling official phrases, and everyone pays them lip service, but they have almost no traction at all in the ethics of daily life.

The only widespread public values today are the making of money and a relatively superficial version of nationalism that emphasizes Han pride, Olympic glory, and the country’s economic “miracle.” But these cannot solve the values crisis. They are too thin to carry the weight of China’s longstanding cultural habit of relying on a shared ethical system. Notions of moral right and wrong, that one can learn to “be a good person” (*zuo ren*), are too deeply rooted in Chinese culture for even the Maoist conflagration to annihilate, and someday, when today’s narrow and repressive rulers get out of the way, something better is sure to grow.

Notes

1. Pew Global Attitudes Project, "15-Nation Pew Global Attitude Survey," June 13, 2006, 5, available at www.pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/252.pdf (accessed February 5, 2008).
2. Cao Xueqin's *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, also known as *The Story of the Stone*, has been published in English by Penguin Classics as a five-volume series, translated by David Hawkes and John Minford.
3. Sha Yexin, "Zhonghua Minzu Daole Zui Weixian De Shihou" [The Chinese People Have Reached Their Most Dangerous Hour], Boxum Xinwenwang [Boxum News Net], October 21, 2006.
4. Ibid.
5. For more statistics on incidents of civil unrest in China, along with the Ministry of Public Security's statements on the issue, see Ching-Ching Ni, "Wave of Social Unrest Continues Across China," *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 2006; and Murray Scot Tanner, "Chinese Government Responses to Rising Social Unrest" (testimony, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Washington, DC, April 14, 2005), available at www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT240/ (accessed February 5, 2008).
6. Zhang Ping, *Choice* (Beijing: Qunzhong Chubanshe [Masses Publishing House], 2001).
7. Amnesty International, "State Control of the Internet in China," November 2002, 2, available at: www.amnesty.org/en/alfresco_asset/4a3cab2f-a3ff-11dc-9d08-f145a8145d2b/asa170072002en.pdf (accessed February 5, 2008).
8. Wu Jingzi, *The Scholars*, trans. Hsien-I Yang and Gladys Yang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
9. Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, trans. Tai Hung-Chao (New York: Random House, 1994).
10. Yan Lianke, *Serve the People*, trans. Julia Lovell (New York: Grove Press/Black Cat, 2008).
11. He Qinglian, *Zhongguo de Xianjing* [China's Pitfall] (Hong Kong: Mingjing Chubanshe, 1998).
12. Transparency International, "TI Corruption Perception Index 1996," 2, available at www.transparency.org/content/download/2914/18028/file/cpi1996.pdf (accessed February 5, 2008).
13. For a review of Chen Hong's arguments, see Hu Ping, "The Accidental Spokesman for China's Workers," *China Rights Forum* 71, no. 1 (2007), available at www.hrichina.org/public/PDFs/CRF.1.2007/CRF-2007-1_Spokesman.pdf (accessed February 5, 2008).
14. I have not been able to obtain this report, which is probably classified. But whether or not the report is accurate, Liu's blog post was widely touted on the Internet and is probably a good indication of popular resentment of elite wealth.
15. Benjamin Kang Lim, "China's Censors 'Serve the People' with Ban on Novel," *Seattle Times*, April 17, 2005.

About the Author

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About the Tocqueville on China Project

This paper was commissioned by the American Enterprise Institute in conjunction with its Tocqueville on China project. Directed by AEI's Gary J. Schmitt and Dan Blumenthal, the project examines topics and issues designed to provide greater insight and an enhanced understanding of contemporary Chinese civic culture. For more, see www.aei.org/tocqueville/.