HISTORIOGRAPHY
EAST & WEST

History and State: Searching the Past in the Light of the Present in the People's Republic of China

Jin Qiu
History Department, Old Dominion University
United States of America

Keywords:

China, Chinese historiography, official history, unofficial history historicism, history and state, Party history, Mao Zedong, Jian Bozan, Wu Han, Yu Ping-bo, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Lin Biao Incident.

Abstract:

This article explores the interaction between the state, society and the individual in the process of forging contemporary history in China. I discuss two distinctive categories in contemporary Chinese history, official history (*zhengshi*, 正史) and unofficial history (*yeshi*, 野史). By comparing and contrasting these two categories of history, I intend to show how history serves as an agent between past and present, and as a convenient tool for the state to formulate its political legitimacy in contemporary China. I do not intend to treat official and unofficial history as two exclusive categories to cover all the historical studies published in the People's Republic of China. The distinction of official history and unofficial history is made to facilitate discussion of the

relationship between history and the state, and thus, these terms should be understood as representing alternate poles in a linear relation, with many other subcategories in between.

Inquiries into the relationship between history and the state become more important when we study historiography in the People's Republic of China. Although traditional concept of official and unofficial history changed in the modern era, the state has continued the practice of controlling the sources and interpretations of history. The officially sponsored/recognized history still possesses much more authority than unofficial history. In order to justify his revolutionary theory and practice and to establish a "new tradition," Mao and his Party pushed what I define as "ahistorical" practice to the extreme. The politicization of historical study has greatly changed the direction of Chinese historiography and resulted in the domination of the "ahistorical" attitude over studies of Chinese history. Not only did Mao controlled the interpretations of China's past, he also ambitiously intended to remold the worldview (*gaizao shijie guan*, 改造世界观) of intellectuals and reshape the way historians conduct their research. By the end of the Cultural Revolution, the field of historiography in China had been pushed to an "ahistorical extreme." Many intellectuals were purged during the politicization of historiography to reinforce the official ideology in historical study.

In my study of unofficial history, I try to illustrate the discrepancy between the dominant official history and unofficial histories in terms of historical facts and perceptions of particular historical event. Unofficial history in contemporary China emerged as the result of the intensive politicization of Chinese society after 1949, which left little room for different opinions and even different academic opinions. Many works/manuscripts in the category of unofficial history, such as my study of the Lin Biao Incident, can still not be published in China. I will use different interpretations of the Lin Biao Incident to illustrate the interaction between official history, collective memory and individual memory in forging the history of contemporary China. I try to reconstruct the process by which particular political / social / personal events are transformed into recent history and to illustrate how different elements, official history, social memory, and individual perception, function in shaping or reshaping the recent past in the People's Republic of China.

关键词：

中国，中国史学，官方正史，非官方野史，历史主义，历史和政权，党史，毛泽东，翦伯赞，吴晗，俞平伯，中国文化大革命，林彪事件。

摘要：

本文旨在探讨在中国当代历史形成的过程中政权，社会和个人三者之间的相互作用。我详细讨论了当代中国历史的二个类别，即官方历史（正史）和非官方的历史（野史）的区别。通过比较中国历史的这两个类别，我试图演示历史是如何在过去和现在之间搭起一座桥梁，并且因此而成为政府的一个工具，用来解释其统治中国的政权合法性。我不打算将官方正史和非官方野史作为二个截然不同的相互排斥的类别，用于包括在中国出版的所有历史研究和与历史相关的着作。我将历史着作区分为“官方正史”和“非官方野史”是为了更好地讨论历史和政权之间的关系。 因此，官方正史与非官方野史之间的关系可以解释为一个线性关系的两个终端，而中间存在许多可以进一步加以区分的不同的类别。

当我们讨论中华人民共和国历史的演变过程时，探讨历史和现政之间的关系就显得尤其重要。虽然官方正史和非官方野史的传统概念经历了不同时代的演变，但政府试图对历史资料和解释权加以控制的实质并没有多少发生变化。官方正史仍然比非官方野史拥有更多的权威，而且具有排他性。为了给他的革命理论和实践找到历史性的解释和建立一个“新传统,”毛泽东和他的党将我定义为“非历史”的实践推向了极端。历史研究的政治化很大程度上改变了中国史学发展的方向，从而导致“非历史”的态度在历史研究领域里占了主导地位。毛泽东不仅设法控制对中国历史的解释权，他并且雄心勃勃地打算改造整个知识界的世界观来彻底改造中国史学家研究历史的方法。历史和历史学的研究在中国被推到“非历史”的顶端。这种情况一直持续到文化大革命结束。在政府强行推行历史研究政治化期间，许多知识分子被清洗，而政治和官方思想贯穿在历史和历史学研究的所有过程。

在我的对非官方的历史的研究中，我设法证明正史与野史之间可能出现对某一事件从史实到观点上的不同。非官方的历史在当代中国的涌现现是由于在 1949 年以后中国社会的高度政治化所致。学术的政治化没

有给不同的观点，甚至不同的学术观点留下任何余地。许多学术研究，譬如我对林彪事件的研究，被认定在非官方史范畴，至今仍然不能在中国国内出版。因此，我将用对林彪事件的不同解释来说明官方正史、集体记忆和个人记忆之间在当代中国历史研究中的相互作用。我设法展现当代的某一政治或社会事件或个人经历是如何演变为历史事件的，以及在此演变过程中，不同的元素，官方正史、社会记忆，和个人理解，在塑造或重塑中华人民共和国当代史中的作用。

* * *

One of the biggest challenges for historians of Modern Chinese history is to understand the complex legacy of the Chinese revolution. For historians, this means trying to understand the influence of the Chinese revolution, especially the Communist Revolution, on historical studies and on the way in which historiography has evolved in the People's Republic of China (PRC). In her review essay "Restarting Chinese History," Merle Goldman calls attention to a recent trend in which most studies of post-Mao China resume China's history where it left off in the mid-twentieth century.[1] Thus, a revival of the Chinese historical tradition has occurred in China. Many historical figures reappeared on stage and numerous books on the Confucian tradition, which had been forbidden in China after 1949, were republished.

It is understandable why Chinese scholars prefer to skip the immediate past to reconnect with the more durable historical tradition and to re-acknowledge Confucianism as an important heritage and to recognize today's China as the result of the continuous historical development instead of just the result of innovation by the communists. Many of them strongly feel the need to forge a new political identity other than that of communism in order to forget the painful recent past. Through re-emphasizing the Chinese historical heritage, some actually voiced their rejection of the ideological dominance of Marxist theories in historical studies, which not only hindered the development of Chinese historiography in terms of diversity and vitality, but also resulted in persecution of many historians, which culminated during the Cultural Revolution.

The revival of the Chinese historical tradition, moreover, indicates an apparent ambivalence among scholars as to how to evaluate the period of the communist revolution in the *longue durée* of Chinese history. Some pertinent questions arise: 1) Is it possible to explore Chinese experiences under the communist regime in the light of Chinese historical tradition instead of Marxism-Leninism? 2) Can we exclude the communist revolution from Chinese experiences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and ignore a possible connection between the Chinese tradition and the communist revolution, even if we view that period as an anomalous interruption in Chinese history? 3) How do the Chinese people remember their immediate past, and what is

[1] Goldman 2000: 153-164.

the long-term legacy of fifty years of communist control over Chinese historical and cultural studies? So far, few studies of contemporary Chinese history have addressed these issues.

This paper is largely a response to these questions concerning the historiography of recent Chinese history based on newly available materials in China. From a historiographical point of view, many practices in the communist era resemble the traditional idea of history in China. I intend to illustrate both continuities and changes between traditional Chinese historical ideas and communist practices through detailed discussion of two distinctive categories in contemporary Chinese history, official history (*zhengshi*, 正史) and unofficial history (*yeshi*, 野史). The distinction itself is not new, but official history became dogmatic in Mao's China, and those who dared to voice opinions different from official history were purged. By comparing and contrasting these two categories, I intend to show how history can serve as an agent between past and present and as a convenient tool for the state to formulate its political legitimacy. I do not intend, however, to treat official and unofficial history as two exclusive categories to cover all historical studies published in the People's Republic of China. The distinction is made to facilitate discussion of the relationship between history and state, and thus these terms should be understood as representing alternate poles in a linear relation, with many other subcategories in between. Through an analysis of the various aspects of official history, I will review the relationship between history writing and central power in forming communist historical tradition.[2] With regard to *yeshi* or unofficial history, I will focus on the historiography of the Lin Biao Incident in the Cultural Revolution, which provides a good example of how official history and unofficial history can be contradictory, both in terms of basic facts and, more importantly, interpretation. The historiography of the Lin Biao Incident also serves to highlight the larger issue of the interaction between the state, society and the individual in the process of forging contemporary history in China.

---

[2] For an interesting argument of the relationship between history and state, see Duara 1995. While Duara is concerned with applying post-modernist concepts, such as time, space, and narrative to the study of Chinese history, my intention here is to find out answers as to why the Chinese state is so keen on controlling interpretations of history.

Although China is not the only state where a political regime controls the interpretation of the history of the nation, the composition of national history has been integral to the unification of the country. In terms of the relationship between history and the nation, few countries have as long and as serious a historiographical tradition as China. Its long tradition of composing dynastic history goes all the way back to the Han dynasty, when Sima Qian, China's first grand historian, finished *The Historical Records* in the first century B.C. The tradition of recording China's past continued, and historians in subsequent dynasties largely followed this tradition, despite the change of dynasties.[3] Usually an emperor would decide which historical works would become the standard official history. By the time of the Qing dynasty, this tradition had produced what are collectively known as the "twenty-four histories," which consist of 3,250 volumes and cover nearly five thousand years of Chinese history from the period prior to the Zhou down to the Ming dynasty.[4] They also came to be known as the "Twenty-five histories," because in 1921 the President of the Republic of China accepted a "new" history of the Mongol Yuan dynasty. *A Draft of the History of the Qing Dynasty* (*Qing Shi Gao*, 清史稿), which was compiled under the Republican China, but which has not yet been officially accepted as one of the "standard histories."[5] These three thousand volumes of dynastic histories serve as a solid proof of China's amazing tradition of compiling official history.

Why did Chinese rulers keep alive this tradition of sponsoring and supervising the compilation of the official history for nearly two thousand years? Some answers may seem self-evident; the very fact that Chinese civilization continued to survive with minimum changes may already have illustrated the authority of a well-established historical tradition over a political entity. Written history has greatly contributed to the continuity of Chinese civilization ever since its early stages. Once history and tradition were recorded in written documents, they displayed the impersonal process of historical development, which should be taken seriously by the political ruler. The dynastic rulers seemed to understand this metahistorical force in shaping a unified national identity and in forging current politics. They found themselves under an obligation to follow the established tradition. Otherwise, it

[3] Reischauer and Fairbank 1960: 14.
[4] *Ci hai* 1980: 7.
[5] Reischauer and Fairbank 1960: 114.

an obligation to follow the established tradition. Otherwise, it might jeopardize the legitimacy of his rule.

Other answers, however, call for more complex arguments about the relationship between state building and other constitutive elements of the nation, namely, ethnicity, culture, tradition, and power. Although scholars still debate how and when a national identity of "Chineseness" was established in China, or whether the identity established was that of "Chineseness" or not, it seems that the majority of the ancient peoples in North China had taken for granted their Chinese ethnicity, as descendents of Emperor Huang (*Huang Di*, 皇帝) and Emperor Yan (*Yan Di*, 炎帝), long before the rise of the Zhou (1100-256 b.c.)[6] Even in the Chinese creation myth, one finds no suggestion of any hero who led the Chinese to China from elsewhere. Most legendary figures in early Chinese history are "cultural heroes," who taught the Chinese practical skills to survive.[7] It has been taken for granted that the Chinese originated in China--specifically in the central Yellow River region--and had developed a distinct group identity since the beginning of their civilization.

Sima Qian's *The Historical Records*, in a sense, put this otherwise fluid identity into something solid. His history provided the Chinese people with evidence of their past and made them aware of their group identity which would otherwise have been lost. This group identity of "Chineseness" gradually merged into metahistorical forces of the tradition by way of the written history and eventually became one of the criteria used to evaluate the legitimacy of subsequent political regimes in China. It became important for subsequent dynastic rulers to resume their connection with this group identity in order to justify their rule over China. Otherwise, they would run the risk of being accused of betraying the Chinese tradition and unfit to rule.

Ethnicity, thus, posed certain challenges to the rulers of a new dynasty, especially to those whose ethnicity was other than Han Chinese. It seems that there were two ways for an alien ruler to connect with the Chinese tradition: to accept Confucianism as the ruling ideology and to continue the composition of official histories. These were exactly what the early Qing emperors did. For the Qing rulers, history, with its strong connection to the tradition, would

---

6 Ho Ping-ti 1975: 344ff. Also see Fan Wenlan 1953-1965.
7 Reischauer and Fairbank 1960: 36-38.

help them to connect with "Chineseness" in order to legitimize their rule over China in the eyes of their Han subjects. Accepting the official history of the previous dynasties and the composition of the official history of the Ming dynasty became crucial steps to connect the "alien" emperors with Han Chinese tradition. This may also explain why the Twenty-four Histories were completed during the time of the Manchu dynasty.

The ethnic distinction, however, may not be the most important element in the process of nation-building. Scholars still debate the core of national identity and which element performs the dominant role, be it ethnicity, culture, or power. According to Joseph Levenson, ethnicity faded away in the Confucian tradition.[8] Among the Chinese, the early understanding of ethnic distinction probably developed along the line of Chinese and non-Chinese (derogatorily known as "barbarians"). To the early Chinese, who were geographically isolated from the outside world, "Chineseness" was the equivalence of "civilized." One of Confucius' central ideas was that the gentleman (*shi*), the backbone of the country, was not made by birth, but by education. This actually opened the door for non-Chinese to enter Chinese civilization. Similar to the enthusiasm of Christian missionaries, who believed in their responsibility to save others' souls, Confucian scholars, who formed the majority of the Chinese bureaucracy, also committed themselves to the mission of "civilizing" the "barbarians." The Chinese seemed to be willing to accept anybody ethnically different so long they demonstrated their commitment to the Confucian tradition. According to Lodén, "the acculturation of barbarians remained a recurring theme" in Chinese history.[9] One can find numerous examples of the recognition of the contributions to Chinese tradition by those who were ethnically foreign.[10] We can also find such examples in the early modern period. For instance, Qing Emperor Qianlong, in a letter to King George III in 1793, expressed his willingness to accept Europeans in his service so long as they followed "the established rule of the Celestial Dynasty" to wear Chinese court costumes, to stay in specified residences, and to prom-

---

[8] For more discussions on this, see Levenson 1968; Cohen 1984; and Lodén 1996 (Tønnesson and Antlöv 1996): 270-296.

[9] Lodén 1996: 273-276.

[10] For more discussions on this, see Lodén 1996: 270-272.

ise never to return to their own countries.[11] Chinese historians seldom question the ethnic identity of the Tang dynasty, even if it was actually established by a family that could only claim to be half-Chinese (Han Chinese). The Manchu rulers initially had more acute problems with their Chinese subjects because of their different ethnicity, but once they demonstrated their commitment to the Chinese Confucian tradition, and even adopted the Chinese language, the problem of ethnicity faded away, even though the anti-Manchu mentality never completely disappeared. Judging from the fact that Manchu culture has almost been completely assimilated into the Chinese culture today, can we assume that had the Manchus continued their rule without the interruption of the western powers, the Qing Dynasty might have eventually become one of the authentic Chinese dynasties? In other words, without foreign interference, Chinese nationalists might not have blamed the Manchus for the decline of Chinese power.

If Culturalism, as argued by Levenson and others, was indeed a central aspect of the relationship between the nation (dynasty) and tradition, the notion of the "Mandate of Heaven," another essential aspect of Confucianism, may help to explain why other dynastic rulers, who did not seem to have problems with their ethnicity or cultural heritage, also had the urge to follow the tradition of forging a dynastic history.[12] Chinese emperors, unlike those in Japanese history, had continuous problems in terms of genealogy. In Japan, the emperors seldom had problems of legitimacy, because all of them were believed to come from the same unbroken line of one imperial family. In imperial China, however, it did not mean much for the emperor of a new dynasty to establish a genealogical tie with the imperial family of the overthrown dynasty, since Heaven had already rescinded the mandate from the fallen emperor and given it to the new ruler. After the new rulers established a dynasty by force, it became both politically and culturally important for them to prove to the Chinese why they, instead of someone else, obtained the mandate from Heaven to rule China. In order to prove their legitimacy, the emperor was obligated to demonstrate his knowledge of and commitment to "the kingly way." As the Son of Heaven, he had to promise to rule as a "sage king" and to restore "the perfect order" manifested in the early Zhou.

---

[11] Teng and Fairbank 1982: 19.
[12] Lodén 1996: 273.

A state thus needs to be kept alive through continuous transformation and reconstruction of its tradition. In order to consolidate their rule over China, the dynastic rulers continued the practice of establishing a convincing link between their present and the Chinese past. The composition of a dynastic history became a convenient tool to relate the comparatively recent historical innovation to "antiquity." Paradoxically, the frequent interruption of the genealogical line of the emperor in China actually helped to consolidate Chinese tradition. Chinese rulers constantly needed to reassert their commitment to Chinese tradition and history and, thus, add more force to that tradition as well. Zhu Ziqing, a Qing scholar, crystallized this argument of the relation between history, nation and national identity with his famous remark, "To destroy a nation, one would destroy the nation's history first." (*yu wang qi guo, xian wang qi shi* 欲亡其国，先亡其史).

The rulers of modern China seemed to be luckier than the dynastic rulers, because they seldom needed to reconfirm their Chinese identity so long as they lived within the boundary of the Chinese state and knew the Chinese language, even if they spoke different dialects. Through a long process of evolution, "Chineseness" has become more culturally and territorially oriented. The long tradition of centralized bureaucracy had already established all the means to guarantee the legitimacy of any ruler who conquered the most of the Chinese territory, so long as they were "Chinese." Modern rulers, however, faced a new set of problems as China encountered the Western powers. Ever since the Opium war, Chinese leaders have been caught between two seemingly incompatible trends: to preserve tradition in a modern world or to save the country through modernization. To some intellectual leaders, history and tradition became more and more paradoxical, because no one in the pantheon of tradition could provide an effective solution to save the country from declining and from Western aggression. The urgent need was no longer to implement the "kingly way" in accordance with the Mandate of Heaven, but to secure Chinese political and territorial integrity. To find the remedy to save China became the objective of various reforms and revolutions, including the communist revolution.

From the very beginning the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP) had more difficulty reconciling the present with Chinese tradition than other modern rulers. Sun Yat-sen could claim certain Chinese origins for his

"Three Principles of the People," even if he borrowed some concepts from the West. Communist ideology, however, was totally alien to the Chinese and Chinese tradition. Chiang Kai-shek, for instance, described the communists' adoption of Marxism as unpatriotic: "It is only too clear now that Communists can never have any sense of loyalty to their own country: They are devoid of patriotism or national consciousness. In fact they have no love for their country but they will deliberately work against national interests."[13] In order to study the new development of the relationship between history and the modern state during the communist period, we need to review the ideas and practice of Mao Zedong, the charismatic leader and major theorist of communist China for nearly fifty years. Mao was not a professional historian, but his views on history and historiography greatly influenced the development of Chinese historiography. Up to the end of the Cultural Revolution, the theory and practice regarding history in China largely reflected Mao's personal view on the historical position of his regime as well as the role of history in his state.

Traditional Chinese ideas had much greater impact on Mao's thinking than those of Marxism. Mao's acceptance of communist ideology was basically the result of his practical concerns rather than his evaluation of the appropriateness of such ideas to the Chinese revolution. I do not believe that Mao ever truly understood Marxist theories of the communist revolution. His interpretation of Marxism was largely based on sinified fragments of Marxist communist theory. He was more impressed by Lenin's success in gaining power in Russia and Lenin's pragmatic interpretation of Marxist theory than by Marxist theory itself. After Lenin's revision, certain concepts in Marxist theory, such as the "power of the proletariat" and the "proletariat dictatorship," became handy for Mao's purpose of mobilizing poor peasants to achieve his political ends. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union remained in close contact with and provided aid to the Chinese communists in the earliest stage of forming their political Party. As a result, Marxism in China always appears as Marxism-Leninism, as if there is no difference between the two. During the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong Thought became the newest stage of Marxism and Leninism.

---

[13] Chiang Kai-shek 1968: 88-89.

Mao's adoption of Marxist-Leninist ideology and his strategy to link Mao Zedong Thought with the tradition of Marxism and Leninism, however, did not help Mao to solve the problem of the legitimacy of his rule and to consolidate his power in China after 1949. As the major theorist of the Party, Mao faced a considerable challenge in finding common ground between communist ideology, which was alien to the Chinese, and Chinese tradition, which had dominated daily life and collective memory in China for thousands of years. Even if Mao considered himself to be anti-traditional ever since he was a young man, in his theory he had to address the issue of tradition in order to make the Chinese people willingly to accept his rule. If the question of legitimacy had been one of the major concerns for the dynastic rulers, it became an even more acute problem for Mao and his Party. According to Mao, the Chinese were no longer the *subjects* of the emperor, but were under transformation to *citizens* and even *masters* of the country.

How could Mao convince the Chinese that both he and his Party were legitimate rulers of China? What kind of choices did Mao have in order to defend the legitimacy of his rule? Obviously, Mao could not follow the practices of the dynastic rulers and defend his legitimacy by way of "the Mandate of Heaven" because of his inherent anti-traditional spirit, which was manifested through the development of a new culture and even a new written language (*baihua*, 白话) since the May Fourth movement. It was totally out of the question for Mao even to talk about "the Mandate of Heaven." In addition, following the Marxist view of history, Mao could only define China's past as "semi-feudal" and "semi-colonial," something which, as a communist, he was committed to change.

If Mao's commitment to destroy China's feudal tradition eliminated any chance of following the past practice, the development of an anti-Western mentality from the late nineteenth century onwards also prohibited him from following Meiji Japan's example of adopting any Western political and military innovations other than Marxism and Leninism. The latter was actually developed as a criticism of capitalism, the major development in the West in modern era. Mao's commitment to Marxist theory, thus, also deprived him of the choice of modernizing the country by imitating the major developments in the West. The international hostility toward communism that developed

during the Cold War further left Mao no other choice but to take a strong anti-Western stand.

What was left for Mao? He had little choice but invent a "new tradition" (the phase itself is indeed an oxymoron) in China, which coincided with the personal ambition he had harbored since he was a young man. Mao Zedong Thought can be considered as a collective manifestation of this new tradition. Andrew Walder, in his pioneering study of the political and social structure of the Chinese factory, has already employed the concept "neo-traditionalism" to describe his major findings.[14] It is interesting that people draw similar conclusions from studying totally different aspects of the power-relations in modern China, whether it is authority relations in industry or those in history. Because of the nature of my study, however, I intend to employ the concept "new tradition" to reflect the influence of pre-revolutionary cultural traditions on Mao's thinking and practice, something that Walder had his own reasons not to include in his study of the Chinese industry.[15]

History, interpreted in its universal and anthropological sense as "a culture's interpretive collection of the past" and "a means to orient the group in the present world," would surely play an important role in Mao's efforts to build the new tradition.[16] Mao understood that it was as important to search for the roots of his new tradition in the Chinese historical heritage as it was to connect his practice with Marxist-Leninist theory. As early as in Yanan period (1936-1947), Mao expressed strong interest in studying Chinese history and reinterpreting it to suit his needs. He frequently communicated with communist-oriented historians about how to rewrite Chinese history for the purpose of revolution and how to educate his cadres about that history. In 1940, he instructed Fan Wenlan, who was in charge of department of history in the Central Research Institute in Yanan, to compile a comprehensive history of China. Fan published his book, *A Brief History of China* (*Zhongguo tongshi jianbian*) in Yanan in September 1941.[17] In November 1944, Mao wrote a letter to Guo Moruo, one of the most influential historians at the time, encouraging him to continue his study of Chinese history. "Your works on the theory of

---

[14] Walder 1986.
[15] Walder 1986: 9.
[16] Rüsen 1996: 8-9.
[17] Wang Xuedian 1996: 7-8.

history and historical drama will certainly be beneficial to the Chinese people," Mao mentioned in his letter.[18] In one of his most important articles of the 1940s, "On New Democracy" (*Xin minzhu zhuyi lun*, 新民主主义论), Mao made it clear that his Party "must respect the history of its own country, and must not deviate from that history."[19] "Today's China developed as the result of historical China," Mao declared in another article. "As Marxist historicists, we should not break with history."[20] The Party theorists later repeatedly insisted that the true essence of "Mao Zedong Thought" was "the combination of Marxist universal theory and the realistic conditions of the Chinese revolution."[21]

As a politician, however, Mao's interest in Chinese history was not simply an expression of a personal hobby. He wanted to define the communist revolution as a logical stage of historical development in China and find it a proper place in history. He was knowledgeable about Chinese history and understood how written history could serve as a meaningful link between the country's historical past and its political present, and could be used to strengthen or sabotage his political power. As early as 1939, Mao made it clear his intention to rewrite Chinese history in a letter to the historian He Ganzi. "It will be of great help in our current anti-Japanese war," Mao said in the letter, "if you could prove in your book who was right and who was wrong between the two lines of national resistance or national surrender, or if you could severely criticize those who surrendered during the Northern and Southern dynasties in Wei-Jin Period, the Southern Song Dynasty, and at the end of the Ming and the Qing dynasties, and praise those who put up a national resistance."[22] This pragmatic attitude toward history later developed into what I interpret as an "ahistorical" trend in Mao's historical thinking, which carried to the extreme certain ideas in early Chinese historical thinking.

Let me follow Benjamin Schwartz's arguments to venture some comments on what I call, in light of the arguments of historicism, the "ahistorical"/ "ahistoricist" trend in Chinese historiography. I find the concept especially

---

18 Wang Xuedian 1996: 7-8
19 Mao Zedong 1966 vol. 2: 668.
20 Mao Zedong 1966 vol. 2: 499.
21 Lin Biao 1966: 2-3.
22 Mao Zedong 1983: 136-137.

useful in a study of the historiography of contemporary China. The word "ahistorical" is used here in two of its many senses. First, it is used in contrast to the ideas of "historicism" developed in the late eighteenth century.[23] According to Schwartz, historicism, especially in the tradition of "pure historicism" (developed by Dilthey and others) has posed a serious limitation on the role of human agency in history. Pure historicism would regard "any notion of an 'end of history' as itself unhistorical, whether it assumes a Marxist or a liberal form."[24] Early Chinese thinkers were obsessively concerned about order, either human/political order (*zhixu*, 秩序) or metahistorical order (*Dao*), and about how to achieve harmony between these two orders. According to Schwartz, this dialectic concern with both metahistorical ideal order and human order in early Chinese historiography was very much related to the problem of the role of impersonal historical processes and the role of the human agency.[25] In Confucianism the focus is on the role of the human agent in achieving the ideal order. The historical problem, accordingly, "was the fatal human capacity to fall away from the principles of this normative order (*Dao*, 道)."[26] Schwartz argued that most early Chinese thinkers, no matter how different their thinking may be from Confucianism, did not entirely deny the role of the sages, or the self-cultivation of individuals, as the vehicle for "what might be called an impersonal historical process."[27] Then, it was the responsibility of the political representative of the state, the sage kings, to restore and maintain the social order. Hence, human/social order became a manifestation of that higher level of metaphysical order of the *Dao*, and the rulers became the gatekeepers of that order as well (the rulers in Chinese political tradition vs. the law in modern western tradition). This problematic conflict of the impersonal historical process and human will, according to Schwartz, emerged and re-emerged throughout Chinese history.[28]

---

[23] Historicism is also understood here according to its dictionary definition: A theory that events are determined or influenced by conditions and inherent processes beyond the control of human beings. See *American Heritage Talking Dictionary* 1996.
[24] For more discussions on this, see Schwartz 1996: 25-26.
[25] Schwartz 1996: 28-29.
[26] Schwartz 1996: 23.
[27] Schwartz 1996: 27-29.
[28] Schwartz 1996: 26.

In other words, human will was seldom properly separated from the impersonal process of history in traditional Chinese historiography.

Despite Mao's claim to a Marxist historicist stand, Mao's historical thinking best reflects the same view of the problematic relation between impersonal historical process and human will. He put more emphasis, however, on the role of ordinary people than that of "sage kings," although he might never have stopped imagining himself assuming such a position. If Mencius and others still accepted the limits created by Heaven on the sages' role in history, Mao believed that the human agent, which was translated into the modern terminology of "the people" (*renmin*, 人民), was the single force for the historical development. He was a true believer in the power of the human will. This "ahistorical" trend in Mao's thinking later led to his disastrous experiments of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Frederic Wakeman's early study of philosophical perspectives of Mao Zedong's thought, *History and Will*, pinpoints this conflict in Mao's understanding of history. Wakeman believes that all the different aspects (reflections) of Mao's philosophical thinking finally united at the moment of the Cultural Revolution when "history (bureaucratic routinization) and will (Mao's permanent revolution) conflicted so dramatically."[29]

In its second sense as employed here, the word "ahistorical" relates, again, to historicist criticism of the metahistorical concerns in the Chinese historical tradition. According to Schwartz, despite the vastly different framework, there was enormous room in Chinese historiography for this kind of "unhistorical" history, which "regards history as a reservoir of metahistorical experiences in ethical, political and other aspects of life."[30] The concept of "ahistorical" in this second sense was clearly manifested in the *Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu*, 春秋), a history which is attributed to Confucius himself. Instead of keeping a straight record of historical/political events in the Western Zhou, Confucius focused more on evaluating the success or failure of the rulers by the Confucian criteria of good and evil. He sometimes even changed historical facts in order to achieve his purpose of making history a mirror that reflected his moral standards. For instance, Confucius recorded

---

[29] Wakeman 1973: viii.
[30] Schwartz 1996: 23

that it was Zhao Dun who assassinated the ruler of the Jin Kingdom, whereas most other historical records named Zhao Chuan as the assassin. According to Chen Qitai, Confucius may have deliberately made the change because he believed Zhao Dun was equally responsible for the death of the master. As the prime minister, Zhao Dun ran away from danger and did not punish the murderer after he returned. By changing the name from Zhao Chuan to Zhao Dun, Confucius intended to teach his students the virtue and the responsibility of a courtier.[31] History, thus, became an important tool for Confucius to teach Confucian virtue, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* became one of the most important Confucian classics after Confucianism became the ruling ideology.

Chinese historians later emulated Confucius' practice of adding moral lessons to history even at the cost of historical accuracy and objectivity. This became an important part of the Chinese historical tradition. Many traditional historians believe that the "meaning of history" (*shiui*, 史义) should come before the historical facts (*shishi*, 史事) and historical texts (*shiwen*, 史文).[32] It is said that Sima Qian's *Historical Records* followed the same model closely and greatly strengthened this tradition.[33] The impersonal process of historical development had been illustrated in Chinese history in the rise and the fall of the dynasties. The latter, in turn, was largely interpreted by Confucian tradition as the result of human merit or error. In other words, history in Chinese tradition largely exists in its functional mode – to serve as a link between the past and present and as a mirror for the future. For many Chinese historians, to study history means to draw lessons from the past for the sake of the present. If this functional view of history is called "ahistorical" in the light of arguments of historicism, it is because of the close relationship between history, tradition, and the political concerns of the dynastic rulers discussed above. In the Chinese tradition history has seldom been treated as a "self-sustaining historical process with a dynamic principle of its own."[34] This practice also entrusted considerable power and responsibility to historians, who serve as "historical judges." It is the nature of this reciprocal power

---

[31] Chen Qitai 1999: 48-50.
[32] Chen Qitai 1999: 50-52.
[33] Chen Qitai 1999: 99-144.
[34] Chen Qitai 1999: 26.

relation between the ruler and the historians that later brought many PRC historians into irresolvable conflict with the state power and its personification, Mao Zedong.

History, of course, has been used elsewhere to "forge that comparatively recent historical innovation."[35] Cultural historians believe that "a theory which explicates this fundamental procedure of making sense of the past in respect to cultural orientation in the present is a starting point for intercultural comparison."[36] Because of the coercive power of Mao and his Party, however, after 1949 Mao was able to reorient the whole field of historiography toward justifying the communist revolution based on a peasant movement and, thus, carried ahistorical practice to the extreme. For instance, after 1949 Chinese historiography focused on issues such as "how to make the Marxist principle of class struggle the guideline for historical study?"; "what was the basic force behind historical development (the emperors or the slaves)?"; and "what was the role of peasant rebellions in historical development?" The foremost goal of historical research was to formulate new interpretations of Chinese history so that Mao's new tradition would fit in and sound less alien to the Chinese, who have enormous respect for their tradition.

The Party's domination of historical studies began with establishing centralized institutions to supervise historical research. In 1953, the central government established the Central Committee of Historical Study to exercise overall control of the study of Chinese history. The members of the committee included Party historians, such as Chen Boda and Hu Shen, and other pro-communist historians, such as Guo Moruo, Fan Wenlan, and Jian Bozan. Chen Boda served as director. In October 1953, the committee extended the number of the institutes of history under the Chinese Academy of Science (*Zhongguo kexue yuan*) from one to three. In addition, the committee began publishing a journal, *Historical Studies* (*Lishi yanjiu*), which was granted the highest academic authority because of its political affiliation. The purpose

---

[35] Smith 1995: 24.
[36] Rüsen 1996: 11

of the journal, however, was to establish the leading position of Marxist theory in historical studies.[37]

To some historians, including Guo Moruo, Fan Wenlan, and Jian Bozan, the Party seemed to be willing to pay homage to the established historians by recruiting them into the centralized institutions, but to many others this became a malicious signal of Party's tighter control of historical studies. For instance, Chen Yinque, one of the best historians in China, declined the invitation of the central government to become the director of one such central institute under the assumption that it would jeopardize his academic freedom. In his reply letter to the invitation, Chen made it clear that he would not become the director unless Mao or Liu Shaoqi agreed in writing that historians employed in this Institute of Medieval History of China would not be forced to follow Marxist-Leninist principles in their historical research and would not have to spend any time on political studies. "I absolutely have no intention to oppose to the current government," Chen wrote in the letter, "but I don't think we should commit to Marxist-Leninist principles first, then conduct academic research." Chen also told his former student, who came all the way from Beijing to Guangzhou to deliver the invitation letter in person, that he would continue to "strive for freedom for the academic field." "I have devoted myself to [the idea] of academic freedom since I wrote a eulogy for Wang Guowei," Chen told the student, "and I haven't changed over the past twenty years."[38] Chen's rejection of the Party's appointment illustrated the concern among the historians that they may lose their academic freedom if they accepted appointments from the Party. Many historians became increasingly uncomfortable about being pressured to "revolutionize historiography" along the line of Marxist and Leninist principles. Few of them had any idea of how to resolve the methodological and historiographical issue of reaching reconciliation between the Chinese historical tradition, based on Confucianism, and the current official ideology of Marxism-Leninism. In the early 1950s this resulted in a historiographical debate over historicism, which in essence was a political debate about whether Marxist theory should dominate historical research in China. As one Chinese historian put it, this debate

---

[37] Lu Jiandong 1995: 96.

[38] Wang Guowei was a professor of the History Department of Qinghua University who committed suicide in 1928 to protest changes.

between historicism and the Marxist-Leninist theory of class struggle became a central theme in contemporary Chinese historiography and has haunted several generations of historians in China since the establishment of the PRC.[39]

The debated over historicism started in the early 1950s when some leading historians employed the concept of "historicism" to defend the integrity of their profession. The concept of "historicism" (*lishi zhuyi*, 历史主义) understood by Chinese historians is related to, but somewhat different from, the understanding of historicism in German historiography. Chinese historians understood "historicism" more or less the same way as suggested by Maurice Mandelbaum, who defined historicism as "a belief that an adequate understanding of the nature of anything, and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained by considering it in terms of the place it occupied and the role it played within a process of development."[40] Instead of engaging in philosophical arguments about historicity or historical consciousness and understanding, Chinese historians discussed historicism more as the issue of methodology. For instance, in his book about historicism in China, Wang Xuedian interchangeably employed the terms of "historicism" (*lishi zhuyi*), "historical method" (*lish fangfa*, 历史方法), and "methodology of historicism" (*lishi zhuyi fangfa*, 历史主义方法).[41] According to Wang, Chinese historians defined the concept as a type of methodology, which "treats history as history instead of as part of politics" and "treats history as an academic field instead of part of political propaganda."[42]

Even though the Chinese interpretation of historicism may not reflect the philosophical arguments surrounding the concept, Chinese historians employed the concept to critique the "ahistorical" tendency in Mao's desire to employ narrowly defined Marxist-Leninist principles of class conflict and class struggle to reinterpret all of Chinese history. Among numerous articles published to discuss historicism in the early 1950s, Fan Wenlan, for instance, criticized his own early book, *A Brief History of China*, published in 1941 in Yanan. He apologized to the reader, claiming that his early book did not

---

39 For more discussion, see Wang Xuedian 1994.
40 See Mandelbaum 1967; and Krapauskas 2001:1.
41 Wang Xuedian 1994: 19-28.
42 Wang Xuedian 1996: 40.

provide an objective interpretation of history. "There were several shortcomings in my book, which appeared not to follow the idea of 'historicism'," asserted Fan in his article. "For instance," he continued, "although there is no doubt that emperors, ministers, and military generals in the dynasties belonged to the class which suppressed and exploited people, some of them might have played a positive role in historical development under certain circumstances."[43] Jian Bozan also criticized an "ahistorical" tendency of "using history only as analogy to the present" (*jie gu yu jin*, 借古喻今), admitting that he himself had also made the mistake of employing this method in his earlier studies.[44] These arguments manifested the historians' intention to neutralize the study of history, using the theory of historicism to define historical study as an academic field with its own theoretical approaches.[45] By the middle 1950s, these efforts had temporarily succeeded, and the Chinese version of historicism had largely established itself in the historical field.

The situation changed dramatically after the beginning of the Great Leap Forward. On March 10, 1958, Chen Boda, a representative of the Party, made a speech at a national meeting, calling on scholars to "emphasize the present and downplay the past" (*hou jin bo gu*, 厚今薄古). His speech initiated a subsequent movement in the historical field, which has since been known as the "revolution in historiography" (*shixue geming*, 史学革命), and which totally nullified the early efforts to separate history from politics. This "revolution in historiography" aimed at establishing the authority of Mao's new history, in which all emperors either disappeared or were condemned, and peasant rebellions achieved the focal position in historical development. This, of course, was also a response to the fanatical movement of "the Great Leap Forward," in which human will was highly counted upon for boosting economic production. After this "revolution in historiography," only a few major themes were sanctioned, such as so-called "people created history" (*renmin chuangzao lishi*, 人民创造历史); and "history should serve current political purposes" (*gu wei jin yong*, 古为今用). The former served as part of Mao's justification for his revolution, making revolutionary masses as the dominant

---

[43] Fan Wenlan 1951; and Wang Xuedian 1996: 43-45.

[44] Jian Bozan 1952; and Wang Xuedian 1996: 52. For more discussion on Jian Bozan's historicism, see Edmunds 1987: 65-106.

[45] For more details of the debate, see Wang Xuedian 1996: chapter 1.

class of the country, whereas the latter related to Mao's ahistorical attitude of reinterpreting Chinese tradition to serve the purpose of the current politics.

After this severe setback, in the early 1960s several leading historians reasserted the principles of "historicism" in order to reverse the revolutionary trend as the result of the Great Leap Forward. Fan Wenlan, for example, argued again that one could not totally ignore the role of emperors and the ruling class in Chinese history. "It would be ridiculous," claimed Fan, "to suggest that all of Chinese history consisted of nothing but peasant rebellions."[46] Wu Han, another reputable historian, also voiced his disagreement with the "revolution in historiography." "What kind of justice will it bring to us if we describe all of our ancestors as villains, the history of our motherland as the dark ages, and all of us as the descendents of the villains?"[47] Of course, the historians who stubbornly adhered to their professional standards would only bring trouble to themselves in the process of revolutionizing historical study. Mao and the Party would definitely not allow this kind of resistance to the official view of history.

The 1950s and 1960s saw increasing pressure on historians to comply with the Party line. Mao personally initiated criticism of individual intellectuals one after another. Through his knowledge of history, Mao understood the aversive power of history and was sensitive to the opinions of intellectuals. Disappointed with the general attitude of non-cooperation among historians, Mao's criticism of individual historians became increasingly strong in the late 1950s and the 1960s. Many historians eventually paid high prices, and some even lost their lives, for their attempts to maintain their academic integrity. Actually, the entire first generation of historians was in trouble after 1949, including those who were initially willing to support the Party's policies. Mao understood only too well the potential power of historians, who traditionally served as "historical judges" and could thus use their knowledge of history to counteract his efforts of building up the new tradition. His mistrust of intellectuals, especially historians, grew stronger as he viewed more resistance to change on the part of historians and became increasingly frustrated when his

---

[46] Fan Wenlan 1961:1.
[47] Wu Han 1959.

ambitious project of re-molding the worldview (*gaizao shijie guan*) of the entire group of intellectuals did not work out as he had expected.

One of the early targets of criticism was the movie, "A Biography of Wu Xun" (*Wu Xun zhuan*). Wu Xun was a poor peasant in Shandong who eventually set up a school for poor people through begging for over thirty years. The Qing government later acknowledged his contribution, and Empress Dowager Cixi presented him a "yellow robe," the symbol of official endorsement. The original intention of the playwright, Sun Yu, was to praise Wu Xun's persistence in helping poor people despite personal suffering and humiliation. For some reason, this movie caught Mao's attention. On May 20th 1951, *The People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*) published Mao's criticism of the movie, in which Mao described Wu Xun's enthusiasm for setting up a school as an actual defense of feudal culture and a surrender to the ruling class, especially during a time period when the Chinese should have been engaged in struggle against Western aggression and the feudal Qing dynasty. Mao especially reprimanded the Party officials who approved the release of the movie, saying that they had forgotten Marxist-Leninist principles. On the same day, *The People's Daily* also issued a commentary, requiring all Party members who had seen the movie to stand up to criticize the wrong ideas expressed by the movie. In May 1951, the Central Department of Propaganda, the Ministry of Education, and the Party Bureau of East China all sent out the circulars to engage "every school, every educator and every artist" in the movement to criticize the movie.[48]

This criticism of the movie "A Biography of Wu Xun" was only the prelude to Mao's increasingly bitter criticism of literary works on historical subjects. In 1954, Yu Pingbo's study of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng*), one of the best-known pieces of Chinese literature, received even harsher criticism from Mao. Yu Pingbo was known as the most reputable scholar on the subject in Mainland China. Together with Hu Shi, who chose to stay in the United States after 1949, Yu was considered one of the founders of what is called the "New Studies of *The Dream of Red Chamber*" (*xin hong xue*). Instead of employing the methods of literary criticism to assess the novel, Yu chose to use the historical method of finding evidence (*kaozheng*, 考证) to examine the relationship between the story and historical events. In 1952, he

[48] Jin Wu 1999: 6-13.

published his revised version of *A Study of the Dream of Red Chamber* (*Honglou meng yanjiu*), which initially received positive reviews from other scholars.[49]

The book also received some criticism, especially from the younger generation of historians, who were more committed to Marxist-Leninist principles. In September 1954, the academic journal of Shandong University, *The Journal of Literature, History and Philosophy (Wenshizhe)* published one such article. Two young authors argued that Yu's study of *The Dream of Red Chamber* failed to catch the essence of the book--the protagonists' resistance against their own class, the doomed ruling class. According to this article, Yu's study ignored the book's real significance, which in turn revealed the author's ideas of "anti-realism and bourgeois idealism."[50] Such politicized criticism, however, received support from Jiang Qing (Madam Mao) first, and then Mao himself. Jiang Qing, who held a position at the Bureau of Fine Arts of the Ministry of Culture, asked *The People's Daily* to republish this criticism of Yu Pingbo's study, but without success. Jiang then turned to another major newspaper, *Fine Arts* (*Wenyi bo*), which republished the article upon her request. In October, the same authors published another article in *The Guangming Daily* (*Guangming ribo*), repeating the same line of criticism of Yu's study. Strangely enough, this time the authors criticized not only Yu, but Hu Shi as well. Because Hu Shi had rejected the communist government, this association brought further trouble to Yu.

On October 16, 1954, Mao personally joined the criticism of Yu by issuing a letter to the members of the Politburo and other leaders. In his letter, Mao approved the criticisms of Yu penned by the two young authors and expressed his anger that such important articles had been rejected by *The People's Daily* because of the humble positions of the young authors. Mao also related this criticism of Yu to the early criticism of "A Biography of Wu Xun," believing that the intellectuals had not really learned the necessary lesson from the previous criticism. According to Jin Wu and others, Mao was actually angry because so far not many intellectuals took his authority over academic fields seriously.[51] Mao's criticism of Yu set one of the worst exam-

---

[49] Jin Wu 1999: chapter 2.
[50] Jin Wu 1999: 28-29.
[51] Jin Wu 1999: 31-32.

ples of turning an academic discussion into a political dispute. Some intellectuals considered this criticism of Yu Pingbo and Hu Shi as Mao's denial of the major academic development since the May Fourth Movement. "To criticize Hu Shi," one scholar commented, "is to criticize all the scholars above the age of forty."[52]

In the 1960s, Mao's criticism of intellectuals continued with increasing severity and bitterness. In his own words, this was because "the tree may wish to stand still, but the wind will not subside." (*shu yu jing er feng bu zhi*, 树欲静而风不止). The Cultural Revolution was characterized by Mao's extensive purge of intellectuals, including those who had helped him implement his early policies toward other intellectuals. A few more examples will illustrate this point. Jian Bozan, a vice president of Peking University, was severely criticized in late 1965 when Qi Benyu published an article in *Red Flag* (*Hong qi*) entitled, "To Study History for the Revolution" (*Wei geming er yanjiu lishi*, 为革命而研究历史). In this article, Qi accused Jian's early promotion of historicism as "anti-Marxist," although he did not mention Jian's name in the article. The next year, Qi and others criticized Jian more explicitly and severely in another article published in *Red Flag*, entitled "Jian Bozan's Ideas about History Should Be Criticized," (*Jian Bozan de lishi sixiang yingai pipan*). During the subsequent Cultural Revolution, the Red Guards not only continued to criticize Jian's idea, but also physically abused him. On December 18, 1968, both Jian and his wife committed suicide at their home.[53]

Another well-known case was Wu Han, a historian and vice-mayor of Beijing. Many scholars believe that Mao's Cultural Revolution started with Zhang Chunqiao and Yao Wenyuan's criticism of Wu Han in their article, "On the Newly Edited Historical Drama, 'Hai Rui's Dismissal from Office'" (*Ping xinbian lishiju 'Hai Rui ba guan'*). According to Wu himself, however, following Mao's instruction was the only motivation for him to write about Hai Rui. He had heard from Hu Qiaomu that Mao had recently advocated the spirit of Hai Rui. Since his expertise was on the history of the Ming Dynasty, he believed that he should follow Mao's instructions to write some-

[52] Lu Jiandong 1995: 131.
[53] Wang Xuedian 1996: 373.

thing about Hai Rui.[54] He never expected that this would cost him life, and the lives of his wife and daughter, during the Cultural Revolution.[55]

To many historians, Mao's purges of Jian Bozan and Wu Han were even more alarming. The two cases clearly indicated that by 1965 Mao had turned against the entire group of established intellectuals, no matter whether they cooperated with the Party or not. Both Jian Bozan and Wu Han were members of the CCP and held high positions in the government bureaucracy. Jian joined the Party as early as 1937, and became vice president of Peking University in 1965. Wu Han became a Party member in 1957 and held various government positions, including membership of the first three National Congresses and vice-mayor of Beijing. Both Jian and Wu had largely followed the Party's cultural policies and at least gained trust from the Party. They had supported Mao's previous criticism of other historians, but now in his desperation to achieve a complete victory over the old tradition before his time was up, Mao finally turned against those historian who had earlier supported his cultural policy.

As the result of Mao's efforts to politicize the study of Chinese history and his extensive purges of historians, few scholars could still conduct research on non-revolutionary subjects in the 1960s. One rare exception was Chen Yinque in Guangzhou, who focused his research on a Qing novel, *Love until the Next Life* (*Zai sheng yuan*), and the poems of the Yuan Dynasty. Chen enjoyed great prestige both within and outside China because of his early academic achievements. He had kept a low profile since 1949, so was uncharacteristically left alone to study and write as he wished. However, he had continuous problems with his research because of a lack of official support. When Guo Moruo visited him in Guangzhou in 1961, Chen only asked one favor that Guo provide him with more writing paper so that he could finish his research![56] Even after Chen finished his works, no publishers would dare to accept them for publication. Chen ended up using his own money to print limited copies of his work as gifts to his friends.

---

[54] Jin Wu 1999: 344.

[55] For detailed discussion of Wu Han and his play, "Hai Rui's Dismissal from his Office" (*Hai Rui ba guan*), see Tom Fisher 1993: 9-45; Pusey 1969; Moody 1977; Dittmer, 1999; and Lee 1978.

[56] Lu Jiandong 1995: 318-319.

By the end of the Cultural Revolution, it seemed that Mao had finally accomplished his goal of revolutionizing the entire field of history in the PRC. Not only did historians lose their freedom to do research based on historiographical principles other than that of Marxism-Maoism, many also voluntarily offered their services to provide logical links between Mao's revolutionary innovation and Chinese tradition. The dynastic history of China was reinterpreted as the conflict between feudal power, the emperor and the imperial bureaucracy on one side, and the anti-feudal forces, the peasant rebels, on the other. Modern Chinese history was recounted in light of the Chinese Revolution, especially the communist revolution. The history of the Chinese Communist Party replaced the history of the PRC, and contemporary history became the place for the Party to exercise its moral and political evaluation of "right" or "wrong." The entire academic field was politicized, with nothing left but those who provided justification for Mao's theory and the practice of the communist revolution. More than at any other time in the past, history became a metahistorical force for its social, cultural, and political implications in relation to the present. This ahistorical trend dominated historical studies, and the political and the social concern of research in history exceeded its academic importance in Mao's China. One can find numerous ridiculous examples of such studies, especially among the publications of "Liangxiao" group, which consisted of well-known history professors in Peking and Qinghua universities, during the so-called movement of "criticizing Lin Biao and criticizing Confucius" (*pi Lin pi Kong*, 批林批孔) in the Cultural Revolution.

The official domination of historical studies has especially been successful in terms of contemporary history. Deeply concerned about how his regime would be recorded and judged by history, Mao inserted even tighter control over the writing of contemporary history. The Party totally dominated the study of contemporary history through reorganizing historical institutions, tight control of the archives, heavy censorship, and the purge of historians who had different opinions. Most officially sponsored study of contemporary history after 1949 was in the hands of a few Party institutions, such as the Central Institute of the Party History (*Zhongyang dangshi yanjiu shi*); the Central Party School (*Zhongyang dangxiao*), the Institute of Research on Central Archives (*zhongyang wenxian yanjiu shi*); and the Department of Party History of Academy of National Defense (*Guofang daxue dangshi yanjiushi*). As the result of

recent effort to separate Party history from that of the PRC, the government set up another institute, the Institute of Contemporary Chinese History (*Dangdai zhongguo shi yanjiu suo*, also known as *Guoshi suo*) to research the history of the PRC. The institute, however, has not made much difference, since a Party theorist, Deng Liqun, initially headed the institute. The central archives remain closed to the public, and only a few from these institutions mentioned above have access to CCP documents and archives. [57] Even those who did have the privilege of visiting the archives had to sign an agreement not to reveal to any unauthorized audience what they had read at the archives. In most cases, notebooks and recorders are not allowed in the archives, and all notebooks are subject to meticulous checks when exceptions are made. Because of their privileges and their pre-determined functions, historical researches undertaken by these major Party institutions and published through the central propaganda organs, such as *Qiu Shi* (formerly *Red Flag*), *The People's Daily*, *The Guangming Daily*, and *The People's Liberation Army Daily* (*Jiefangjun bao*), have formed a major body for the expression of official history. Chinese officials, even today, still reserve the exclusive right to interpret recent historical events and no other voices can be heard through official channels. As a result, the distinction of official and unofficial history remains most striking in terms of the writing of contemporary history. In order to have their voices heard, those who have different opinions regarding politically sensitive events can only publish their research in forms of "unofficial history," such as "biographies" and "autobiographies," or have their research published outside China and sometimes in other languages. The consequences and similar problems still plague the development of the historiography in China today.

Let me briefly examine the historiography of the Lin Biao Incident of 1971 to illustrate how official and unofficial history can differ in their interpretations of a particular event and how the state can interfere in making contemporary history. The Lin Biao Incident refers to a dramatic political event on September 13 1971 when Marshal Lin Biao, who held the second most powerful position as the vice chairman of the CCP, reportedly died in a mysterious plane crash in the Mongolian Republic. The official explanation afterward was that Lin was engaged in an abortive coup d'état against Mao

[57] The Central Institute of the Party History, for instance, administratively equals to a ministry. The head of the institute has the same privilege as that of a minister.

and escaped from the country after the coup attempt failed. Many Chinese, however, still remember that at the time, the incident actually shocked everyone in China and the rest of the world as well. By the time of his mysterious death, Lin Biao was at the peak of his political career. It was largely because of Mao's own patronage that Lin became the second most powerful person in China in 1966 and had been designated as Mao's heir apparent by the Party Constitution of 1969. The public image of Lin Biao before the incident was that he had accompanied Mao on every public occasion, always clutching and waving a copy of the "little red book" of Mao's quotations. He was publicly known as Mao's "closest comrade-in-arms," "best student," and successor. Only two days before the incident, the official Xinhua New Agency announced the news that a book of photographs that included several of Mao and Lin together would be published shortly as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the CCP. "This will make people feel encouraged," stated the Xinhua report, "that Comrade Lin Biao is a proper example for the whole Party, the whole army, and the whole country to learn from."[58]

The death of Lin Biao triggered one of the biggest crises that the CCP ever had after 1949. Lin's death was extremely awkward and embarrassing for Mao's regime, because it was Mao who hand-picked Lin as his successor and made people believe that Lin was his most loyal student. How could Mao explain to the Chinese people Lin's sudden death in a foreign country? What would this tell the Chinese people about Mao and his Party, and how would he still make people believe in his great and "infallible" leadership? Because of the awkward nature of this event, the government kept Lin's death as a secret, even from its own high officials, for over a week before it released its first secret document about Lin Biao's death to the ranking government officials. Ordinary Chinese did not learn about the death of their vice chairman until months later. Actually, the government never formally announced the death of Lin Biao. It issued instead a few sets of secretive Central Party Committee (CPC) documents, dated from September 18 1971 to June 1972, and had them read to Party cadres and members first, and then to ordinary people. Certain people were excluded from listening to the CPC documents,

---

[58] Chen Lisheng 1974: 264. For more on this, see Jin Qiu 1999: 1-14.

such as those who were labeled as counterrevolutionaries, or class enemies, and all foreigners who worked in China at the time.[59]

The Chinese government, however, did not provide any evidence to support its accusation against Lin Biao until January 1972. After much work, the government finally released a set of CPC documents containing some seemingly authentic evidence from key eyewitness, including Lin Biao's daughter, Lin's former bodyguards, his former secretaries and subordinates, as well as the former colleagues of his son, Lin Liguo. These CPC documents formed the basis of the official history of the Lin Biao Incident. It seemed that the only way to rescue Mao from this awkward dilemma was to make Lin Biao an extreme villain. All the official publications and the propaganda about the Lin Biao Incident had been channeled in this way. Lin was described as a careerist (*yexin jia*, 野心家), a conspirator (*yinmo jia*, 阴谋家), and a double dealer (*liangmian pai*, 两面派), who was extremely calculating and notoriously ambitious and could not wait until Mao, who was then 78 years old and fifteen years his senior, passed the state power to him. He had to wage a deadly struggle against Mao and died in disgrace upon his failure. The official version also tried to maintain Mao's position as the great leader by portraying him as a victim of Lin's infamous conspiracies, but who was also able to outmaneuver Lin's clumsy coup attempt. All major history books and school textbooks later echoed more or less the same official version. For instance, Hu Sheng of the Party History Research Center of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party described Lin Biao Incident as the result of the failure of his alleged coup d'état:

> At 10:30 pm on the [September] 12th, Zhou Enlai received a telephone report from the Central Guards Bureau saying that Lin Liguo [Lin Biao's son] had flown a Trident plane from Beijing to Shanghaiguan that evening. Zhou ordered an investigation into the sudden flight of the plane to Shanghaiguan and demanded that the plane immediately return to Beijing. Seeing that their intrigue to flee south was exposed, Lin Biao, Ye Qun and Lin Liguo hurriedly got on board the plane and fled the country in the small hours of the 13th. The plane crashed at Undur Khan, Mongolia, killing them all. The remaining principal figures of the "combined

[59] For more on this, see Jin Qiu 1999: chapter 1.

> fleet" either committed suicide or were arrested. The plot to mount a counter-revolutionary armed coup d'état was thus scattered to the winds. These were the events making up what is now known as the "September 13th Incident.[60]

Another general textbook compiled by Historical Association of the National History of the People's Republic of China (*zhonghua renming gongheguo guoshi xuehui*) followed the same line of the official explanation:

> After the second plenum of the Ninth Party Central Committee, Mao saw through Lin Biao's intention of becoming the state chairman and realized that the problems would continue, and the behind-the-scene activities of Lin Biao and Chen Boda had not been properly exposed and dealt with. In August 1971, he went to the South for an inspection tour, having received many important local and military leaders and sternly criticized Lin Biao and others' conspicuous activities to split [the Party].
>
> The Lin Biao Clique understood that the crisis was impending and decided to make a reckless move. [They] began to plan to rush [Lin] into the position of the successor through an armed coup d'état to usurp power [from Mao] [*qiangban duquan*, 抢班夺权]…
>
> …
>
> Mao all of sudden returned to Beijing, and this upset the arrangements of he Lin Biao Clique. They panicked and could do nothing, but had a plane dispatched [to *Beidaihe*] without reporting to the authority as part of their plan to escape to Guangzhou in the South and establish a separate central government. On the evening of September 12th, Lin Biao's daughter, Lin Liheng, discovered the abnormal activities of Lin Biao and others and reported to the head of the General Office of the Central Party Committee through the responsive person of the Central Regiment of Guards. Zhou Enlai immediately made some arrangements.
>
> After Ye Qun [Lin Biao's wife] realized that their secretive dispatch of the plane (to Beidaihe) had been exposed, she tried to cover things up. She called to tell Zhou Enlai that Lin Biao wanted to travel, so they needed a

---

60 He Sheng 1994: 672.

> few planes. In reply, Zhou Enlai [told her] that it was not safe to fly in the dark and [Zhou] also expressed the intention to come to Beidaihe to deal with situation. Now Lin Biao and Ye Qun realized that their conspiracy to escape to the South had been exposed and became more panic-stricken. They decided to escape to the Soviet Union immediately.[61]

The official strategy to make Lin a villain was largely successful. Many people believed in the official version even though there was not much convincing evidence to support the official accusations against Lin Biao. "The demise of Lin in a way reaffirmed my faith in Mao," mentioned Chang Jung in her book.[62] Nevertheless, to many others, Lin Biao was not the only person who suffered from a damaged reputation. The incident turned out to be a turning point in many people's beliefs in Mao's regime. Rae Yang describes her experiences in the following way:

> If the Laomizi incident had caused me some small disquiet, another, known as the September 13th incident, brought on a violent storm in my mind. Looking back on it, I believe it was a turning point in the lives of many of us.
>
> The September 13th Incident refers to the attempt made by "our most revered vice-commander in chief Lin Biao" to assassinate "our most beloved great leader Chairman." It ended in Lin Biao's death in Mongolia on September 13, 1971. This incident shocked me and made me question the nature of the Cultural Revolution. Was it really an unprecedented revolution in human history led by a group of men (and a few women) with vision and exemplary moral integrity, as I had believed? Or was it a power struggle that started at the top and later permeated the whole country? If the Cultural Revolution was just a power struggle, it meant that we were deceived and used by a bunch of dishonest politicians. Lin Biao was a typical example. Who would have thought that the successor of Chairman Mao, handpicked by the great leader himself, his position guaranteed by the Party constitution was such a scheming and murderous

---

[61] See Association of National History of the People's Republic of China 1999: 162-63.

[62] Zhang Jung 1991: 442.

opportunist? If he was like that, what about others just like him who had seized power during the revolution?[63]

Meanwhile, the Lin Biao Incident appeared to be a totally different story for many other people whose lives and careers were severely damaged by Mao's purge. After the incident, Mao started one of the worst purges of the Chinese armed forces, which had been under the direct command of Lin Biao since 1959. Those who were arrested and later put in prison included the Chief of Staff, four Associate Chiefs of Staff, the commander-in-chief of the Air Force, the political commissar of the Navy, the director of the General Logistics, among others. According to a government document from 1982, over one thousand generals of two-star rank and above were interrogated, suspended, and purged from their positions.[64] The position of the Chief of Staff remained vacant until 1975 when Deng Xiaoping assumed the position after he returned from his political exile.[65] More than half of the members of the Central Military Committee were either purged or demoted after the incident. The newly established Committee in 1973 retained only 28 members from the previous one and added 35 new members.[66] In order to retain the control of the military forces, in December 1973 Mao ordered a reshuffling of the commanders of the eight military regions, and all the commanders were to report to the new positions within ten days.

In the highly politicized society of Mao's China, the political purge of someone never ended with them simply being removed from office, but was always followed by mental and physical harassment of the accused and their family members as well. Misfortune extended even to the relatives and the staff who had only working relations with the accused. Whoever had worked for the family of the accused, secretaries, assistants, bodyguards, chefs, chauffeurs, or even nannies, were punished, humiliated and lost their jobs. They and their families were also labeled as politically unreliable and were deprived of the opportunity to get jobs, promotion and higher education. Some of them committed suicide or went insane because of the unexpected humiliation and mistreatment. Nobody knows exactly how many lives were ruined by

---

63 Rae Yang 1997: 217-218.
64 Xiao Sike 1992: 692-93.
65 Li Ke and Hao Shengzhang 1988: 146.
66 Li Ke and Hao Shengzhang 1988: 145-146.

the purge after the incident. The figure might run as high as 100,000 or 300,000.[67]

For these people, the Lin Biao Incident means something different. It is not part of national history or part of the justification of Mao's great leadership, but something related to their lived experiences and the meaning of their lives. To them, Lin Biao was not a careerist, a conspirator, and a double dealer as portrayed by the official version, but a caring superior and one of the best CCP generals. During my research on the Lin Biao Incident, I found out that many of them still have respect for Lin and they believed that he was considerably misrepresented by the official version of the incident. Moreover, very few of them believed the official version of the incident, especially among those who were close to Lin Biao. For instance, Lin Doudou, the daughter of Lin Biao, whose report was used by the official version as part of rationale for Lin's final reckless move, had insisted on her father's innocence. She maintains that the government used her name to deceive the country and the people, because she never reported on her father's "conspiracies." What she actually did on that fatal evening was to ask for help from the troops guarding her father. She asserts that she had reason to believe that her mother and brother would kidnap her father and take him to somewhere against his wishes.[68]

Outrageous as this claim may sound, I believed that her account was worth looking into. My family also suffered dramatically during Mao's purge after the incident, so it is personally important for me to find out what really happened to Lin Biao. After I came to the United States, I spent six years researching the incident and interviewed a number of people whom Chinese officials claimed to be involved in the Lin Biao Incident, including Lin Biao's daughter, her husband, the former fiancée of Lin Liguo, Lin Biao's bodyguards, his secretaries, and some generals. Through the inside information provided by my interviewees and a careful study of the CCP documents, as well as the primary and secondary sources available, I reached a conclusion about the Lin Biao Incident, which is considerably different from the official

---

[67] Some believe that over 300,000 people suffered because of the purges after the Lin Biao Incident. See, for instance, Zhang Ning 1997: 304-305.

[68] Zhang Ning 1997: 276-77 and 396-403.

version. Here is a summery of the major points in the conclusion of my book that resulted from my independent research:

1) There is no evidence that Lin was previously involved in any plots against Mao. The Lin Biao Incident, narrowly defined as Lin's flight from Beidaihe, was accidental in nature. Lin's hasty departure from Beidaihe was a result of unexpected events that developed within the span of the several hours preceding the flight. Neither Mao Zedong nor Zhou Enlai expected that Lin Biao would attempt to "flee."[69] Lin's family did not have an agreed-upon plan until their sudden departure late on the night of September 12.

2) Nor is there any evidence to support the official claim that Lin had been actively involved in planning a final "escape to the Soviet Union." Until 11:00 p.m., Ye was still talking about going to Dalian or Guangzhou the next morning. Even Li Wenpu, Lin's long-term bodyguard, believed that Lin was going to Dalian or Guangzhou until the car left for the airport around midnight. Lin himself never mentioned anything to anyone about going anywhere except to Dalian.

3). One political event most directly tied to Lin's departure was Mao's inspection tour in the south between mid-August and September 12, 1971. Mao undertook the tour for the purposes of undermining Lin's support among provincial military commanders and preparing them and other high officials in the provinces for his future actions against Lin Biao. Mao made it clear to the provincial leaders that he had taken certain issues with Lin Biao personally and seriously. He openly criticized Lin Biao and his generals and elucidated his intention to dismiss Lin's generals from their positions. It would not be difficult for Lin Biao and Ye Qun at Beidaihe to learn about what Mao said about them, especially when their son, Liguo had already set up his own intelligence network around the country.

4) What happened at Beidaihe around September 13th and Lin's unexpected death was largely a result of the disagreement among the family members as to how to meet Mao's challenge. The official accusation of

---

[69] Yu Nan 1995: 191.

Lin's plots focused on the activities of Lin Liguo, especially based on his discussions with his Air Force colleagues in Beijing between September 8 and 12. Each member of the family – Lin, Ye, Liguo, and Doudou – had his or her own agenda concerning how to deal with Mao's challenge. Lin's own inclination seemed to remain silent and do nothing: "be passive." Lin Liguo, however, had other purposes. Young, ambitious, and inexperienced, he believed he could save his family, even the whole country, from Mao's schemes. Loyalty to Mao and to the Party meant little to him if his or his family's future was in jeopardy. In facing Mao's challenge, it was possible for his colleagues to come out with radical plans. Authentic as those plans seem to be, however, there is no evidence that Liguo and his colleagues had ever turned any of them into action, including their plans to assassinate Mao.

5). None of Lin's generals had anything to do with the incident of September 12-13. Nor were they involved in any of the alleged plots to assassinate Mao. In fact, Lin Liguo's group planned to kidnap the generals and take them, with Lin Biao, to Guangzhou. They were thus purged for undisclosed reasons. In hindsight, it is clear that Mao would have purged Lin and his generals had nothing occurred on the night of September 12-13. Mao had promised to solve the problem of Lin at the upcoming Third Plenum and talked about dismissal of Generals Huang Yongsheng and Wu Faxian. However, the fate of Lin's family and others associated with Lin might have been wholly different without the Incident.[70]

My book is not the only book that contradicts the official version of the Lin Biao Incident. During my research, I benefited from numerous books that provide valuable information or implied arguments toward a similar direction. For instance, Zhang Yunsheng, one of Lin Biao's former secretaries, published his memoir about his work in Lin's office between 1966 and1970.[71] The image of Lin Biao in his account is dramatically different from the one established by the Chinese officials after the incident. Guan Weixun, who worked as Lin's staff between 1968 and 1970, provides in his book an even

[70] For more on this, see Jin Qiu 1999: 195-199.
[71] See Zhang Yuansheng 1988.

more sympathetic account about Lin Biao and his family.[72] While Zhang Ning's book provides the most outspoken accounts disputing the official explanation of the Lin Biao Incident, some recently published articles by the eyewitnesses provide more detailed information supporting a different story.[73] These books, however, received little publicity because of heavy official censorship, and they are generally dismissed as "unofficial history", which is not to be taken seriously in Chinese historiography. Guan Weixun's book was banned immediately after its publication, and an abridged version of Zhang Ning's book published in China experienced similar ill fortune. My book, so far, has no chance to be published in China, even if it is translated into Chinese.[74]

There are, therefore, substantial discrepancies between the official and the unofficial interpretations of the incident. The dominance of official history and the practice of government censorship over the different voices has raised serious questions about the historiography of contemporary China. What is history in contemporary China? How do people remember their experiences? And how do the government and society create a history, which can be based on distorted facts in the eyes of people who experienced it? In the case of the Lin Biao Incident, it is almost certain that the official version will continue to remain as the standardized interpretation of the Lin Biao Incident. The stereotyped image of Lin Biao and his allegedly ill-fated coup d'état will continuously be kept alive by official media, history books and textbooks, films, exhibitions and museums, which will continue to influence the collective memory of the event. In the summer of 1999, I visited one such museum in Hangzhou, which is set up in a few buildings that formerly served as the reception house of the Zhejiang provincial government. I was told that it was in these buildings that Lin Biao and his generals had prepared for their military coup. According to my research, however, Lin Biao never set foot in the building after its renovation for his exclusive use in 1971. The continuous

---

[72] Guan Weixun 1993.

[73] See, for example, Li Wenpu 1999: 11-20.

[74] My book, of course, is different because it is a history of the Lin Biao Incident, whereas the others mentioned above are memoirs. In terms of the historiography of the Lin Biao Incident, however, I believe that my book and most of the books published overseas still belong to the category of "unofficial history" according to official Chinese view.

influence of official propaganda and commemoration strongly suggest that the difference presented by the unofficial history will eventually make no difference in history and will gradually be overwhelmed and forgotten. What will happen in the next century when people visit this museum? Will they still question the official version of the Lin Biao Incident?

One irony for unofficial history in contemporary China is that it cannot reach the general public without governmental endorsement. The different views of Lin Biao represented by unofficial history cannot be widely aired in China unless Chinese officials are ready to rehabilitate Lin Biao. A bigger irony, however, is that even if unofficial voices find their way to a public audience, many would dismiss them because they have already accepted the official version as "true." During my research of the Lin Biao Incident, I was quite distressed by questions and comments about whether I was trying to rehabilitate Lin Biao (*ti Lin Biao fanan* 替林彪翻案). The issue of "rehabilitation" is actually related to a dominant pattern in the official history of the People's Republic of China, which has been closely interwoven with that of the Chinese Communist Party. Party history, in turn, is embodied by the rise and fall of high officials and hence dominated by a frequent cycle of "purge-rehabilitation." The question of the rehabilitation of Lin Biao also suggests a general understanding in China that any works about Lin Biao can hardly remain politically neutral, and opinions sympathetic or positive to Lin Biao could be viewed as an attempt to "rehabilitate him." It is true that I was inspired by a personal motivation to conduct independent research and my book tells a different story of Lin Biao, but why is it impossible for me to write a history with a different opinion of the Lin Biao Incident without trying to "rehabilitate" him? To many Chinese (not just the government officials), those who challenge the official history have to be politically motivated and should hence be treated as a "dissident." In the summer 2000, I was invited to give a talk at the School of International Relations of Shangdong University. Even if the organizers did not advertise my talk, they still experienced considerable difficulty in keeping to their agenda. One hour before my presentation, someone who had heard about my talk still called in and tried to persuade the organizers to cancel it. "The problem is who she is and what she will talk about," claimed the caller. I had similar experiences at other universities in China, including Beijing University, Nanjing University and Nanjing Normal University. The organizers of my talks happened to be extremely open-min-

ded professors who ran the risk of being harassed by the government and sometimes from individuals as well. No one, however, ever dared to advertise my talk to the public so far.

In conclusion, the Chinese government's heavy censorship of history and the sharp distinction between official and unofficial history go beyond the problems of a totalitarian regime. It reflects a deeper problem of how to interpret the current political development within the long tradition of Chinese history. Mao and his Party well understood the power of history, which could be used to legitimize or sabotage his political rule. Mao's "ahistorical" attitude toward history pushed the practice of using the past to serve current political purpose to the extreme. The subsequent process of politicizing historical study brought detrimental consequences to the field of historical studies after 1949. Mao's personal involvement in the academic discussions and his extensive purge of intellectuals had tremendous impact on the field of historical study. Because history in the Chinese tradition serves as a mirror to reflect on the present, the Party pushed historians to provide a "correct version" of history versus a "wrong version" of history. In modern China, especially after 1949, the "correct interpretation" of history is not based on historical accuracy, but on the concerns of political correctness so that history can fulfill its political and social function under the supervision of the Party. The government, thus, created an atmosphere that became increasingly brutal toward historians who wanted to conduct independent academic research. No other voices except those of Chinese officials were allowed, especially on certain politically sensitive events. *Yeshi* or anything without official endorsement was viewed with increasing suspicion as possessing potential and malicious power against the Party.

The dominance of the official version of modern Chinese history not only hindered the development of Chinese historiography in China in terms of diversity, it also posed a challenge to the scholars in the China field outside China. In his review of historiography of the republican era (between 1911 revolution and 1949) in the West, Jeffery Wasserstrom correctly identified a dominant trend of *dangshi* (Party history, 党史) in the writings of historians of China in the West. Although I do not fully agree with his word choice of "*dangshi*," which he used interchangeably with the "top down" approach

which focuses only on the political and Party elites and Party policy, I believe that he pinpoints a potential problem that the dominance of official history in China may also have an impact on the historical research on China in the West.[75] The recent reviews of my book of the Lin Biao Incident provide other examples to illustrate this point. While some still expect the CCP maintains "truthful records" of the incident in the archives, others quoted from CCP officials to prove that Lin Biao was indeed engaged in the alleged coup d'état.[76] Perhaps the biggest irony for the unofficial history of a politically sensitive and public event is that the factual difference maintained by the eyewitnesses' accounts will eventually make no difference in the official and public history because the government and the society will continue to dismiss these opinions as unofficial and biased, and the public will continue to accept the authority of the official history according to the current political needs and public tastes.

---

[75] In terms of history of the People's Republic of China, I will define the "Dangshi tendency" more specifically as the domination of written history by the Party organs and the tendency of replacing the national history with the history of the Chinese Communist Party.

[76] See, for example, Wortzel 2000: 998-999.

References cited

American Heritage Talking Dictionary (1996). Cambridge/Mass.: Learning Co.

Chen Lisheng 陈立生 (1974), *Zhonguo "wenhau geming" he zhengzhi douzheng* 中国“文化大革命”和政治斗争 (The Chinese Cultural Revolution and the Political Power Struggle). Taipei: Li Ming Cultural Press.

Chen Qitai 陈其泰 (1999), *Shixue yu zhongguo wenhua chuantong* 史学与中国文化传统 (Historiography and Chinese Cultural Tradition). Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, enlarged edition.

Chiang Kai-shek (1968), *Soviet Russia in China.* New York: Farr Strauss and Cudahy.

Ci hai 辞海 (1980) *Encyclopedia.* Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe.

Cohen, Paul A (1984), *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past.* Columbia: Columbia University Press.

Duara, Prasenjit (1995), *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Edmunds, Clifford (1987), “The Politics of Historiography: Jian Bozan’s Historicism,” in Merle Goldman, Merle et al eds. (1987), *China’s Intellectuals and the State: In Search of a New Relationship*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 65-106.

Fan Wenlan 范文澜 (1951), “Ganyu *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* 关于<中国通史简编> (On *A Brief General History of China*)”, in *Xinjianshe* 新建设 (New Construction) 4:2, 12-18.

– (1953-1965), *Zhongguo tongshi jianbian* 中国通史简编 (A General History of China), 4 vols. Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe.

– (1961), “Zai Beijing lishi xuejie jinian ‘Taiping Tianguo yundong’ yibai yishi zhounian dahui shang de jianghua.” 在北京历史学界纪念‘太平天国运动’一百一十周年大会上的讲话 (A Speech at the Get-together of Historians in Beijing commemorating the 110th Anniversary of ‘the Kingdom of Heavenly Peace’)”, in *The Guangming Daily*, 光明日报, 1.

Fisher, Tom (1993), “‘The Play’s the Thing’: Wu Han and Hai Rui Revisited,” in Unger, Johathan ed. (1993), *Using the Past to Serve the Present.* Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 9-45.

Goldman, Merle (2000), “Restarting Chinese History,” in *American Historical Review*, vol.105 (February 2000), 153-164.

Guan Weixun 官伟勋 (1993), *Wo suo zhidao de Ye Qun* 我所知道的叶群 (The Ye Qun I Knew). Beijing: Zhongguo wenxue chubanshe.

He Sheng (1994) (chief editor), A *Concise History of the Communist Party of China*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Ho, Ping-ti (1975), The *Cradle of the East*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Chicago Press.

Hong Yung Lee (1978), *The Politics of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: A Case Study*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jian Bozan 翦伯赞 (1952), "Guanyu lishi renwu pinglun zhong de ruogan wenti – fandui fei lishizhuyi de guandian 关于历史人物评论中的若干问题 – 反对非历史主义的观点 (On Certain Problems in the Evaluation of Historical Figures: Criticism of Non-historicist Ideas)", in *Xuexi* 学习 4:2, 1-6.

Jin Qiu (1999), *The Culture of Power: The Lin Biao Incident in the Cultural Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Jin Wu 金乌 (1999) (chief compiler), *Chenzhong de fansi: zhendong lishi de pipan* 沉重的反思:震动历史的批判 (Heavy Reflections: The Great Criticism that Shook History). Yanji: Yanbian daxue chubanshe.

Krapauskas, Virgil (2000), *Nationalism and Historiography: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Lithuanian Historicism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Levenson, Joseph (1968), *Confucian China and its Modern Fate, a Trilogy*. 3 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Li Ke 李可 and Hao Shengzhang 郝生章 (1988), *Wenhau dageming zhong de zhongguo renmin jiefangjun* 文化大革命中的中国人民解放军 (The People's Liberation Army in the Cultural Revolution). Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe.

Li Wenpu 李文普 (2002), "Lin Biao weishi zhang Li Wenpu chenmo hou bu de bu shuo 林彪卫士长李文普沉默后不得不说 (Li Wenpu, Chief Bodyguard of Lin Biao, has to Speak out after Silence)", in Chi Nan 赤男 et al (compilers), *Lin Biao pantao shijian zuixin baogao* 林彪叛逃事件最新报告 (The Most Recent Report on the Betrayal Incident of Marshal Lin Biao). Fuzhou: Qunzhong chubanshe, 3-38.

Li Wen 李文 and Kang Tizi 康庭梓 (1999), "Danan weisi de jizu renyuan 大难未死的机组人员 (The Members of the Crew who Survived the Disaster)", in *Tongsu xiaoshuo bao* (通俗小说报) 13 (1999), 11-20.

Lin Biao 林彪 (1966), "*Zaiban qianyan* 再版前言 (Preface for the Second Edition)", in *Mao zuxi yülu* 毛主席语录 (The Quotations of Chairman Mao). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

Lodén, Torbjörn (1996) "Nationalism Transcending the State: Changing Conceptions of Chinese Identity" in Tønnesson, Sten and Hans Antlöv (eds.), *Asian Forms of the Nation*. Curzon: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 270-296.

Lowell Dittmer (1999), *Liu Shao-ch'i and the Chinese Cultural Revolution*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2nd edition.

Lu Jiandong 陆键东 (1995), *Chen Yique de zuihou ershi nian* 陈寅恪的最后二十年 (The Last Twenty Years of Chen Yinque). Beijing: Sanlian shudian.

Mandelbaum Maurice (1967), "Historicism," in Edward, Paul ed. (1967), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York: Macmillan, Vol. 4, 22-25.

Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1965), *Maozedong xuanji* 毛泽东选集 (Selected Works of Mao Zedong). 4 vols. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

– (1983), *Mao Zedong shuxin xuanji* 毛泽东书信选集 (Selected Letters from Mao Zedong). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

Moody, Peter R. (1977), *Oppositions and Dissent in Contemporary China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pusey, James R. (1969), *Wu Han: Attacking the Present through the Past*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Reischauer, Edwin O. and John K. Fairbank (1960), *East Asia: The Great Tradition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Rüsen, Jörn (1996) "Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparative Historiography," in *History and Theory* 35:4 (December 1996), 5-22.

Schwartz, Benjamin (1996), "History in Chinese Culture", in *History and Theory* 35:4 (December 1996), 23-33.

Smith, Anthony D. (1995), *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Teng, Ssu-yu and John K. Fairbank (1982), *China's Response to the West*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.