

**From the Editor:**

Urbanization is a global trend. It is projected that in the next fifty years, two-thirds of humanity will be living in towns and cities. But seriously under challenge is the notion that urban places are necessarily the hubs of productivity, and that there will be automatic improvement in living standards and economic growth. Rapid urbanization usually generates excessive demands and malfunctions. Their impacts on lives of urban dwellers are an overarching concern. This will be a global issue to be debated in the World Planners Congress - World Urban Forum III this June in Vancouver. In urban China, water shortage and other natural resource limitations exacerbate the problems generated by millions of migrant unskilled workers flocking to cities to seek employment opportunities, as manufacturing industries that consume labour, energy and natural resources drive urbanization.

China was given pretty high marks for macro-economic management by the World Bank (*Forbes Global*, July 25, 2005). At the same time, the Bank advised China to consider shifting its engine of growth from a heavy emphasis on investment in hard infrastructure to, in some measure, the latent potentials of its own domestic market. It specifically recommended meeting needs in public health and education, and food, basic clothing and modern services in the rural interior.

Writers in this issue of *CCS Networking* are contributing varied observations and opinions on China's latest development. From our Old China Hand, Stephen Endicott, is a thought-provoking piece, highlighting some current trends written in his usual forthright manner.

David Lumsden celebrates Chongqing's coming-out party. Toronto and Chongqing are sister cities. While some of Toronto's institutes of higher learning (e.g. Osgoode Hall Law School) and research institutions (e.g. the Medical and Related Sciences project) already enjoy some degrees of influence there, other Canadian cities, for example, Burnaby, Edmonton, and Lethbridge, are equally enthusiastic in networking with the city's various institutions. Chongqing, no doubt, will remain a key destination for Canadians.

Caroline Walker introduces us to Niangkharjia, a socially committed young man from Qinghai. He explains how the use of solar energy for cooking can improve the quality of life for the entire village. His narrative depicts aspects of the rural realities in China.

Dr. M. P. Lau, our in-house medical and psychiatry expert, deliberates how some traditional Chinese values and cultural propensity for self-discipline may work against our best interest in the age of globalization and change.

Together these articles provide a candid picture of contemporary China – showing both its trials and tribulations. Happy reading!

Y. Annie Cheung

China's New Value System

Stephen Endicott



Stephen Endicott (centre) and Scott Davidson, curator of the Norman Bethune Museum in Gravenhurst, of the Canadian delegation, answer questions at a press conference organized by the State Council in Beijing, 3 September 2005.

Recently I was part of a seven-member Canadian delegation to Beijing, invited by the Chinese government, to join in the vibrant celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of the defeat of fascism and the end of Japanese occupations of China. The Chinese, wishing to remember those foreign friends, or their descendants, who helped them in that horrific struggle, included in their invitation members of the families of Norman Bethune, Earl Willmott and James Endicott from Canada.

There were 400 foreign guests in all, including one hundred American 'Flying Tiger' veterans, fifty Russian generals, guerilla fighters from Korea and former prisoners of war from Japan. It was a great honour to be there. The large demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, in the Great Hall of the People (on three occasions) and at the Peace Wall in Chaoyang Park, took place under the general theme 'For Justice and Peace.' In listening to the speeches and watching the colourful pageants I was encouraged to note that a great victory in war was being celebrated in such a way as to strengthen commitments for peace.

After the stirring events in Beijing our hosts invited us to take side trips. The Endicotts chose Sichuan province and Shanghai, places familiar to our family's 112-year history of living in China. There are a hundred and one things I could write about but the editor of this journal has asked me to comment on "the new value system" now arising in China. In one week one can only gather scattered impressions.

At first I thought the editor referred to the 'get rich quick' philosophy that has come to the fore so strongly in the past 25 years. But on further reflection I realized she was thinking of 'the new San Min Zhu Yi' ('Three Principles of the People' associated with Dr. Sun Yat-sen) that many people in China are currently talking about. In the speech of President Hu Jintao at the celebrations we heard him express these principles as

"exercising power for the people's benefit, sharing their concerns and placing their interests first," and pushing "for the building of a harmonious society." During an evening cruise on the Huangpu River we saw one of Shanghai's tallest skyscrapers displaying a giant luminous sign saying 'Adhere to unity, co-operation, equality, harmony.' Across the street from the place where my father was born, in Leshan city, Sichuan, a red banner sporting the hammer and sickle read 'Party members are in training; build a harmonious community.'

The emphasis on a 'harmonious society' sounded strange to my ears, coming from a communist party whose founding father's highest injunction was to 'never forget the class struggle.' The phrase, in fact, has a studied ambiguity worthy of some of the lectures of Canada's most famous literary critic, Northrop Frye, which I listened to as a student, and many Chinese I talked to are unclear as to its deeper meaning. It is part of an evolving debate in China about the social decay that is accompanying China's rapid economic development and what to do about it.

For any Chinese over the age of forty-five, who has had some experience of the revolutionary struggles led by Mao Zedong, the imbalances that have occurred in recent years - the growing gap between rich and poor, between those who live in the countryside and those in the cities, between those who do manual and mental labour - are deeply distressing. Whether from necessity created by rising social discontents, or from inclination caused by an uneasiness in their conscience, the new leadership grouped since 2003 around party general secretary, Hu Jintao, have decided to take some decided action towards slowing and possibly reversing the social decline. Their steps are mostly cautious, not based on a communist program for social and economic transformation, but rather on a more social democratic approach which accepts capitalist market forces as the main engine of development ameliorated by reforms to check some of the worst expressions of abuse.

Thus, since the poorest of the poor live in the countryside, the government has abolished the Agricultural Tax for five years (with only four provinces - Hubei, Shandong, Kuangxi and Yunnan - still resisting this order. The agricultural tax was always low - only 4% - but still it is an important gesture and it will cost the government plenty since there are so many farmers in China and so many costs to keep up the rural infrastructures - the irrigation canals, the tractor roads etc. - that will now have to be paid for by the profits of industry.)

Thus, the strong arm methods of dealing with the millions of migrant workers who have moved from the rural areas into the big cities are being revised in various ways. In Shanghai since the new, young mayor, Han Zheng, 41, has eliminated police powers to detain vagrants, an influx of beggars has appeared, forcing the newly wealthy middle class of Shanghai to confront some of the more unpleasant realities of the runaway foreign-investor, capitalist development, for which their city is becoming famous.

Thus, some tough action against speculators. Many of the tall buildings in Shanghai are empty, being held by speculators hoping to push up the price of real estate and thereby putting the price of housing out of reach for everyone. This year Mayor Han's municipal council passed a regulation requiring a property to be held for two years, to have its mortgage paid off before re-sale and imposing a 20% sales tax when it is sold. No doubt the speculators are thinking this feels more like class struggle than harmony!

Many more examples of ameliorative actions currently being implemented in China could be cited. But from talking with old and new friends in China I have the feeling that all these measures, welcome as they are, still leave a deep void because they omit any discussion or definition of the larger meaning of socialism -- a topic which remains at the deep core of China's revolutionary experience and aspirations.

One can gain hints about these continuing aspirations. Two new biographies of Chairman Mao were published in China this year. A very large museum honouring the artifacts (if not the ideas) of the Cultural Revolution is being built in Sichuan's Dayi County; Mao's statue still stands tall in the central square of Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province, as well as at Sichuan University.

At the end of the political meeting in the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, after Hu Jintao's speech, the orchestra of the People's Liberation Army suddenly struck up the strains of 'The Internationale' with all rising. The organizers of the event clearly wanted to link the great hymn of the international communist movement and its 150-year history with the vision of China in the year 2005. As we stood to attention a young man in our delegation from Canada, standing next to me, whispered that he had never heard of the song, knew nothing of its meaning and wondered why it was being played at this historic moment.



Stephen Endicott and Sue Endicott Huntington visit the birthplace of James G. Endicott at 212 White Pagoda Street in Leshan city, Sichuan. The stone, erected by the Leshan Historical Board in 1984, says "WenYiuzhang guju" (former residence of James G. Endicott).

CHONGQING CELEBRATES THE WORLD IMPORTANCE OF CITIES

Hosts the Fifth Asia Pacific Cities Summit, October 11-14th, 2005

David Paul Lumsden
York University, Canada

On the evening of October 10th, 2005, I arrived in Chongqing by air, my first visit since 1993, to be struck as we landed by a veritable fairyland of modernity, the City-as-Arcade of social change, with all the many new skyscrapers lit up in outline by lights of all welcoming hues.

I went there to join our Sister City of Chongqing in its hosting of the Fifth Asia Pacific Cities Summit. This increasingly prominent organization was founded in 1996 as an initiative of the city of Brisbane, Australia, and indeed Brisbane has hosted three such gatherings, and will host the next one as well, while Seattle and now Chongqing have been the other hosts to date. The Asia Pacific Cities Summit series, as the current Lord Mayor of Brisbane puts it, "is driven by the concept that cities are the social, political and economic engines of the new global economy". In the view of many, it is the City which deservedly is the most meaningful level of government for the daily life and well-being of a polity's resident citizenry - hence the conference's theme of 'City.Man.Nature' and its emphasis on seeking the enhancement of city governance and of city-to-city cooperation internationally.

For Chongqing, under Mayor Wang Hongju, this clearly was not just any gathering, but rather was the occasion for Chongqing's 'coming-out' party as a serious player on the world stage, a testament to and an embodiment of its recent promotion to the status of being one of only four cities in all of China that report directly to the national government, its status and heft as being a sort of 'Province' in its own right and on behalf of its current population of over 31-million citizens. And a dramatically well-organized feast of shared ideas, contacts, lessons, and performances it was, and on a grand scale: reportedly the preparatory costs for the Summit were some 7 billion yuan or USD863 million, or close to one billion Canadian dollars - largely in the form of new or improved infrastructure which remains to enhance post-Summit life in the city (China Daily, 12/10/05). The official tally of those participating is given in China Daily (13/10/05) as: "932 guests from 124 cities in 41 countries or regions, as well as 255 corporate representatives". The Summit not only promoted the role and cause of cities around the world, but also mobilized and show-cased all of Chongqing's own people and their aspirations writ large.

Canadian cities represented at the Summit included Burnaby, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Toronto. Edmonton's Mayor used the occasion to sign a partnership agreement with Chongqing and to promote new Alberta ties with Beibei District's Southwest University, while Lethbridge's Mayor gave a well-received lecture at the Sichuan International Studies University in Shapingba District. Toronto did itself proud in expressing its support for Chongqing: its delegation was headed by Deputy Mayor Sandra Bussin, who showed herself to be a very adroit diplomat on our behalf, and included Gloria Lindsay Luby - herself a key City Councillor, and Mr. Ron Wandel, Manager for Investment Attraction in our city's Economic Development Department. Deputy Mayor Bussin's participation was the first such high level visit to Chongqing from Toronto City Hall since former Mayor June Rowland's official visit in 1993, which I also accompanied, and signals Toronto's renewed commitment to Chongqing as being its Chinese Sister City. Indeed, it may also signal Toronto's return to a stronger international role for itself too.

Chongqing's own government gave special attention to the Toronto delegation's presence, through a personal meeting with Vice Mayor Wu Jianong and a private banquet hosted by Vice Party Secretary Jiang Yikang, himself a recent visitor to Toronto. That banquet included many old friends of Toronto in the Chongqing Waiban, notably Mr. Tang Wen and Mr. Yin Heng. Canada's Consul General in Chongqing, Mr. Philippe Rheault also kindly hosted the Canadian visitors to a dinner in the splendor of the new Chongqing Marriott Hotel.

Others attending the Summit included many current Mayors, such as the President of the U.S. Mayors' Association, and a leavening of former movers and shakers, notably a former President of the Philippines, a former PM of New Zealand and a former Deputy PM of Australia, along with World Bank representatives and many business worthies from near and far.

On the morning of October 12th we were all bused through the traffic-controlled streets for the formal opening of the Summit at the new Convention Centre built for this purpose, beside the Yangzi River. On arrival at the site, we were amazed and delighted to be greeted by hundreds of massed lion-dancers, ceremonial flag-wavers and other costumed young people.

Inside, Mayor Wang Hongju opened the proceedings, and the substantial keynote address was given by the Vice-Premier of China, Mr. Huang Ju, who made the point that today, some 520 million PRC citizens live in cities, that China has over 171 cities each of whose population exceeds at least one million persons; further, he emphasized that national government policy is that 'urbanization will be pushed ahead, by rational planning', by 'an urbanization path with Chinese characteristics'. Then, with excellent simultaneous translation, came a variety of sessions on that and subsequent days, on such topics as: 'Cooperation and Exchanges Between Asia-Pacific Cities', 'Making Cities Competitive: Infrastructure, Finance, and Metropolitan Governance'; 'Education: Cultivating Lifetime Learning to Build City Capacity'; 'Harmony Between Man and Nature: Environmental Management', and more.

In addition to these formal and numerous informal opportunities for sharing ideas, Chongqing put on a series of spectacular performance rituals. One such was the formal dinner banquets on the 12th and 13th. Another was the ritual busing of us all, in a convoy of over two dozen large vehicles, back and forth through the city streets, streets lined on both sides with ranks of public security bureau members and with crowds of ordinary onlookers gazing at these moving museum display cases of 'foreign-guests' as we swept on by-streets and traffic-circles by the way, which were lined too with thousands of pots of flowers.

The evening of the 12th also was marked by all guests being taken for a boat ride to the confluence of the Yangzi and Jialing Rivers, and then we and the whole core city were treated to a stupendous, thundering, exceptional fireworks display such as none other I have ever witnessed and felt.

On the 13th, all of the Mayors, including Deputy Mayor Bussin, were taken off to dress up in 'minority nationality' dress ('Bayu Traditional Costumes') for their group photograph, a ritual found too for APEC and other such gatherings. That evening, we all crammed into the iconic Renmin Hotel, now the Chongqing People's Auditorium, for a specially designed series of vignettes and performances building on the metaphor of the

connections that a river such as the Yangzi forges between all who work and travel on and through it (overall entitled, 'The Sound of Qingling: Our Common Home'). This splendid and moving occasion included: a rustic dance with erhu music and bird-song, singing by ethnic Miao people, a Boatman's stirring work-song, a women's acrobatic group, a very colourful Chinese Opera excerpt in full costume, a dance about 'the Water of Life', a thrilling solo on 'Our Common Home', and then, to bring the evening to a rousing conclusion, the Chongqing Western Opera choir, in white gowns and black tuxedos, gave spirited voice to Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy', followed by an excited horde of little girls parading around the stage and through the audience, each holding up a sign on which the name of a particular city was emblazoned, to great sentiment and applause.

You see, the haunting, heartfelt message of this evening was simple but powerful: just as the rivers of the world meet and talk with each other, so too now the cities of the world, our common home, are meeting and talking and sharing with each other - a force for constructive change and prosperous peace.

October the 14th, the last day of the Summit, offered participants a variety of tours of Chongqing's diversity, such as to the famous 9th-11th Century Buddhist stone-carvings at Dazu, to the Three Gorges Museum, to old and new residential quarters, to the Chang'an Automobile Group's Industrial Park, and more. I myself had the opportunity to visit three universities during my stay, Beibei's Southwest University and Shapingba's Southwest University of Political Science & Law, and Sichuan International Studies University.

At the Law University, I had the great pleasure of greeting its former President, my friend Chong Ming Zhao, and to meet with the three young teachers there from Osgoode Hall Law School at my York University - Sameer Akhtar, Kathryn Culek and David Han, all enthusiastically helping Chongqing students advance in the understanding and practice of specific branches of Law.

My visit to Chongqing also alerted me to the major transformation that is underway in the higher education sector of that city, the creation of a synergistic 'University City' in Shapingba District ongoing since 2003 - perhaps comparable to Toronto's MaRS project, the concentration of Medical and Related Sciences in Toronto's core, though obviously on a larger and more diverse scale, involving the move of some eleven universities and development of associated enterprises. But my further research on that feature of the 'new' Chongqing, must await my return visit this February.

Our Sister City of Chongqing continues to pioneer and impress. To the citizens of Chongqing, then, and to all of us in this our Common planetary Home, Happy New Year, 2006!

Donate Solar Cookers to Dongwei -- a Village in Qinghai

Caroline Walker

Niangkharjia is a young Tibetan teacher whom Ruth Lor Malloy and I met in Xining, Qinghai province in July 2005. We are working with him on behalf of the CCS to donate the money given in memory of my husband and CCS founder, Norman Endicott, to a village next to his, to purchase solar "cookers".



Niangkharjia

Niangkharjia:

I have come up with two projects which, I think, are productive, effective and long-lasting. They are greenhouse and providing poor families with livestock. In terms of greenhouse, villagers can grow vegetables which they have to buy in town and the money spent on vegetables can be spent on other goods and services. Livestock, like yak and sheep, can also improve villagers' lives. Villagers can make money out of these animals. Female yak produces milk and mutton which villagers can sell. Villagers can also sell fleece from sheep.

Let me tell you about my village as an example. Xie Zhi village is situated on the top of Rschbekha Mountain in the east of Tongren County, approximately two hours walking distance from Tongren Town up and down steep mountain paths. Tongren Town is a long day's drive from Xining, onto the Tibetan Plateau. In the past, straw, wood and dung were fuels used to cook food. Xie Zhi Villagers obtained wood from a forest that is 3 hours walking distance from the village. There is little available wood there now. In addition, the local government has imposed severe restrictions on wood harvesting.

Nowadays, people who can afford it buy coal. This is a significant expense for local households. The average household yearly expense for coal is approximately 300RMB. Having solar cookers can increase household income. This imposes limits on the other goods and services that the households can purchase, e.g., paying tuition for children's school expenses, food, and access to expensive health care. In addition, some families force their children to drop out of school because they want them to spend most of their time gathering wood from distant locations. Consequently, children cannot continue their studies and remain illiterate. A solar cooker per household would be a means to boil water and perform such simple cooking tasks as boiling potatoes and cooking bread with environmentally and financially friendly solar energy. The project can reduce erosion because less organic materials will be gathered from surrounding areas.

Women's health will also be improved since they would not be trapped in smoky kitchens to boil water. Having solar cookers provides tremendous assistance to the women, because they will not have to spend the entire day in distant woods collecting firewood. Additionally, in Winter the track to the forest is icy. Women with heavy burdens of firewood on their back have slipped and rolled down the mountain, resulting in serious injuries. Finally, the introduction of appropriate new technology is significant because it suggests that positive change is possible and provides an example that nearby villages would wish to emulate.

There are 155 households in my village and all the villagers are farmers. The principal means of making a living is digging caterpillar fungus which can be sold at a high price. The majority of villagers leave their homes and go digging caterpillar fungus in high mountains in the distance, where they spend two months, from May to July, every year. The income from caterpillar fungus is absolutely necessary to cover the villagers' annual expenses which include food other than what they grow themselves, clothes, health-care, children's education and other expenses.

Unfortunately, the local governments in some places have started to impose severe restrictions on digging caterpillar fungus because digging the land causes serious erosion. Caterpillar fungus is still available in some places, but business people rent the land from the local community or government, commencing from May to July, and charge those who are there to dig caterpillar fungus. Sometimes, the diggers could not even earn the money they have paid out in advance for digging rights, for the quantity of caterpillar fungus is now very small. The small quantity, imposing restriction on digging caterpillar fungus and paying business people, are the problems diggers have to face.

Besides this, there are some more serious problems. During peoples' absence digging for caterpillar fungus, aged ones and very young children stay at home and deal with all domestic works, such as herding livestock, taking care of infants and so on.

In 2004, a house in a nearby village caught on fire. An old woman, an infant and their livestock were burnt alive. Other members of this family were far away digging caterpillar fungus. In 2003, a woman from my village was struck by thunder-bolt when she was looking for caterpillar fungus on a high mountain and she died. In 2002, a woman from another village died from a traffic accident on the way back home from digging caterpillar fungus. There are many unexpected problems. Another means of making a living is to work at construction sites.

Two families in my village have a green house and they say that they do not buy vegetables all year round and that having a green house can save a lot of money which they can then spend on other expenses. They can grow pepper, cabbages, tomatoes, carrots, beets, potatoes, lettuces and so on. A better road to my village has been completed recently and the transportation now is convenient. If villagers have green house, they can make money by selling vegetables in town. Green houses requires little maintenance and vegetables can be grown all year round. Villagers can eat fresh vegetables which can improve their health.

Niangkharjia organized a project which purchased these cookers for his village, with the money coming from the Finnish Embassy and by local households' contributions.

Yes, every household in my village has a solar-cooker which costs 160RMB. Some villages have solar-cookers which were sponsored by the government, but villagers were required to share the cost. Every household had to pay 60RMB to 70RMB as a local contribution. Compared to the contribution demanded by the government, every household in my village paid less, 15RMB as a local contribution. In addition, the quality of solar-cookers in my village is better.

There are several nearby villages without cookers. Hearing the positive comments from people in my village, villages nearby are eager to obtain cookers and willing to contribute some of the cost. I called the manager of the solar-cooker factory and he said he would charge 140 RMB for each cooker, including transportation fee. The price is less expensive than before.

The village I have identified (for which we might provide cookers) is called Dongwei village, approximately thirty minutes on foot from my village. Dongwei village has 173 households, 965 males and 486 females. The village committees are Qiaodan, Sangjiek, Xiawujia, Lengzhi and Xiawulijia. Here are some pictures of Dongwei village.



The Poorest Household.

Dongwei Village From a Nother Angle.



A solar cooker – donated by Finland



Solar cooker

Project Update: In March 2006, the project of solar cookers donation receives the green light. On the 143 cookers donated, there will be the CCS Chinese characters as well as Norman Endicott's Chinese name. If more donations are received, more cookers can be purchased.

GUILT AND SHAME IN CHINESE CULTURE

Notes on Sinology by Dr. M.P. Lau

To conform to societal norms we need standards of reference. There are externally established rules such as moral principles, legal regulations, codes of ethics, traditional customs, religious tenets, unwritten expectations. Humans are also supposed to have consciences, which form a part of character traits, which may be shared among persons or quite variable from person to person, developed during childhood upbringing by introjecting (or internalizing) family guidance, communal orientation, rational or irrational impositions and other influences. In a civilized society, the rules and values work in harmony with human resources to engender productivity and order, to deter destructive and deviant activities, to generate overall fulfillment and content. For example, tax payers follow most of the rules, and revenue legislations are fairly enacted and enforced.

However, offences and infractions do occur, and would lead to feelings of guilt and remorse and to shame when exposed. There would normally be moods of sadness and mortification, anger and blame, sometimes clinical symptoms of depression, including suicidal tendency and attempts. The problems may be resolved through various forms of atonement, contrition, self-flagellation, overt or covert compensation or retribution, professional or common-sense counseling, appeal for supernatural intervention or prevention. The issues may be contested through concealment, denial, projection, rationalization (e.g. "I am only ten per cent as corrupt as my boss) or other defense or deceptive mechanisms. The cultural and case-by-case variation would be encyclopedic in scope, and may be worthy of examination.

In feudal societies, behavior models were often constructed according to rank and status, and sustained by power differentials. Subordinates bowed to superiors and standards were set by the elite, who might or might not be humanistically inclined. Even among siblings, the eldest male had the most inheritance rights, while young daughters did not even have the autonomy to choose whom to marry. Social roles were manipulated and exploited, both upwards and downwards. What was right or wrong was subject to varying interpretation, and indoctrinated rather than rationally taught.

As we emerged from a slave society (which Chairman Mao considered a passing phase from a primeval to a modern one), we learned through trial and error, reflection and analysis, sometimes at high costs, more objective and common grounds for our ethics and ethos. These were integrated into our egos and superegos (the unconscious part of our conscience) and may form the collective psyche of a human group. Without a baseline or infrastructure of decency and self discipline, no amount of censorship or censure, legislation or moralization can put a society in order.

In societies where it is assumed that an individual has control over his or her behaviour, especially while exercising intention or planning, credit and discredit tend to be assigned to the individual, who is made to bear the consequence of his or her action. That is, one is made accountable as a result of autonomy and volition. In modern Western civilization, when something goes wrong, we look for a culprit or suspect whom we can accuse or point a finger at. We can go to extremes ("leaving no stone unturned") to get to the bottom of things, to explore and expose, to debate and attribute, in the name of "justice". We demand transparency or legalistic clarity even if we have to face the awful or unsightly. The Readers' Digest has observed that the Americans have a tremendous capacity to look at their own ugliness. They can relish gory crime stories and horror

movies and stomach descriptions of prisoner abuses, and are open to learning from misdeeds.

In classical Chinese society, premium values were set on propriety, harmony and orderliness, and expression of feeling and impulse (such as grieving, rivalry) was regulated rigidly by approved channels, forums, rituals. It would pay to appear proper, poised, disciplined, cultivated, even puritanical. Raw emotions tended to be inhibited or prohibited, and may be cloistered, with cognitive elegance, in flowery metaphors, poetry, drama, fiction. Repressed bitterness could be sublimated in folklores, including thrillers, ghost stories, sagas of hero-outlaws, while didactic decrees would be enunciated in dry, stern, platonic, desensationalized tones.

In the absence of mass media and widespread literacy, the communication of moral ideals and their transgressions depended much on words of mouth and role-modeling, especially during the formative years. Certain higher ethics were inculcated in the development of the elite (or the “gentry”), often through paternalism and authoritarianism (e.g. Confucius says, “.....”; the Buddha says, “.....”) to form the exemplary class of people called junji. A non-exemplary class called xiao-ren was often disregarded, passed over, disparaged, tolerated and not persecuted as long as they maintained an obedient outlook. Conflicts, especially physical strifes, were to be eschewed, or at least kept private, such as conversion into intrafamilial or kinship disharmonies and intrigues, as publicity and shame (failure to save face) could have more devastating consequences.

Chinese philosophy tends to underscore the relativity of values and truth, the cyclical nature of changes, the dynamics of human interactions, the inscrutability of fate and destiny. Moral lapses, trespasses, misdemeanours, iniquities are seen as mostly multifactorial, multifaceted and chain reactions beyond one person’s control. Blames can be shared, diffusive, collective, contextual, accidental, nonspecific, nondescript. Choices made could be involuntary, compelled, limited, gratuitous. There are many grey areas within the domain of guilt and shame which can be covered by charity, empathy, amnesty, forgiveness, exoneration, tolerance, mercy, grace, generosity. Donations, gifts, tributes, awards, commissions, gratuities, grafts, kickbacks, discounts, bribes can supplement or replace formal levies or revenues in certain locales. On the other hand, individuals can be deemed guilty by association or affiliation, by extrapolation or scapegoating; and penalty can be harsh and swift, such as execution of entire families (including servants and other employees) or communities by ruthless despots.

In summary, to maintain a protocol or appearance of civility, guilt and shame are often shielded from strangers and micro-managed within families or clans or otherwise privately. Judgments and correctional measures can be meted out in discretionary, flexible, arbitrary or philosophical manner. There is less preoccupation to pinpoint discrete individuals as single entities altogether culpable. However, such traditions and ethos are being challenged by increasing globalization, migration, hybridization, intercultural exchange, instant communications, forensic sciences advances. Are there lessons to be learned so that the aversion to guilt and shame can become driving forces for the advancement of humanity rather than its destruction?

Dr. M. P. Lau is a retired medical professor and specialist in psychiatry, with publications in areas of substance abuse, human sexuality and Sinology.

2005 CCS Summer Picnic at the Yuyitung Residence





Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Board of Directors of the Canadian China Society (CCS) or its members.

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