Chinese Political Communication: Roots in Tradition and Impacts on Contemporary Chinese Thought and Culture

Xing Lu

DePaul University

Abstract

This study offers a review of traditional Chinese political thought and an array of rhetorical practices in ancient China. It examines how the rhetorical features of contemporary Chinese political discourse resemble those of classical Chinese rhetoric with emphasis on worshiping of the ruler, moral/ethical appeals, ritualistic practices, and the employment of metaphors. The author argues that similar rhetorical forms have been appropriated in the Chinese political discourse to meet different political goals. Further, the author exemplifies how the political discourse used during the Chinese Cultural Revolution has dehumanized "class enemies" and affected the way Chinese people think in more polarized terms. This study suggests that culture has enduring qualities as manifested in recurring themes and practices. At the same time, culture also transforms to meet the needs of globalization and demands for an open society.

Studies of Asian culture and communication in the past have informed us of the Eastern core value of harmony and intuitive "thinking" (Kincaid, 1987; Nakamura, 1964), the Asian politics and leadership style as authoritarian and idealistic (Oliver, 1989; Pye 1985), Asian rhetoric as implicit, moralistic and audience-centered (Garrett, 1991; Jensen, 1992; Oliver, 1971), and East Asian communication styles as indirect and face-saving (Yum 1991). While these studies have contributed to our knowledge of Asian culture and communication, they tend to make broad generalizations without a careful examination of rhetorical texts and communication contexts. Moreover, some of these studies failed to make links between Asian cultural roots with contemporary communication practices in order for us to make sense of events and behaviors taking place in Asia and to reach an in-depth intercultural understandings between Asia and the West. This paper examines a specific Asian culture in a specific communication context: Chinese political communication, and attempts to make a connection between traditional Chinese political thoughts and

rhetorical features to contemporary Chinese political discourse and practices. I contend that Chinese contemporary political communication is very much influenced by traditional Chinese political thought; rhetorical appeals employed in the public discourse resemble closely to the classical rhetorical appeals. Even though the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution in China has in many ways altered traditional Chinese way of thinking and social relationship, with the economic reforms and drive toward modernization, indigenous cultural values and rhetorical practices resurfaced. While China has transformed itself in many ways, the fundamental political thought still dominates Chinese way of life.

I present my study in three parts. In part One, I review traditional Chinese political thought and rhetorical practices. I then describe and analyze political rhetoric and communication of contemporary China with a particular focus on the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. In the final section, I discuss the connection between language, thought, and culture in the context of Chinese political communication.

Traditional Chinese Political Thought and Rhetorical Practices

Traditional Chinese Political Thought

Even though Chinese history is filled with bloodshed and uprising in the replacement of one dynasty over the other, traditional Chinese political system, dominated by the absolute power of the emperor and elite bureaucracy, remained stable and enduring for over two thousand years. Despite the competing ideologies and religions within the Chinese tradition, Confucianism has been the dominant source of Chinese political thinking.[1] Confucian values of social hierarchy, family authority, and emphasis on public rituals and morality of individuals have become operative principles of Chinese political practices. The three most influential Confucian philosophers are Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi.

Confucius (551-479 B.C.E) lived in the time period of political transition from an orderly society of Zhou dynasty (approx. 11th -8th centuries B.C.E) to the chaotic period of the Spring-Autumn and Warring States (8th-3rd centuries B.C.E). Thus Confucian discourse was in response to the tumultuous times in which he was living. The ideal political model for Confucius was that of the Zhou dynasty where the ruler was benevolent, people were filial to their parents and loyal to their rulers and friends, the society respected authority and emphasized on rituals.

The ultimate political goal of Confucius was to achieve moral idealism of the rulers and individuals, which in turn would contribute to an orderly and civilized society. For Confucius, an orderly and harmonious society can be achieved and maintained by two important values and practices: *ren*

(humaneness, goodness, kindness, benevolence, virtue, and love for fellow men) and *li* (rites, customs, ceremony, ritual, rules of propriety, decorum).[2] The qualities of *ren* are expected to be possessed by the ruler and social elites. The aspects of *li* are functioned as a mechanism of social control of the masses and for maintenance of an orderly society. In Confucius' words, a good government "lead them [masses] by virtue, restrain them with ritual…" (Leys, 2.3, p. 6). No doubt, Confucius positioned the ruler as the ultimate moral exemplar and legitimate parent of the state. The advice he offered to the rulers included: "to govern is to be straight [moral/righteous]. If you steer straight, who would dare not to go straight" (12.17, p. 58); "You must draw them [masses] to you by the moral power of civilization [through practice of rituals]" (16.1. p. 81).

A devour defendant of Confucian doctrine, Mencius (390-305 B.C.E) continued to promote *renzheng* (benevolent government) in formulating his own political views. Mencius argued that the three dynasties (the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties) had at first prevailed by practicing benevolent government and had subsequently lost their rule by treating their people with cruelty (Mengzi, 4a. 3. p. 153). In other words, the rise and fall of a state depends on the moral character of the ruler. The ruler's legitimacy would come to an end (being overthrown or struck by natural disasters) if he did not bring goodness and well being to his people. In this sense, Mencius made a link between the concept of *renzheng* with traditional notion of *tian ming* (Mandate of Heaven), making benevolent governing divinely justified and morally mandated.

While Mencius extended Confucius notion of *ren* into a divine power to regulate the behavior of the rulers, Xunzi (298-238 B.C.E) put emphasis on Confucius' concept of *li* as a means of social control of the masses. Xunzi believed that observation of *li* served to establish social hierarchy, maintain order, and rectify individuals' behavior. In his words, "a man without ritual will not live;... a nation without ritual will not be tranquil" (Knoblock 2.2. p. 153); "the rituals contain the model for the primary social distinctions and the categories used by analogical extension for the guiding rules and ordering norms of behavior" (1.1. p.139). However, for Xunzi, the observation of *li* should be implemented and supervised by the rulers. In this sense, Xunzi has extended *li* from a ritualistic concept to a mechanism of social-political control. Scholars agree that Xunzi's concept of *li* and his pragmatic orientation in philosophy are the basis of Chinese political thought and practices that have manifested in subsequent dynasties, even in modern and contemporary Chinese political leaders such as Sun Yatsen and Deng Xiaoping (Twohey, 1999).

Han Feizi (280-233 B.C.E), a student of Xunzi, also a representative of the Legalist School, challenged his teacher on effectiveness of *li*. Influenced by Xunzi on the view of human nature as evil. Han believed that *li* was not sufficient in controlling people's behavior since it is easily violated without

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receiving any punishment. What he proposed was *fa* (penal laws) enacted by the ruler and applied to everyone except the ruler who was considered the symbol of the state. As Liang Chi-Chao (1873-1929) described " It [the Legalist School] firmly believes in the power of the state, denying the sanctity of the individual. Politically it advocates strict interference, with the restraint of formal standard for the man in authority" (1930, p. 34). In Ames' opinion (1983), Legalists' views "have nothing to do with cultivation of personal life or its societal implications. Rather, their concern is effective political control, and culture is rejected as inimical to this end" (p. 12). However culturally destructive, Han's political views were adopted by the King of Qin who united China in 211 B.C.E. and was considered the most righteous political philosophy by Mao during the Cultural Revolution.

Another important concept of Confucian political philosophy is *zheng ming* (rectification of names). The term was first coined by Confucius who believed that the misuse of names/words and their meanings were the direct cause of social disorder and moral decline. In his view,

> When names are not correct, speech will not be appropriate; when speech is not appropriate, tasks will not be accomplished; when tasks cannot be accomplished, rites and music will not flourish; when rites and music do not flourish, punishment will not justify the crimes; when punishment does not justify the crimes, the common people will not know where to put their hands and feet." (LY 13.3. p. 132)

Here, Confucius pointed out the crucial role of communication in contributing or inhibiting social order and proposing rectification of names as a political solution to the problem of disorder and moral decline.

The process of rectifying names must first start at the level of social roles. "Let the lord be a lord; the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son" (Leys, 12.11, p. 57). This way, people at the different levels of social hierarchy would act and be treated in the way expected of these positional roles. The task of the state kings was to ensure that everyone performs his or her roles in society. Further, the rulers must prescribe a new set of social norms and moral standard through rectification of names or creation of new terms. Such a process, according to Hall and Ames (1987) would have a transformative effect in providing "the impetus and direction for social and political change" (p. 273). Names, asserted by Makeham (1994) are not simply passive labels for Confucius, but rather function "as social and hence political catalysts" (p. 46). Confucius own painstaking efforts in defining and creating moral terms such as *ren, li, xiao* (filial piety), *shu* (reciprocity) in *Lunyu* (The Analects of Confucius) indicated his intention to reshape the Chinese moral standard and redirect Chinese society into an orderly and civilized one. In this sense, Confucius shared a similar view with Greek sophists in that language shapes perception of

reality, stirs up action, and brings social change.

Despite the differences in philosophical views, like Confucius, Mozi (475-390 B.C.E), the founder of the Mohist School was also very concerned with stability and social order. For Mozi, the way to achieve social order is to make sure that masses were under the control of the ruler through unification of thoughts that prescribed by the ruler. This process of unifying the belief system of the ruled is called *shang tong* (identification with the superior). *Shang tong* is achieved through a hierarchical ordering of official positions. When *tianzi* (the Son of Heaven, the ruler) made a pronouncement, it will be communicated to the highest level of officials who will pass it on to the local executive officers. The local officers would deliver the message to the head of the village who would pass it on to the head of each family. It is then the responsibility of the head of the family to ensure that everyone in the family understands the ruler's message and obey it in action. Even though Mozi encouraged open communication between the ruler and his people, he did not mean to favor freedom of speech. In fact, if there is disagreement between the ruler and a subordinate, the subordinate's view must be brought in line with that of the ruler. In Mozi's words, "To identify one's self with the superior and not to unite one's self with the subordinates—this is what deserves encouragement from above and praise from below" (Mei 3. 11. P. 56).

In sum, traditional Chinese political thought entrusts the moral character of the ruler, giving the ruler the absolute power of control legitimized by benevolent governing and will of Heaven. Ritual is perceived as crucial means of establishing and maintaining hierarchy and control, which is fundamental to an orderly society. The use of symbols and process of communication should be closely monitored and controlled by the rulers and bureaucratic system. The ruled should conform to *li* and fear of *fa* and should have identical views and act in unison with the ruler.

Rhetorical Practices of the Pre-Oin China

Robert Oliver was the first American communication scholar who recognized and wrote about classical Chinese rhetoric. While some scholars denied the existence of Chinese rhetoric, Oliver (1971) asserted that 'talk in China was the primary medium for the exchange of ideas. Eloquent speakers were influential in the moulding of social ideas, ideals, and institutions" (p. 84). Indeed, there are many eloquent speakers, speech events and persuasions taking place in ancient China recorded in numerous historical and literary works. Here I will focus on three aspects of rhetorical practices: dissemination of *Zhou Li* (the Rites of Zhou), speeches in *Shang Shu* (The Book of History), and persuasive appeals of *you shui* (traveling persuaders).

According to Peng Lin (1991), the Rites of Zhou was completed by

anonymous writers in the early Han dynasty (around 200 B.C.E). It detailed rules and norms for speech and action and rules for rituals and social relationship. It was believed to be the "Bible" of Zhou dynasty in providing and enforcing certain prescribed rules of moral conduct and ensuring and maintaining an orderly society. Some of the rules are enforced like penal laws and directly targeted on social deviance. An example of Zhou Li goes:

> Death to anyone who disturbs the government by initiating reforms; death to anyone who confuses people by making lascivious noise, wearing barbaric clothes, exhibiting strange skills, and using strange utensils; Death to anyone who confuses people through adherences to wrong doings, arguing for sophistry, studying unorthodox thoughts, and rebelling against authority; death to anyone who confuses people by practicing witchcraft, astrology, and fortune telling. (Wu, 1984, p. 37)

By this rule/law, the freedom of speech, thought, and action were absolutely prohibited in Zhou dynasty. People would be forced to conform to such rules for fear of losing their lives. Furthermore, *Zhou Li* was the core text for examinations in the selection of local officials, familiarization of *Zhou Li* is a mark of the higher learning and social elites. According to Peng Li's study, in the first month of every new year, high ranking officials would disseminate contents of *Zhou Li* through oral and written pronouncements. Local officials would visit every district and community under their jurisdiction to explain and promote the understanding of messages in *Zhou Li*.

Among a number of pre-Qin (before 211 B.C.E) historical and literary texts, *Shang Shu* stands out as a text that offers a collection of public speeches by the rulers and military commanders. The text is believed to be written in the middle or late Zhou dynasty by unknown historiographers. Three forms of speeches can be identified in *Shang Shu*: *shi* (taking oath), resembling today's ceremonial speeches, *gao* (advising), similar to contemporary persuasive speeches, and group discussions between the ruler and administrators. From her careful examination of the text, Lu (1998) identified five characteristics of the speeches in *Shang Shu*. They are: (1) the use of *tian ming* (Mandate of Heaven) as the universal principle to legitimize the overthrown of an old regime; (2) the use of historical examples to justify the current action; (3) the use of psychological appeals of rewards and punishment as source of motivation; (4) moral appeals; and (5) the use of metaphors and analogies. As one of the early ancient Chinese texts on political communication, these characteristics set up the standard for many speeches to follow in the speech contexts and by rulers in the subsequent dynasties.

Many other pre-Qin literary and history texts such as *Shi Ji* (Records of History), *Zuo Zhuan* (Zuo Commentaries), *Guo Yu* (Discourse of the States), and *Zhan Guo Ce* (Intigues) have recorded speech events and private persuasion

between the state rulers and traveling persuaders. Traveling persuaders had no clear affiliation with any particular state. They were the social elites who were knowledgeable in many subject areas and their task was to offer advice to state kings in military maneuver and political strategies. Persuasive appeals, as identified by Lu (1998) from a scrutiny of selected speeches in these texts, included appeals to moral and cultural values, emotional appeals, analysis of advantages and disadvantages, use of historical and current examples, psychological and instrumental appeals, use of deductive and inductive reasoning, use of metaphors and analogies. These persuasive techniques used in political contexts are also discussed in other scholarly works (Crump, 1964; Garrett, 1993; Jensen, 1992; Kroll, 1985-87; Raphals, 1992).

Like the ancient Greece, ancient Chinese used a variety of rhetorical appeals in their persuasive activities in political contexts. Even though Chinese rhetoric was not codified and systematically studied as Western rhetoric until recent years, its influence was evident in the political communication of subsequent regimes.

Political Rhetoric and Communication in Contemporary China

In his book, *The Spirit of Chinese Politics*, Lucian Pye (1992) pointed out that Chinese imperial and Communist politics share a lot in common in that they are both hierarchical in structure, both showed heavy dependence upon formal ideologies, and moral righteousness. Moreover, both systems have relied on private morality and public rituals as institutional mechanisms of social control; both systems have combined bureaucratic hierarchy and ideological conformity to govern its people and maintain its power. In Pye's view, "the centrality of hierarchy, the elaborate concerns involved in managing superior-subordinate relations, and a pervasive use of moralistic rhetoric have combined to produce in China a form of Confucianist Leninism… " (p. ix). In comparing traditional Chinese politics with the contemporary Chinese political rhetoric, Townsend and Womack (1986) observed that

> the tendency to cast political discourse in terms of historical events and personalities did not die with the end of the imperial system in 1911. Despite marked differences in vocabulary and interpretations required by a Marxist approach, the Chinese Communists remain highly sensitive to the political uses and implications of Chinese history and have continued to find legitimization in China's past for the domestic and external developments of her most recent present." (p. 30)

I agree with both observations and will offer some specific evidence in the use of rhetoric and communication process in contemporary China to demonstrate the link.

China has experienced ideological shifts since 1949 when Communist took over. The takeover marked the first ideological shift from Confucianism to Communism with emphasis on idealism. The second shift took place in early 1980s, signified by a move from Mao's idealism to Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism in an attempt to modernize China. In the following, I identify four rhetorical features and communication processes of these two periods that can be traced to the ancient root: Cultism of the ruler, moral/ethical appeals, ritualistic practices, and the use of metaphor.

Cultism of the Ruler

Confucian political thought accredited the ruler with moral attributes; his legitimacy is mandated by Heaven. Legalists granted the ruler with the absolute power and authority over his people. This mentality toward the ruler did not diminish with the disappearance of the imperial China. Mao Zedong is such an example. With the Communist propaganda glorifying his merits and contributions to the founding of the People's Republic of China, Mao was worshiped and revered as the living God. Mao was described as "the red sun in our heart" and "the greatest teacher, the greatest leader, the greatest commander, and the greatest helmsman" of Chinese people. The worship of Mao was intensified during the Cultural Revolution. Everywhere one saw or heard "Long live Chairman Mao;" "Wish Chairman Mao a long long life, " the same worship emperors of imperial China received.

Besides slogans, Mao was also idolized in songs. For example, in the most popular song, "The East is Red," Mao is regarded as a savior and his position as a leader is Heavenly mandated. As the first line of lyrics goes:

The East is red, the sun rises.
China had Mao Zedong.
He seeks happiness for his people; and he is people's savior.

In almost all the songs eulogizing Mao, Mao is symbolized as the red sun or golden sun with infinite radiance that shines over China and brings energy to Chinese people. Songs like this one reinforced the myth that Mao is such deity sent by Heaven to help Chinese people and the legitimate leader as he has brought prosperity and happiness to Chinese people (*ren zheng*).

Songs like the one above were sung everywhere and all the time during the Cultural Revolution. They were often accompanied by "loyalty dance" as part of the ritual in worshiping Mao, which I will discuss in the section on rituals. Such cultism of Mao promoted the absolute loyalty and obedience to authority and also granted Mao with absolute power. This zeal of worshiping the current leader as the living God gradually subsided after Mao's death. However, the mentality of idolizing the leaders has not completely gone. Deng Xiaoping, the successor of Mao, was referred as 'the architect of Chinese economic reform."

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Jiang Zemin, the current President of China, was regarded as the "core of leadership."

The legitimacy of rulers was also reinforced by the government efforts to inform and educate the public on the personal history of the ruler, the contribution he made, and significant changes he has brought to people and society through multiple forms of media and repeated reinforcement in public rituals. Numerous national narratives, films, media, and books have been produced and disseminated informing the public the deeds and contributions of Mao during the revolutionary period and those of Deng Xiaoping during the times of the economic reform.

Moral/Ethical Appeals

In classical Chinese rhetoric, moral principles were employed as universal appeals in public and private persuasion. For example, *tian ming* (Mandate of Heaven) has been used in every dynasty in Chinese history to legitimize a new rule and justify the overthrown of the old regime.

Moral/ethical appeals served as a main rhetorical theme in classical Chinese rhetoric, especially within the School of Confucianism. Ironically, during Mao's era, Communist propaganda had been trying to eradicate the influence of Confucianism since its takeover of China in 1949. As Confucianism represents the "four olds" (old ideology, old culture, old custom, and old habit), it was severely condemned and bitterly attacked during the Cultural Revolution. Interesting enough, Mao's propaganda also co-opted Confucian model of moral/ethical appeals in the effort to mold a selfless person possessing Communist consciousness of sacrificing for and devoting to the state. While Confucian moral standard is *ren*, communist moral standard is to believe and conform to communist ideology. To do so, one must be loyal to Mao, think and act according to Mao's guidance. Any other way of thinking or signs of disloyalty to Mao and Communist ideology would be considered immoral and unethical and in fact, a class enemy. One criterion to test loyalty to Mao is whether the person believes, accepts, and practices Mao's version of communism, which is granted as the absolute truth and has the highest moral standard. Such criterion is articulated in many *dazibao* (big-character poster) during the Cultural Revolution. For example, in a *dazibao* criticizing Deng Xiaoping during the Cultural Revolution, it says:

> It is the belief of the Communist Party headed by Chairman Mao that the goal of communism is to eradicate all the classes and societies with class differences. It is a society that all its people have the communist consciousness and quality; it is a society that has the advanced production. To reach these goals, [we] must strengthen proletarian dictatorship, widely engage in class struggle and to develop people's revolutionary thinking…

On the other hand, Deng's version of Communism is to have a better material life symbolized by "a dish of stewed beef with potato." According to the authors of this *dazibao* (Red Guards from Beijing),

> These are two drastically different views just like the difference between water and fire. This is the struggle between two classes, two roads, and two ideologies. One [Deng's version] is to go back to capitalistic road, toward the darkness, and the other [Mao's version] is the road to communism, leading to brightness." (Tan & Zhao, 1996, p. 162)

This moral absoluteness framed the criterion of morality by conforming to Mao's ideology. Nearly all the public discourse used such criterion to draw lines between friends and enemies, good and evil. FitzGerald (1976) notes in *Mao Tsetung and China*,

> The thoughts of Mao Tsetung [Mao Zedong] have become to his own people in his own age what the Sayings of Confucius were to the Chinese people for the past two thousand years: the source of inspiration and guidance in matters social, political, and moral. (p. 1)

Mao's speech became the moralistic language and the Little Red Book (Quotations of Chairman Mao) became the new "Bible" for every Chinese during the Cultural Revolution. Even to this day, Deng Xiaoping's works and Jiang Zemin's speeches are required readings for government officials as they provide moral guidance and ethical standard for action (*zheng ming*). The use of moralistic language is still the central feature of Chinese political communication as in the cases of condemning Taiwan leaders for their inclination of Taiwan independence, crackdown of Falun Gong, and accusation of American hegemony. Although in private settings, people can openly express their different views on these issues nowadays, in public situations, it is imperative the individual identify with the authority in political views and act in agreement with the version of reality provided by the government (*shangtong*).

Ritualistic Practices

Philipsen (1992) posits ritual as "a structured sequence of actions the correct performance of which pays homage to a sacred object" (p. 133). Rituals and rites are the core values and practices of Confucian society. The ritualistic performance for Confucianism aims at establishing and maintaining the social hierarchy and order through repeated and carefully orchestrated procedures. In ancient China, ancestor worship was the type of ritual that served this purpose. On the surface level, ancestor worship was a symbolic practice of filial piety through the sacrifice of animals, food offerings, and kowtowing. At the deeper level, this ritualistic performance served to establish and maintain family and social hierarchy, strengthen group cohesiveness, and promote a unified social consciousness.

Rituals in contemporary Chinese political contexts have taken different forms. I mentioned earlier the "loyalty dance" as part of the ritualistic performance during the Cultural Revolution. As I experienced myself, every morning after getting up, people would sing and dance in front of the Mao's portrait. Before every meal, people would stand up singing songs eulogizing Mao or praying for his longevity. Before the start of every meeting, people would shout slogans or sing songs worshiping Mao. All these rituals established Mao as a religious cult. Hsia (1972) records that

> Many Chinese villages have dedicated 'rooms of loyalty' to the thoughts of Chairman Mao and that many peasant households have their own 'tablets of loyalty.' These are clearly derived from the ancestral temples and tables of the old China: mornings and evenings the villagers gather, either in their communal room, or in front of their family tablets, to pay reverence to Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong]." (p. 233)

Other forms of political rituals included attending political studies every week at the work unit. Every Tuesday afternoon was the designated time for such studies in many places in Beijing. At the political studies sessions, the leader would read some document passed on from the administration above the work unit or read official newspapers and magazines, then followed by a group discussion. The leader must make sure that everyone understood the essence of the document from the above and individuals spoke at the meeting must use the politically correct language. If anyone had different views and dared to challenge the government version of morality, this person would be asked to write a letter of self-criticism, admitting the "wrong thought," and expressing willingness to conform with the authority. If the person refused to do so, the person will be ostracized and even be charged with ulterior motives or a class enemy. A similar practice of ritual is currently being administrated at the education camps for Falun Gong practitioners.

Another common ritual in Chinese political communication is the dissemination of information. When the top leaders of the country had reached some important decisions such as cracking down corruption, giving names back to those who were wrongly persecuted, a new economic policy or a new political regulation, the ordinary people would not immediately be informed of the changes. Instead, the new information will be passed on by levels and ranks of officials. That means only officials at certain rank could get access to certain document and information. This practice again reinforced the bureaucratic hierarchy and loyalty of the officials.

The Use of Metaphors

Many rhetorical features of classical Chinese rhetoric can be identified in contemporary Chinese political communication. Due to the length of the paper, I

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only describe one of these techniques, the use of metaphors.

The use of metaphors is a recurring rhetorical technique in classical Chinese literary and historical texts. Weapon metaphors and animal metaphors are particularly popular in *Zhan Guoze*. The concept of *pi* (metaphor) was coined by Hui Shi (380-320 B.C.E) who defined it as "using what people know to convey and explain what people do not know" (SY 11.8.471). While metaphor is an effective persuasive device in classical Chinese social and political context, metaphor used in pubic discourse during the Cultural Revolution mainly served to dehumanize "class enemy," to intensify hatred, and to provoke violent act. Similar to the types of metaphors in the classical texts, war metaphors and animal metaphors were pervasive in *dazibao*. Examples of war metaphors were "using pen as knifes and guns," "fire at capitalistic headquarters," "hold on to the revolutionary front line." The Cultural Revolution was described as "the fifth campaign" launched by Mao following other campaigns in the history of the CCP against Japanese and the nationals. The difference in ideology between Maoists and anti-Maoists was considered as a "battle" between true revolutionaries and capitalists or revisionists. True revolutionaries must "attack and aim at revisionists." Mao's directives were named as "strategic plan" that would "kill class enemies into pieces" and "tear up their front line" (Tan & Zhao 1996, p. 410). The purpose of the Cultural Revolution was to "gain a thorough victory." To do so Red Guards must "bravely and tenaciously fight against class enemy" and "pledge to fight to the death in defending Chairman Mao and in defending the proletarian headquarter" (p. 411). "There will be no withdrawal of soldiers without a thorough victory" (p. 172).

The other group of metaphor dehumanized "class enemies" by calling them "ox, ghosts, snakes, and demons" Wang Guangmei, wife of Liu Shaoqi (the President of China during Mao's era) was described as a "monster," "alluring woman," "filthy miss," and "snake" (p. 239). Those who have different views from Mao were called "a group of snakes and dog party" (p. 153). Sometimes the war metaphors and animal metaphors were used together. In one of the announcement by Red Guards, they wrote:

> Now we must fire at the capitalistic running dogs, the ox, ghost, snakes, and demons. We must target at the residue of old ideology, old culture, old custom, and old habit. We must smash down anything that does not conform to Mao Zedong's thought. (p. 36)

Such dehumanization through the use of metaphor resembles closely to the language rules of Nazi Germany in the justification of the holocaust of six million Jews.

Implications on the Relationship Between Language, Thought, and Culture

in Chinese Political Communication

I have reviewed major traditional Chinese political thought and illustrated contemporary Chinese political communication focusing on the rhetorical practices of the Cultural Revolution. It is clear that many of the contemporary rhetorical practices are influenced by traditional Chinese political thought. At the same time, the contemporary political communication may have altered Chinese thought pattern and cultural behavior in different ways. This study illustrates that culture is enduring, culture changes, and culture transforms in the efforts to achieve political goals. The content and goal of political communication may change, the form of rhetoric and communication remains fundamentally the same.

Enduring Force of Traditional Chinese Culture

Many scholars agree that culture offers underlying script for human behavior and is the determining factor for communication (e. g., Hall, 1959; Gudykust & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Porter & Samovar, 1988). Although this traditional perspective of culture has been challenged by the communicative management of meanings model and the critical approach, its basic tenet still rings true. Two recent studies on Chinese culture and communication have confirmed the enduring role of culture. Through an examination of popular writings in contemporary China, Ling Chen (forthcoming), discusses how Confucian norms of conformity and collective mentality still subconsciously affect the communication behaviors of many ordinary Chinese in their decision making process during Mao and Post-Mao era. Rita Ng (forthcoming) observes that the traditional Chinese values of paternalistic authority and psychology of dependency still manifest strongly in China's modernization process. Along a similar line of argument, this study exemplifies that contemporary Chinese political communication is still in many ways influenced by traditional Chinese political thought and rhetorical practices. As well stated by Townsend and Womack (1986), "These and many other examples show that deviations from the past may nonetheless be in part produced by it and thus represent a link rather than a rupture with Chinese history" (p. 31).

I believe that the very reason contemporary Chinese communication has been persuasive is because it has appealed to the traditional Chinese cultural values and political thought. Or at least, traditional cultural values and political thought have been appropriated to meet the current political goals. In a collection of articles edited by Tu, Weiming (1996), many authors have testified that the Asian model of hierarchy, authority, family and social relationship rooted in Confucian tradition has proved to be influential and conducive to Asian economic success.

A good understanding of traditional Chinese political thought will shed light on our understanding of contemporary Chinese political practices. This is especially meaningful from the intercultural perspective. For example, when the U.S accuse China of violation of human rights, it is important to keep in mind that Chinese and Americans attach different meanings to the concept of human rights. The primary task of the Chinese leader is to make sure that his/her people live well in order to remain the legitimacy of his/her government. Freedom of speech and political rights have been historically suppressed and sanctioned. It is not the invention of the Communist Party.

In more recent official publications and media in China, there is a strong emphasis on *yi de zhi guo* (govern by virtue). President Jiang Zeming's famous *sang jiang* (three talks) includes "talks of learning, talks of politics, and talks of righteousness." Many party members (of certain rank) have to attend *sang jiang* seminars to express their views in line with the government. This echoes with Confucian emphasis on the moral exemplar of the rulers and officials and the emphasis on rituals to ensure order and unification of thoughts and action.

Culture Change and Radicalism in China

Although China remains as one of the oldest civilizations in the world, massive changes have taken place in China in the 20th century. Causes of change can be traced to internal force from part of the Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shi, Lu Xun, and western influence in science and democracy. The most fundamental social change came in 1949 when the Communist took over. Even though many government campaigns and brainwash efforts are still rooted in traditional Chinese value of moral idealism, state authority, and conformity, some traditional Chinese cultural values and ways of thinking have been changed. This is especially so through the use of language during the Cultural Revolution.

In her study on early Chinese cosmology and political culture, Aihe Wang (2000) notes that Chinese cosmology is characterized as "correlative," which emerged during political transitions as a way to recognize and balance competing social forces. Wang maintains that such Chinese cosmology "became a prevalent expression of political culture that was essential to the formation of the imperial order of early China, which continues to influence imperial history for two thousand years" (p. 2). Traditional Chinese thought pattern is also considered intuitive and characterized by infusion of the opposites as influenced by Daoist philosophy and Buddhist religion (Nakamura 1964; Northrop, 1946)

However, the public discourse of Mao's era, especially during the Cultural Revolution, with its own form (deductive reasoning, moral absoluteness) and content (Marxist-Maoist ideology), has altered the way Chinese people think from infusion to polarization, from valuing practical wisdom to idealistic

abstraction, and from willingness to examine a variety of possibilities to resistance to any alternative ways of thinking. Western influence and traditional Chinese culture are considered harmful and have to be totally eradicated. A person is either a revolutionary comrade or a class enemy. Views and opinions must conform to Mao's thought. Any deviance from Mao's thought would be considered as the ideology of bourgeoisie which was evil and absolutely wrong. As observed by Markham (1967), "They [Chinese Communists] took the dichotomous view that the old and the new were locked in a death struggle and that one must die so that the other could live, rather than attempting to fuse the better features of the two" (p. 438).

The moral/ethical appeals used in political rhetoric create a thought pattern of absolute certainty. A typical expository speech, usually in the form of *dazibao* during the Cultural Revolution started with presuppositions (counter-revolutionary charges, abstract and high sounding statements, or expression of loyalty to Mao) which were taken as truth and never questioned. With the emphasis on moral absoluteness and blind acceptance of the major premise in such discursive style, Chinese thinking became increasingly dogmatic and essentializing. A person's moral character was not judged by what the person did, but the person's family backgrounds; not by the person's critical judgment, but by the person's loyalty to Mao and faith to Mao's thought. As a result, Chinese people were deprived of their critical thinking ability, or the ability to think from different perspectives. They have collectively committed what Hannah Arendt (1964) called "the banality of evil."

Confucian tradition does have an emphasis on the moral well being of an individual which believed to be leading to a moral well being of a family and society. Confucius also has divided people into "junzi" (gentleman) and "xiaoren" (base person). However, Confucius's doctrine teaches people how to become a cultivated, loving, mature, and responsible individual, it does not teach people to hate those who hold different views from themselves. It teaches people to be well learned, respectful to authority, filial to their parents, but not to worship one particular individual as a cult. While Chinese public discourse has co-opted some Confucian doctrines to meet the political needs such as respect for authority. At the same time, such discourse has also moved away from Confucian principles, especially principles of human relationships.

Traditional Chinese culture values harmony, loving and caring relationship with others. Children are taught at early age to avoid direct confrontation with others, to be polite and to protect one's own as well as others' face, and to be restraint in expressing emotions. Children learn to follow a set of etiquette in the use of language. Any expression of aggression and profanity will be frowned upon and socially sanctioned. Unfortunately, with the goals to destroy traditional Chinese cultural values and to transform its people with a new set of

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Marxist/Leninist/Maoist ideology, political rhetoric during the Cultural Revolution has created a pubic discourse that values confrontation, hatred, and a rebellion spirit.

In his study of contemporary Chinese political behavior, Lucian Pye (1992) notes that "the dominant emotion of modern Chinese politics has been a preoccupation with hatred coupled with an enthusiasm for singling out enemies" (p. 67). Pye's observation proved to be correct. In examining the use of language during the Cultural Revolution, expressions of hatred, aggression, and profanity are common and ubiquitous. Attracted by the communist utopia and swayed by a crusading spirit, Red Guards (most of them were young people) waged personal attacks, humiliated political opponents, dehumanized "class enemies" and let out their pent-up feelings of hatred. Such political behavior was justified as it had moralistic basis and in the name of self-righteousness. Mao's teaching, as Anita Chan points out (1985), has "created competitive aspirations to prove personal devotion, instilled exaggerated needs to conform to political orthodoxy, and encouraged strong prejudice against outcaste groups" (p. 2). With such a mentality, it is not surprising that Red Guards treated "class enemies" with contempt, humiliation, cruelty, and violence. To prove their true revolutionary spirit, many people cut off family and friendship ties. It was not uncommon during the Cultural Revolution to hear that friends and family members betrayed each other; students beat and tortured their teachers; innocent people were persecuted, driven to suicide, and beaten to death. The Cultural Revolution is indeed a cultural holocaust!

From classical to modern time period, Chinese language is rich in its variety of rhetorical and linguistic devices, expressions of aesthetics as reflected in numerous Chinese classical and contemporary works on history and literature. This rich flavor and diverse use of language devices to convey profound and complex meanings through Chinese symbols was lost in the political language used during the Cultural Revolution. The form of political discourse was all the same and linguistic devices were all very similar. The meanings conveyed were politicized, simplistic, reductionistic, and essentialistic. Such linguistic behavior and polarizing thought pattern as result of such discursive practices still have lingering effects among the Chinese to this day both in the official media and personal speeches. The failure of the overseas student democratic movement and the recent crackdown of Falun Gong by the Chinese government can exemplify this lasting influence. However, the cultural damage takes time to restore, wound caused by the Cultural Revolution takes time to heal, and linguistic/discursive behavior shaped during the Cultural Revolution takes time and effort to change.

Chinese Culture in Transformation

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With the ending of the Cultural Revolution and since the economic reform in the early 1980s, China has achieved remarkable economic success and the living standard of Chinese people has improved drastically. The model of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" seems to work really well and has been well accepted by Chinese people as it is rooted in the ancient authoritarian state and relative freedom in economy. Even though political communication in the current regime still follows the Confucian and Mao's model in some ways, Chinese society is a much more open society than it was before. China survived the holocaust of the Cultural Revolution, has gradually come to terms with its national identify and ideological crisis. China does not need any of the revolutionary rhetoric and radicalized actions to destroy its culture, but a rhetoric of reconciliation and reform and revitalization of its tradition. Indeed, China may need to go back to its own tradition to seek for political wisdom and inspiration as well as allowing ideological flexibility and intellectual freedom. While China has created economic miracles, it is time to preserve and accumulate its cultural capital. The spirit of Chinese politics may be deeply rooted in Chinese mentality and the old political goals of order and stability are still the pursuit of current political communication, the Chinese people have much access to information, are becoming more globalized, open-minded, critical and reflective. The new economic structure will eventually push the political reform. Transformation in China has already taken place. As well said by Tu, Weiming (1993) "China in transformation is a human drama on the global stage" (p. xxv). Stay tuned!

Notes

1. Other major schools of thoughts include Taoism, Mohism, Legalism, and Mingjia (School of Names). Each school has contributed to Chinese political thought to a different degree. However, Because Confucianism was claimed as the dominant ideology since the time of Emperor Han Wu (140-187 B.C.E.), its influence was far outweigh other schools of thoughts.
2. Two other important Confucian concepts are *yi* (righteousness, justice) and *zhong yong* (harmony). Because contemporary Chinese political discourse mainly appropriated the concepts of *ren* and *li*, my explanation will be focused on these two concepts only.

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