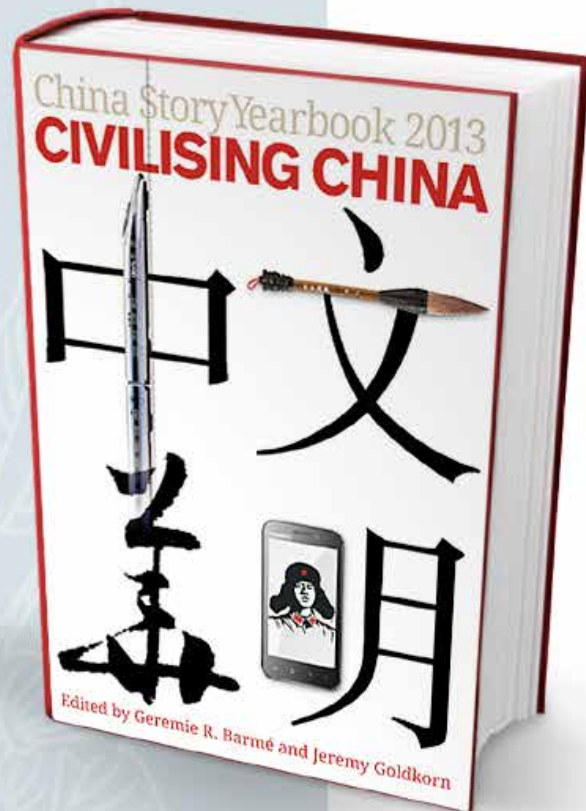


The China Story



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INTRODUCTION

ENGINEERING

CHINESE CIVILISATION

Geremie R. Barmé

Excerpt from

CHINA STORY YEARBOOK 2013

CIVILISING CHINA

文明中华

EDITED BY

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As China becomes wealthier and more confident on the global stage, it also expects to be respected and accommodated as a major global force — and as a formidable civilisation. Through a survey and analysis of China's regional posture, urban change, social activism and law, mores, the Internet, history and thought — in which the concept of 'civilising' plays a prominent role — *China Story Yearbook 2013* offers insights into the country today and its dreams for the future.



Chinese football fans, Guiyang, June 2011.
Source: ImagineChina

INTRODUCTION

Xinhua News Agency launched a nationwide photography contest asking participants to capture 'My China Dream'; numerous middle and high schools held essay contests to see which students could write most convincingly about what the China Dream meant to them. At the Pengzhai primary school in Guizhou province, Ma Lingtong's dream is to be a teacher.

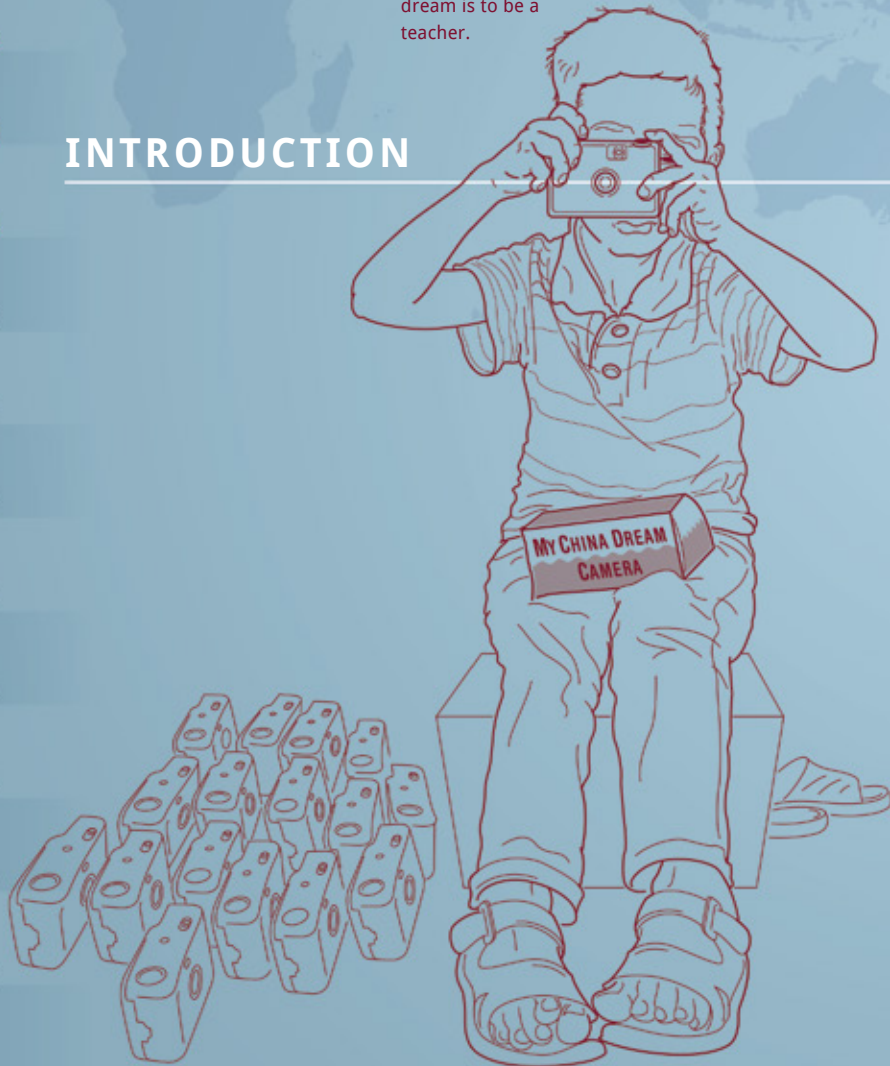
彭寨村

PENGZHAI
VILLAGE

ENGINEERING CHINESE CIVILISATION

Geremie R. Barmé

INTRODUCTION



This second China Story Yearbook covers the period during which the fifth generation of Chinese leaders took control of the Communist Party, in late 2012, and then the government of the People's Republic in early 2013. Xi Jinping became the new General Secretary of the Party and later President of the People's Republic, and Li Keqiang was appointed Premier.

In the years leading up to the 2012–2013 power transfer, Chinese thinkers, commentators and media activists speculated widely about the path the new leaders were likely to take. Many offered advice on what that should be. Some argued that the previous decade-long era under Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, although significant in many ways, had failed to confront or successfully deal with such major issues as income disparities, the environment, economic restructuring, political reform, population policy and foreign affairs. Others with a more neo-Maoist bent (whose views featured in China Story Yearbook 2012), criticised the government for what they saw as its neo-liberal agenda of rabid marketisation that, in their eyes – and for all the Communist Party's rhetoric to the contrary – betrayed the Party's traditions of frugality, following the 'Mass Line' (that is engaging with grassroots opinions and needs) and the upholding of socialist ideals.

As the new leadership took command, it became clear that it would neither lurch to the right (the more liberal end of the political spectrum)

nor return to the radical politics of the past. Instead they would continue what they celebrated as the China Way (Zhongguo daolu), which focuses on economic reforms while maintaining stern Party domination of politics and the public sphere.



A billboard promoting a Civilised Chaoyang district, with the burned out hotel of the CCTV tower in the background. The hotel was damaged by fireworks in 2009.
Photo: Jim Gourley/rudenoan

Transforming the National Character

Towards the end of May 2013, a Chinese tourist, a teenager, carved his name into the wall of the 3,500-year-old Luxor Temple in Egypt, sparking an uproar of outrage and self-reflection in China. China's new Vice-Premier, Wang Yang, was already so concerned about the harm badly behaved travellers were doing to China's image abroad that he had spoken about it publically just a few weeks earlier. According to a news report,

Ding Jinhao was Everywhere

On 24 May 2013, a Sina Weibo user named 'Independent Sky Traveler' uploaded an image he said caused him to feel shame and loss of face. A graffito reading 'Ding Jinhao was here' (*Ding Jinhao dao ci yiyou* 丁锦昊到此一游) defaced an ancient frieze at the Luxor Temple complex in Egypt.

An animated discussion on social media ensued about this vandalism, which many felt had caused all of China to lose face. Within a day angry Internet users discovered that Ding Jinhao was a fourteen-year-old boy living in Nanjing. Ding's parents apologised on his behalf and asked for forgiveness from the public. But the debate raged on; within a week the original post was forwarded almost 100,000 times and generated close to 20,000 comments expressing anger, embarrassment and deep sadness.

This came amid an explosion of Chinese outbound tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization, a UN body, Chinese tourists took ten million international trips in 2000; this grew to eighty-three million in 2012. In the wake of the incident, the *China Daily* pointed out that Chinese tourists have in recent years been associated with bad manners such as spitting and littering, damaging China's image abroad.

The issue of uncivilised behaviour – particularly graffiti – by Chinese tourists is a very common problem within China as well. A few days after the Ding Jinhao story broke, Yunnan province's *Spring City Evening News* (*Chuncheng wanbao* 春城晚报) reported on the scourge of 'Chinese-style I was here' graffiti, which it said was all over the scenic areas of Yunnan. The newspaper dispatched reporters to a range of tourist destinations, where they found evidence of 'I was here' (*dao ci yiyou* 到此一游) and other types of graffiti on old buildings, trees and bamboo, toilets and tourist facilities.

Such reports regularly appear in Chinese newspapers, often couched in a mournful tone, accompanied by soul-searching. In October 2012, Shanghai's *Youth Daily* (*Qingnian bao* 青年报) reported that some of the 200,000 visitors to the Sunflower Festival during the Golden Week holiday in Zhejiang province had vandalised row after row of the flowers by scratching smiley faces on them. After every holiday, the Chinese media reports on the mountains of garbage left behind at tourist spots, and reflects on the general lack of civility and asks what can be done.



'Ding Jinhao was here' scrawled on the ancient frieze at Luxor Temple.
Source: Sina Weibo 空游无依 @1440641483

on 16 May 2013, in the course of an official teleconference organised to promote a new tourism law:

Wang Yang emphasised that due to the popularisation of tourism among the Chinese, an increasing number of people were traveling overseas, where they are generally welcomed by the countries of the world. But some tourists display poor quality and breeding, and display uncivilised conduct such as shouting in public spaces, carving graffiti on tourist sites, crossing against the light and spitting. They're frequently criticised by the [foreign host] media, to the detriment of the image of their countrymen.

Wang Yang's solution: enhance the civilised qualities of China's citizens.

The Origins of 'I was here' Graffiti

In the classical novel *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji* 西游记), the Buddha fools the Monkey King (*Sun Wukong* 孙悟空) by promising that if he can manage to leap out of the Buddha's palm, he can occupy the Celestial Throne. The overconfident Monkey King accepts the challenge, jumps into the Buddha's palm and then does an almighty somersault, tumbling through the air for thousands of miles. Finally, coming to rest at a place where five massive pillars reach into the sky, the Monkey King promptly scratches the following characters into the middle pillar to prove he was there:



Monkey King enactment encountered in southern China.

Photo: Trey Ratcliff (Stuck in Customs)

| 老孙到此一游 (*Lao Sun dao ci yiyou* 'Old Sun was here')

The Monkey King then takes another almighty leap back where he came from, and lands back in the Buddha's palm – or so he thinks. But to his great consternation, he looks down at the bottom of the Buddha's middle finger, where he sees the characters he himself had just carved: 'Old Sun was here'. He had in fact never left the Buddha's palm, and had merely defaced the latter's middle finger.

For nearly a century, efforts to modernise Chinese society have focused on the issues of the quality (*suzhi* 素质) and level of civilisation (*wenming* 文明) of China's population.

Suzhi 素质

'*Suzhi*', 'quality' or 'human quality', is a term frequently used in defence of paternalistic rule, or what we today call the 'nanny state'. It was common during China's Republican era (1912–1949). *Suzhi* also crops up in internal debates about whether China is a civilised country. It describes a person's qualities measured in terms of behaviour, education, ethics/ambition. It is related to the concepts of 'breeding' (*jiaoyang* 教养) and 'personal cultivation' or refinement (*xiuyang* 修养). Yet it is distinct from *zhiliang* 质量, which also means 'quality', but refers to a more straightforward good-or-bad evaluation (as in food or manufactured products) and is not normally used to describe a person. People can have or lack *suzhi*, and for the narrow minded or bigoted, if a person is without *suzhi*, due to perceived innate qualities, background, appearance or personal history, nothing can be done about it.

In general, however, it is argued that a person's *suzhi* can be cultivated or trained. The concept of *suzhi jiaoyu* 素质教育 is often translated as 'quality education' but it is closer in meaning to 'moral education' or even 'a well-rounded education' (including ideological and physical education). It involves an attempt to move away from test-oriented teaching toward critical thinking, problem solving, and other analytical skills. In his work on 'quality education', the educator Yan Guocai classifies *suzhi* into eight types spanning three categories:

Natural quality (*ziran suzhi* 自然素质)

This is innate, and encompasses one's physical state (*shenti suzhi* 身体素质)

Psychological quality (*xinli suzhi* 心理素质)

This is a combination of innate and nurtured emotional and mental states

Social quality (*shehui suzhi* 社会素质)

This is nurtured, and encompasses one's political level 政治素质, intellectual ability 思想素质, moral nature 道德素质, vocational attainment 业务素质, sense of aesthetics 审美素质 and labour skills 劳技素质.

On the flip side, rudeness and bad behaviour are commonly considered marks of 'low quality'. As China's population increasingly encounters the world, the official media attacks bad behaviour and the government launches initiatives to 'enhance the quality of the nation'. The government frequently cites the 'poor quality' of the citizenry as a justification for delaying democratic reforms. This view extends beyond the official sphere: in a notorious blog post made at the close of 2011, the outspoken young blogger Han Han wrote:

Citizens of low quality [*suzhi di* 素质低] will not prevent the arrival of democracy, but will determine its future quality [*zhiliang* 质量]. No one wants Rwandan-style democracy.

Late-Qing thinkers like Liang Qichao (1873–1929) spoke too of the need to remake the national character (*guominxing* 国民性) so that China could slough off tradition and become a vibrant, modern state. During the Republican era, in 1934, the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek launched a ‘New Life Movement’ to counter the influence of Communist ideology and to correct backward aspects of traditional public behaviour; it promoted such qualities as orderliness, cleanliness, simplicity, frugality, promptness, precision, harmoniousness and dignity and was partly influenced by Chiang’s Christian beliefs. (After Chiang was baptised in 1929, foreign observers joked that there was ‘Methodism in his madness’.)

After invading China in 1937, the Japanese attempted to impose their version of modern Asian behaviour on the country. When, in the late 1940s, the Chinese Communist Party came to power, it also quickly moved to clean up the vestiges of what it called ‘feudal’ China to create a model, new, socialist People’s Republic. Meanwhile, after Chiang’s

The New Life Movement

(*Xin shenghuo yundong* 新生活運動)

Recent concerns over corruption, low morale, and the civic standards echo past anxieties. The plans of the Central Guidance Commission for the Building of Spiritual Civilisation for creating a civilised contemporary Chinese society share many of the efforts and goals outlined in the New Life Movement that Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) launched in 1934. Influenced by Chiang’s newfound Christianity and decades of missionary efforts in China, the movement aimed to regenerate the nation by ‘rectifying’ and strengthening the lives of Chinese people who had been ‘polluted’ with Communism.

The Movement promoted eight qualities: orderliness, cleanliness, simplicity, frugality, promptness, precision, harmoniousness and dignity. People were to demonstrate these virtues in the key aspects of everyday life: *shi* 食 (food/eating), *yi* 衣 (clothing or dressing), *zhu* 住 (housing/living) and *xing* 行 (behaviour/action). Aiming to ‘substitute a rational life for the irrational’, Chiang also announced a long code of behaviour based on the four cardinal Confucian virtues of *li* 禮 (propriety or decorum), *yi* 義 (uprightness or righteousness), *lian* 廉 (integrity or honesty) and *chi* 耻 (the sense of shame). Propagandists and movement activists admonished people not to spit, urinate or sneeze in public. They were to adopt good table manners and not make noises when eating. They should avoid pushing and crowding, behave in an orderly manner in public, not smoke, laugh or talk loudly on boats or buses, and observe many other detailed injunctions concerning cleanliness and polite behaviour.



Ensuring the watermelon is cut just right.
Photo: Hsing Wei

government retreated to Taiwan, campaigns to transform the citizenry continued, not always with great success, as the satirist and historian Bo Yang noted in his controversial 1985 book *The Ugly Chinaman* (*Chouloude Zhongguoren* 丑陋的中国人).

During the Maoist years (1949–1978), frequent civic campaigns aimed to transform the Chinese into a people who put the collective before the individual, production before consumption and the Party above all else. People may recall the mass destruction wreaked by the movement to ‘Destroy the Four Olds’ (*po siji* 破四旧: Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits and Old Ideas) during the first phase of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). But it is now generally forgotten that the destruction was supposed to clear the way for the people to ‘Establish the Four News’ (*li sixin* 立四新): New Customs, New Culture, New Habits and New Ideas. In other words, to create a transformed, and universally applicable, Chinese civilisation under the guiding light of Mao Zedong Thought — though the word ‘civilisation’ itself was eschewed. Meanwhile, on Taiwan, and in direct response to the Cultural Revolution on the Mainland, the authorities launched a campaign to revive Chinese culture (*Zhonghua wenhua fuxing yundong* 中華文化復興運動). It was used to promote traditional ethical norms and cultural values in ways both that harked back to the New Life Movement of the 1930s and presaged the language of revivalism that has become a feature of life on the Mainland today.

Following Mao's death in 1976 and the formal end of the Cultural Revolution with its extremist politics, civilisation began to feature in Chinese politics and public discourse once more. In his National Day speech for 1979, at the time when the Party was launching the Open Door and Reform policies, the People's Liberation Army leader Marshal Ye Jianying recalled the devastation of the Cultural Revolution years and called on the country not only to build the economy — its 'material civilisation' (*wuzhi wenming* 物质文明) — but also to reconstruct China's 'spiritual civilisation' (*jingshen wenming* 精神文明). In drawing a distinction between these two forms of civilisation, Ye's words harked back to a debate about creating modern Asian societies that had been going on for at least a century.

The Sino-Japanese word for 'civilisation', *wenming* in Chinese pronunciation and *bunmei* in Japanese, written in both cases as 文明, was coined in 1867 by the Japanese thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), who had been influenced by François Guizot's 1828 *General History of Civilisation in Europe*. Fukuzawa elaborated on the concept in his book *An Outline of the Theory of Civilization*:

Anti-spitting Campaigns

There have been numerous unsuccessful attempts to eliminate spitting in public (*suidi tutan* 随地吐痰) in the name of civilisation and modernity, and not only at the time of the New Life

Movement in the 1930s. Anti-spitting campaigns proliferated in the 1950s. Deng Xiaoping again attacked 'this unhealthy habit' in the 1980s. Beijing held public education events on the subject before the 2008 Olympics, and the city of Shenyang in the northeastern Liaoning province sponsored its own anti-spitting campaigns in 2010 and 2012.

There are parallels between the early twentieth-century efforts to stop bad habits and step out of 'backwardness' and many twenty-first-century national and provincial campaigns to promote etiquette and manners. For example, in preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the eleventh day of each month was proclaimed 'Queuing Day' (*paidui* 排队日), and government employees marshalled people who were not used to lining up for anything to queue in an orderly fashion. In 2009, reviving a formula first introduced in 1995, Shanghai launched a 'Seven Nos' campaign that prohibited spitting, littering, vandalism, damaging greenery, jaywalking, smoking in public places and swearing. Also, before the opening of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, officials distributed booklets on one hundred ways to improve manners as part of the 'Let's Become Lovely Shanghainese' campaign.



Anti-spitting sign in Shanghai.

Photo: R. Reichle

What, then, does civilization mean? I say that it refers to the attainment of *both* material well-being and the elevation of the human spirit. It means both abundance of daily necessities and esteem for human refinement. Is it civilization if only the former is fulfilled? The goal of life does not lie in food and clothes alone. If that were man's goal, he would be no different from an ant or a bee. This cannot be what Heaven has intended for man. ...[T]here must be both material and spiritual aspects before one can call it civilization.

While it carries this historical and philosophical baggage, in common parlance, *wenming* is often used in a sense that is more akin to the concept of 'civility' or 'decorum'. It is this sense that is summoned by the frequent civic campaigns against 'uncivilised behavior' (*buwenming xingwei* 不文明行为) like spitting, littering, jaywalking, loitering and treading on the grass.

Constructing Socialist Civilisation

Deng Xiaoping, the paramount leader and acclaimed 'general engineer' (*zong gongchengshi* 总工程师) of China's post-1978, post-Cultural Revolution Reform era, described spiritual civilisation as encompassing education, science, culture, communist ideology, morality, a revolutionary attitude and other abstract ideas. He warned against the dangers of 'spiritual pollution' (*jingshen wuran* 精神污染), including dangerous ideas from the West ('flies and mosquitoes' that would come in through China's Open Door) and, in 1983, unleashed a nationwide campaign against it. At the same time, the authorities promoted 'Five Behavioural Standards, Four Points of Beauty' (*wu jiang si mei* 五讲四美), with 'civility' (*jiang wenming* 讲文明) as the very first standard, defined to include courtesies such as saying 'please' and 'thank you' that had fallen out of use in the Mao era when such niceties were denigrated as bourgeois.

The authorities regarded the reintroduction of the concept of civility as crucially important for the rebuilding of public life following the long years of political infighting, fear-mongering campaigns and general brutishness. Fears that the Anti-Spiritual Pollution campaign could revive political stridency into Chinese life and possibly stifle nascent economic reforms led to leaders cutting the purge short, but the long tail of ideological rectitude and anti-Western attitudes continued to have an influence in subsequent campaigns (the 1987 attack on 'bourgeois liberalisations' and the post-4 June 1989 purge of dissidents), and do so to this day.

The Party Central Committee incorporated the new long-term campaign to promote party-ordained social principles into its 1986 'Resolution on Guiding Principles for Building a Socialist Society with Spiritual Civilisation' (*Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu shehuizhuyi jingshen wenming jianshe zhidao fangzhende jueyi* 中共中央关于社会主义精神文明建设指导方针的决议). This campaign would unfold in tandem with a gradual revival of traditional, conservative social values and authoritarian politics, creating the ideological bedrock of contemporary China.

In 1997, the Party established a Central Guidance Commission for Building Spiritual Civilisation (*Zhongyang jingshen wenming jianshe zhi-*

Learning Etiquette



Beijing School of Etiquette.
Photo: Sara Jane Ho

In early 2013, Hong Kong native and Harvard Business School graduate Sara Jane Ho established a Beijing School of Etiquette to teach Chinese good 'international' manners, charging US\$3,200-16,000 for classes. There are also less expensive avenues for acquiring social graces. China's Ministry of Education recently devised an etiquette curriculum for Chinese students. Lessons for younger schoolchildren cover good table manners and how to show respect for one's elders. Older students will learn about interacting politely with members of the opposite sex, introducing themselves to strangers as well as basic principles for dealing with foreigners. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also published volumes devoted to appropriate ways to interact with foreigners, whether in China or abroad.

dao weiyuanhui 中央精神文明建设指导委员会), the activities of which feature throughout this *Yearbook*. Its operational arm, the Central Office of Spiritual Civilisation (known as *Zhongyang wenming bangongshi* 中央文明办办公室), is typically headed up by a deputy director of the Party's Central Publicity Department (in less media-savvy times known in English as the Central Propaganda Department). In April 2006, China's major state-run news portals released a joint 'Proposal for a Civilised Internet' (*Wenming banwang changyishu* 文明办网倡议书) in which they pledged to promote 'mainstream values' and cultivate a 'healthy online environment'. They took President Hu Jintao's 'Eight Honours and Eight Shames' (*ba rong ba chi* 八荣八耻) as their guiding principles, which were also heavily promoted by the Office of Spiritual Civilisation.

In 2007, the Commission launched a national campaign to 'Welcome the Olympics, Promote Civility, and Create a Favourable Social Environment' (*ying Aoyun jiang wenming shu xinfeng* 迎奥运 讲文明 树新风), and it continues to promote both national and local good behavior campaigns. The Office sponsors the Civilised Cities (*wenming chengshi* 文明城市) project, which assesses cities based on a wide range of 'civilised' criteria. Civilisation has traditionally been so closely identified with cities that there are now initiatives to 'send civilisation to the countryside' (*wenming xia xiang* 文明下乡), involving technological and medical assistance as well as culture and entertainment for people living in rural areas.

The Party has championed other aspects of civilisation in the wake of its Eighteenth Party Congress in 2012, turning the phrase 'ecological civilisation' (*shengtai wenming* 生态文明), for example, into an environmental buzzword. With the advent of the new leadership, a 'civilising' austerity drive was launched as well. This time around calls to fight against widespread corruption were linked to the viability of the Communist Party and the army itself and they were accompanied by dire warnings that if the cancer was not cut out, or severely limited, the People's Republic would be facing an existential crisis.

Frugality as Civilised Behaviour

Close on the heels of Xi Jinping's calls to limit lavish government spending and corruption came a 'civilised dining table' (*wenming canzhuo* 文明餐桌) initiative to discourage over-ordering and encourage diners to clean their plates. Xi himself is said regularly to request meals consisting of a meagre 'four dishes and one soup course'.

The expression 'four dishes and one soup' (*si cai yi tang* 四菜一汤) has been in common bureaucratic parlance since the fourteenth century when the founding ruler of the Ming dynasty, the Hongwu emperor (Zhu Yuanzhang, 1328–1398), decided to do something about the excessive winning and dining among his own officials. In the early years of the Communist Party's Reform era, much too was made of limiting official meals to 'four dishes and one soup course'.

In fact, drives for frugality date back to the Party's days in Yan'an in the early 1940s. Yet due to a lack of independent supervision and sustained political will, they usually peter out after a suitable interval. None-

theless, Xi Jinping has made a point of attempting to reconcile the economic boom generated by the Reform policies with the Communist values of plain-living and frugality championed in the early years of the People's Republic under Mao. After coming to power, the new Party General Secretary signalled his intention to honour both the legacy of what is known as the Maoist 'first three decades' of the People's Republic (1949–1978) and that of the 'second three decades' of the Reform era (1978–2008) by retracing Deng Xiaoping's 1992 Southern Tour and then, half a year later, visiting Xibaipo, Hebei province, the last way station of the Communist Party under Mao as it prepared to move on Beijing in 1948.

The German sociologist Norbert Elias famously noted in his work on 'the civilising process' that curbing and guiding social behaviour is regarded by many as a mark of 'civilisation', which may be defined as the opposite of barbarity. In January 2013, Xi Jinping himself said it was necessary to 'keep power restricted in a cage of regulations' (*ba quanli guanjin*



Dongguan Times reporting on Xi Jinping's Southern Tour, 12 December 2012.
Source: DgTime.timedg.com

Xi Jinping's Southern Tour and Xibaipo

From 7 to 11 December 2012, newly installed Party General Secretary Xi Jinping embarked on a 'Southern Tour' (*nan xun* 南巡), evoking an imperial tradition started by Qing-dynasty emperor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722), whose first Southern Tour took him to Suzhou and Jiangning (now Nanjing) in Jiangsu province in 1684. Xi's trip was an explicit reference to a more recent Southern Tour. By stopping in Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan and Guangzhou, he revisited the sites of Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour of 1992. That tour, following the military crackdown on public protest in 1989, was devised to rebut conservative elements within the Party who sought a return to a planned economy and to build consensus on expanding market-based economic reforms. It was intended to deliver

the message, as described in a popular saying often misattributed to Deng himself, that 'to get rich is glorious' (*zhifu guangrong* 致富光荣). By most accounts, Xi Jinping undertook his trip with similar goals: to affirm his commitment to the further privatisation of public enterprise as well as to the continued role of foreign investment and market reform in the Chinese economy. He also emphasised the need to fight corruption within the Party.

On 11 July 2013, Xi visited Xibaipo, Hebei province, a place symbolising the Communist Party's pre-1978 leftist ideals. Xibaipo was the final base of the Red Army before it occupied the former imperial capital Beijing in late 1948. It was also where Mao Zedong finalised the process of 'land reform' (the often violently enforced redistribution of land previously held by wealthy, or relatively wealthy landholders to the peasantry) by issuing his 'Principles of Chinese Land Law' (*Zhongguo tudifa dagang* 中国土地法大纲).

Rebuilt after flooding during construction of the Gangnan Reservoir (*Gangnan shuiku* 岗南水库), Xibaipo is now a 'Red holy site' (*hongse shengdi* 红色圣地), a popular destination for 'Red tourism' (*hongse luyou* 红色旅游). Here, Xi gave a speech declaring 'we must never allow the Party to change its essence nor allow the Red of our mountains and lakes to fade' (*shi womende dang yongyuan bu bianzhi, womende hongse jiangshan yongyuan bu bianse* 使我们的党永远不变质、我们的红色江山永远不变色).

zhidude longzili 把权力关进制度的笼子里) adding this to his Eight-point Code (*Baxiang guiding* 八项规定) of official conduct. To many this sounded like a formula for even greater amounts of red tape and bureaucracy. Although the anti-corruption push was a feature of Xi's first year in power (and reached a high-water mark in late August 2013 with the trial of Bo Xilai, the Party Secretary of Chongqing and rising star until his ouster in March 2012), there was little indication from the new leader about how he might address the longstanding dilemma of one-party rule: in the absence of a free press, how effectively can a ruling party operating above the courts and parliament police itself? To date, Xi Jinping's answer has been to reinspire the Party (and nation) through greater attention to ideology, instituting stricter controls on its members and emphasising its positive Maoist traditions related to social welfare and populist politics.

During the December 2012 meeting of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party, the body entrusted with guarding the operational purity of the Party, the official Han Henglin said that the Party should try harder to win public trust. For months party leaders and writers had been warning that overly rapid reform could hasten the collapse of the political status quo. Han referred to the nervous speculation that China was facing a crisis of political confidence. The official media reported on Han's remarks:

'A recent report shows that the public's trust in the Party and the government has fallen to a critical level.'

Han said he had read *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59), a book recommended by commission secretary Wang Qishan. The book analyzes French society before the revolution of 1789.

'The book showed that the revolution was caused by a collapse of public trust.'

Civilising China and Civilising the World



South China International Materials City, Pinghu, Shenzhen.
Photo: Robert S. Donovan

Since the late nineteenth century, efforts to create modern societies in East Asia have involved redefining 'civilisation' itself and imposing new ideas on old cultures. Of course, the project of 'civilisation' is not unique to the region. Worldwide, governments, businesses and educators have long tried to mould the economic, social and political behaviours of their citizens (or consumers, sometimes blending the two concepts). The Chinese Communist Party may be tireless in using the expression 'civilisation' within China to promote improved civic standards and limit dissent (perceived as harmful to society), but as the country becomes wealthier and more confident on the global stage, China also desires to be respected and accommodated as a major global force — and civilisation. In this, we hear echoes of the past.

POLITICAL KEYWORDS OF 2012

In December 2012, the official Xinhua News Agency published a list of what it called 'Keywords in China's Sociopolitical Landscape 2012':

Changeover of Personnel

(*huanjie* 换届)

This refers to the institution of a system for replacing party and state officials, with special reference to the Eighteenth Party Congress and the turnover in personnel. Its use emphasises the implementation of regularised political procedures in the Communist Party.

The China Dream: the way determines fate

(*Zhongguomeng: daolu jue ding mingyun* 中国梦: 道路决定命运)

The China Dream is Xi Jinping's signature (although not new) formulation. It draws on aspirational statements made during and after the Eighteenth Party Congress by President Xi and others as part of the 'great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation'.

Systematisation: enacting laws for the People

(*zhiduhua: li fa wei min* 制度化: 立法为民)

Xinhua noted that 2012 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the China's 1982 Constitution. It further says (in the original English) that: 'China has continued up to today with the legal concept of scientific development'.

'Are You Happy?'

(*xingfu: zhe shi yige zhen mingti 'ni xingfu ma?' 幸福: 这是一个真命题 '你幸福吗?'*)

According to Xinhua, this question flows from an increased focus at the Eighteenth Party Congress on people's livelihoods, the provision of medical care, the development of a social safety net, social pension insurance, and so on.

Pure and Clean: taking it to a new level

(*'chunjiexing': tizhi xin gaodu* '纯洁性': 提至新高度)

Another signature Xi political formulation; as Xinhua put it, this consists of 'a renewed emphasis on anti-corruption and purity in the Party'.

Dynastic China was one of the world's greatest ancient civilisations, with deeply embedded cultural norms and unique forms of social organisation. As the historian Wang Gungwu recently remarked on Chinese ideas of universal values and the revival of the traditional concept of *Tianxia* 天下, 'All-Under-Heaven':

Empires stand for conquest, dominance and control, although the degree of actual control may vary from one empire to the next. *Tianxia*, in contrast, depicts an enlightened realm that Confucian thinkers and mandarins raised to one of universal values that determined who was civilized and who was not. It is not easy to separate *tianxia* from the Chinese idea of empire because *tianxia* was also used to describe the

foundation of the Qin-Han empire. By itself, *tianxia* was an abstract notion embodying the idea of a superior moral authority that guided behavior in a civilized world. The concept could be loosely applied to other universal systems of ideas, even those derived from secular philosophies or from various religions, for example Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. When secular, it could refer to recognized authority that has been legitimized to check and moderate state violence and political and military dominance. When applied to religion, it could highlight the underlying moral values behind acts of faith.

China's growing wealth is having a profound impact on the world. This takes many forms, from large-scale investment in Africa and Latin America to the global reach of Chinese tourists, to the changing consumption patterns of wealthy Chinese who are becoming world leaders in the market for luxury goods, be they cars, clothes or speciality products. As Chinese consumers acquire global tastes, they will potentially fashion and change what those tastes are: a recent Australian documentary, *Red Obsession*, shows, for example, how increasing demand in China for Bordeaux wines is influencing the fate of the famous French wine-growing region. Just as the policies of the People's Republic challenge the political and economic status quo of the post-WWII order, so do the actions of Chinese producers and consumers.

At home, the Chinese Communist Party describes its transformation of society in the language of Marxism-Leninism: a socialist values system, nationwide civilised city campaigns and the new socialist village movement that would transform the rural environment along urban lines. It also promotes usefully rejigged elements of China's political, historical and cultural heritage. Internationally, it insists on global acceptance of its particular interpretation of China's ancient culture as well as the historical narrative that the Communist Party rescued China from a political and economic decline that began in the nineteenth century and for which both Western and later Japanese imperialism must take a significant share of the responsibility. Both at home and abroad, its outlook is informed by a combination of insist-

ence on the legitimacy of its one-party system, hybrid economic practices and the ethos of state-directed wealth creation.

Wang Gungwu points out the paradox at the heart of China's renewed interest in civilisation:

Since the 1980s ... there have been two remarkable developments. There has been an avalanche of new books and essays to renew enthusiasm about Chinese culture and civilization. Underlying this stress on civilization is also an interest in the idea of *tianxia*. This is occurring in the midst of calls for a new patriotism that can be seen in efforts to arouse nationalist fervour. Some such calls are linked with the commitment to reunification with Taiwan, an echo of *tianxia yitong* [天下一统] but they are actually appeals to the modern idea of national sovereignty. However, there is more to that. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Chinese scholars have been divided between those who have renewed their Marxist interest in the capitalist roots of empire and think that empire is now disguised as globalization, and those who reject narrow definitions of the nation-state and would like the Chinese multinational republic to re-discover the ideals of shared universal values in the idea of *tianxia*.

The government of the People's Republic of China reasonably believes that the norms and behaviours of the dominant economic powers should not be regarded as the sole global standard; it argues that those of emerging (or in its case re-emerging) nations like itself are equally important. Accommodating to (official) Chinese views, standards and interpretations, therefore, broadens and enriches the existing global order and challenges it at the same time.

The old order, as represented by such Western capitalist democracies as the US, Canada, the UK, Europe and Australia, may stand in awe of China's economic prowess. Yet state socialism and its authoritarian politics are anathema to its own concepts of civilisation. The Communist Party's ongoing efforts to redefine and refine Chinese civilisation, to promote *wenming*

Zhonghua 文明中华, literally a civilised China, and the notion of sagacious one-party rule as an integral part of this civilising process is thus of great importance and interest to the world at large — not to mention other parts of the Sinosphere, such as Taiwan, which holds competing notions of Chinese civilisation and the role of the Communist Party in its promotion.

The China Story Yearbook

The *China Story Yearbook* is a project initiated by the Australian Centre on China in the World (CIW) at The Australian National University (ANU). It is part of an enterprise aimed at understanding what we call The China Story (*Zhongguode gushi* 中国的故事), both as portrayed by official China and from various other perspectives. CIW is a Commonwealth Government–ANU initiative that was announced by then Australian Prime Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP, in April 2010 on the occasion of the Seventieth George E. Morrison Lecture at ANU. The Centre was created to allow for a more holistic approach to the study of contemporary China — one that considers the forces, personalities and ideas at work in China when attempting to understand any major aspect of its sociopolitical or cultural reality. The Centre encourages such an approach by supporting humanities-led research that engages actively with the social sciences. The resulting admix has, we believe, both public policy relevance and value for the engaged public.

Most of the scholars and writers whose work features in *Civilising China* are members of or associated with CIW. They survey China's regional posture, urban change, politics, social activism and law, economics, the Internet, cultural mores, history and thought. Their contributions cover the years 2012–2013, updated to September 2013; they offer an informed perspective on recent developments in China and what these may mean for the future. *Civilising China* provides a context for understanding the ongoing issues of modern China, issues that will resonate far beyond the year they describe.

The *China Story Yearbook* is produced in collaboration with the Danwei Media Group in Beijing, a research organisation that has been collecting and collating Internet and media information in and on China for CIW and this project since 2010. The chapters are arranged thematically and they are interspersed with Information Windows that highlight particular words, issues, ideas, statistics, people and events. Forums, or ‘interstices’, provide discussions on relations between the polities on either side of the Taiwan Straits, on top ten lists and official Chinese views on China’s achievements, as well as issues of social, political and cultural interest. The list of People and Personalities and the Chronology at the end of the volume provide an easy reference for words, peoples and events featured in the body of the text. Footnotes and the CIW–Danwei Archive of source materials are available online at: thechinastory.org/yearbook/dossier/.

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The Cover Image

The cover features four Chinese characters, read from the top right-hand corner, top to bottom. The character *wen* 文 (‘pattern’, ‘design’, ‘the written’) features a writing brush; the word *ming* 明 (‘bright’, ‘illuminated’) contains a Huawei mobile phone with an iconic image of the model People’s Liberation Army (PLA) soldier Lei Feng on its screen (the fiftieth ‘Learn from Lei Feng Day’ was celebrated on 5 March 2013). Together these words

form *wenming*, ‘civilised’ or ‘civilisation’. The main vertical stroke of the next character, *zhong* 中 (‘central’, ‘middle’, ‘China’), features a high-speed train, while the word *hua* 华 (‘flourishing’, ‘embellished’, ‘China’) is in the calligraphic hand of the Tang-dynasty monk Huaisu (725–799CE). It is taken from a ‘grass-script’ version of the *Thousand-character Classic* (*Qianziwen* 千字文) written in the last year of the monk’s life.



Cover of China Story Yearbook 2013 with calligraphy of Tang-dynasty monk Huaisu (怀素 725–799 CE).
Artwork: Markuz Wernli

