Front. Hist. China 2012, 7(4): 495–498
DOI 10.3868/s020-001-012-0029-1

FORUM

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Introduction: Remolding Chinese Society: People, Cadres, and Mass Campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s

This special issue grows out of a shared research interest in the state-building process during the formative years of the People's Republic of China (roughly defined, 1949–66) and its profound political, social, economic, and cultural consequences. Five articles in this issue demonstrate that the Communist Party of China made a great effort to mobilize different political constituents, social classes, professional groups, and cultural communities to consolidate its rule and advance its revolutionary agendas. Governing a deeply diverse and discontented society, the Party created a system of control and mobilization based on the combined mechanisms of political indoctrination, bureaucratic intervention, neighborhood surveillance, and social voluntarism. Communist rule in the 1950s and early 1960s created new cultural forms, business practices, and a new framework under which the party-state's political agenda and bureaucratic apparatus interacted with individual lives.

The first article by Christian Henriot traces the expansion of "hutments" (*penghu qu*)—shoddy constructions on the fringes of commercial and industrial districts that sheltered a mixture of lower-class people ranging from the laboring poor to refugees—in early twentieth century Shanghai, and its changing meaning in colonial, nationalist, and communist politics. He shows that, before 1949, urban administrators viewed hutments primarily as a potential threat to public order and health that needed to be eradicated. In contrast, the nascent Communist state, after some modest renovation, accepted hutments as a standard form of housing for Shanghai's rapidly growing socialist working-class. Politically, however, hutments were given a new propagandist meaning, serving as a living "condemnation of foreign imperialists and Chinese reactionaries for having left such a pitiful legacy." Di Wang and J. Brooks Jessup draw our attention to state control in the early years of the People's Republic. In his case study of the Teahouse Guild in 1950s Chengdu, Wang demonstrates that local cadres took decisive steps to undermine the guild's key functions such as representing its member's collective interests and resolving internal difference. State actions thus reduced the guild, which had incubated civic activism and social autonomy in the

late imperial and Republican periods, to a symbolic but powerless rubber-stamp institution that represented nothing but the government's policies toward the teahouse profession. In contrast, Jessup's case study of the Young Buddhist Association of Shanghai argues that state control was "transformative rather than destructive or even weakening." His article shows that the new Communist state was willing to incorporate some religious groups into the new political order. As a result, the Buddhist youth movement managed to gain some momentum under the rule of the Communist state and its avowedly atheist policies. If the Young Buddhist Association thrived in Shanghai due in large part to the state's moderate religious policy, as Joseph Tse-Hei Lee's article shows, in the same city Christians of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were condemned and suppressed but miraculously survived largely by adopting new development strategies. "The reorientation of theological concerns, the new strategies for church implantation, and the growth of autonomous church networks," Lee argues, "enabled the Adventists to transform themselves from a heavily persecuted group into a fast-growing religious movement." In the last article by Denise Y. Ho, art collectors and their cultural network in 1950s and 1960s Shanghai exhibited the same level of resilience under the onslaught of the Communist state's campaign to socialize the antiquities market. Ho shows that the Communist cultural policy sought to control the art market by building state museums, by "co-opting connoisseurs and their collections," and by punishing the trading of artwork in the private market. But these reforms were only partially successful. The network between artists and collectors, and connoisseurs' knowledge of artworks, "prevented the state from having a complete monopoly on culture."

Thematically, these five articles seek to shed new light on a number of important issues. First, they examine the transformative (or manipulative in some cases) power of political categorization and the making of revolutionary citizenship in the early years of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Political campaigns promoted many binary categories such as revolutionary vs. reactionary, progressive vs. backward, working-class vs. feudal/bourgeois, secular vs. religious, and new vs. old. These labels, on the one hand, empowered some social groups and allowed them to play an active part in the revolutionary process; on the other hand, it marginalized, demoralized, criminalized, and even demonized certain people whose political views or institutional practices did not conform to the Communist state's agenda. Political categorizations and the process to invent and apply them became a powerful but intimidating practice of inclusion or exclusion. State officials and members of the working-class either controlled or gained access to institutions that provided power and resources. In contrast, "feudal" teahouse guild leaders, "reactionary" Buddhist believers, Christians, and "profit-driven" art traders were seen by the Communist state as types that had to be rectified through education, denunciation, and incarceration.

Second, the five articles in this issue also ask how campaigns in the 1950s and early 1960s created a new socialist "mass," "mass politics," and "mass culture." How did local contexts—political organizations, culture, and business patterns—affect and shape the national movement? In light of the urban backdrop of these articles, the authors also ask how campaigns created new social, recreational, and emotional spaces in socialist-transformed cities. What was the form and content of the Communist government's vision for socialist urban spaces, and how did ordinary people and different social groups interact with this vision? These five articles illustrate that campaigns could co-opt or coerce, depending on the state's perception of a given group's revolutionary potential or political threat. Campaigns could be violent processes that attempted to drastically alter organizations and practices, even spiritual space; in some cases and for some groups, state efforts could be less disruptive, as the Communist state sought to incorporate existing groups into the socialist order. Delving into the Communist rhetoric of mobilization, these articles show that the process of mass campaigns was more nuanced and contingent upon complex local political, social, and economic conditions. People responded to the top-down pressure creatively and often redefined campaigns in their own terms.

Within China, the history of the early PRC has long been understood according to a "liberation narrative," which portrays the seventeen years from 1949 to 1966 as a period of national reconstruction, cultural rejuvenation, or simply revolution, *geming*. All three processes signify a radical and fundamental break from the war-torn, repressive Nationalist regime before 1949. Outside of China, however, the image of this period is mixed. Both eyewitness accounts and historical research tend to highlight the dark sides of the era's sweeping social changes. The five articles in this issue do not attempt to reconcile the two narratives, but seek to understand the contours of history across the 1949 divide. People before 1949 had struggled to define their careers, work, beliefs, and lives under the watch of an invasive government authority. Tensions brought by state control were not unprecedented. There is a certain degree of historical continuity in terms of social structures and practices that crossed political time and boundaries. These studies ask how a consistent vision of the modern city and modern statehood overrode political differences and ideological rivalries during the later Nationalist and early PRC periods. The articles also question how efforts to build the socialist state in the 1950s and 1960s paved the way for the drastic political movements of the Culture Revolution, which was characterized by extraordinary physical destruction, overwhelming political intimidation, and tremendous social dislocation.

Acknowledgements This special issue is a product of research collaboration and a series of panels and conferences at the annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Honolulu

and the annual meeting of the New York Conference on Asian Studies in Buffalo in 2011, and at the Historical Society for Twentieth-Century China Biennial Conference in Hangzhou in 2012. I wish to acknowledge insightful and constructive comments made by David Strand, Gail Hershatter, Andrew Mertha, Janet Chen, Antonia Finnane, Kristin Stapleton, Patrick Shan, Brian Martin, and Robert Cliver. Jin Jiang, Christopher Leighton, Juanjuan Peng, and Hajimu Masuda contributed papers to these panels and helped bring the intellectual exchange to a higher level. I also wish to thank the editors of *Frontiers of History in China* for recommending the inclusion of Christian Henriot's article in this special issue. Henriot's article not only shares the issue's overall theme of the state-building process in the 1950s and 1960s but also adds the spatial dimension that sheds light on the early socialist state's vision for urban spaces.

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