

ChinaSource

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Perspectives and analysis for those who serve China

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Looking Back to Look Forward: A Decade of ChinaSource

With this issue, the *ChinaSource* journal completes eleven years of bringing our readers cutting-edge articles that provide insight, analysis and perspective on a rapidly changing China. In this issue, we take a second look at some of the themes addressed.

There have been foundational articles such as Kay Danielson's "Seeing China through the Lenses of History" and Huo Shui's "Living Wisely in China," included here, which are applicable for anyone going to China at any time. Other past articles have dealt with issues pertinent at a specific time but that are now part of recent history. Some of our most recent journals have covered themes that are becoming more apparent as concerns that must be addressed.

For this issue, in addition to the two foundational articles, we have chosen articles with themes that we believe have high significance for those currently serving in China: the urgent need of training Mainland Chinese to serve as cross-cultural workers; the challenges brought by Chinese scholars returning home; and an update on China's growing urban church that is taking a variety of forms. In addition, we introduce you to the new ChinaSource web site and recommend the 2010 Prayer Calendar.

Throughout the years, ChinaSource has provided a variety of resources designed to aid and enhance your China service. As one of those resources, the *ChinaSource* journal, now available in print format, as a pdf file or an online edition, is committed to continuing to bring you timely, thoughtful and excellent articles.

—Julia Grosser, Managing Editor

ChinaSource serves the international faith-based community by identifying critical issues, formulating strategies, convening resources and evaluating results for the promotion of responsible and effective service in China.

The purpose of the **ChinaSource** journal is to provide up-to-date and accurate analysis of the issues and opportunities facing Christians involved in China service and to provide a forum for exchanging viewpoints and discussing strategies. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of ChinaSource or its cooperating agencies.

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These Next Ten Years

Brent Fulton, Editor

In this issue of *ChinaSource*, we pause to look back at some enduring themes of the past decade as we consider the challenges that lie ahead in the next. Unlike China of the late 1990s, still a question mark in the minds of much of the watching world, China today is a bold exclamation point punctuating the headlines of seemingly every news story, from global finance to global warming, international sport, fashion, culture and everything else in between. In the wake of the global economic crisis, the world's other major powers have acknowledged their interdependence upon the nation whose stewardship of its vast foreign exchange reserves and growing economic clout profoundly influences their own futures.

L. K. Chiu, whose 2006 article is reproduced in this issue, pointed out that interdependence is not merely a factor in the socioeconomic or political spheres. Quoting globalization author Thomas Friedman, Chiu asserted, "The world is flat." In other words, we are in a new world, and we are desperately in need of a new paradigm." Chiu went on to challenge leaders around the globe "to think intentionally and creatively so that partnerships and interfaces for global missions between the East and West, and the First-World and Two-Thirds World can be built."

When *ChinaSource* began publication more than a decade ago, the majority of those who had come from overseas to serve were concentrated in minority areas or on campuses in China's major cities. Massive urbanization—never mind the emergence of a vibrant urban professional church—was still more of an abstract concept than an everyday reality. The book *Back to Jerusalem* had not yet galvanized overseas interest in China's emerging mis-

sions force. And, while much attention was being given to nurturing those from China who had come to faith in the West—many in the wake of Tiananmen—there was little thought of what would happen when, and if, they began to return in significant numbers.

Today an increasingly influential urban church, the gradual but steady momentum toward equipping and sending cross-cultural workers from China, and the growing role of the *hai gui*, or returnees, are among the more significant factors defining the landscape for those who come to live and serve in China.

A common thread running through these emerging issues is the need for greater integration of resources and relationships as those from outside China partner with indigenous leaders. To borrow another concept from Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*, a prominent feature of globalization is the emergence of supply chains that may encompass several countries. Multiple companies come together in a seamless process, each producing components for a finished product that no one company could produce by itself. This specialization coupled with integration allows suppliers to focus on what they do best, while all contributing toward something that is greater than the sum of its individual parts.

In much the same way, effectively addressing the multifaceted needs of the city or facilitating a returnee's successful transition back to China requires that we think in terms of "value chains" that entail a new level of cooperation across organizations and between East and West. In the case of ensuring that believing students continue in their walk following graduation, for

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China Partner

A Piece of the Puzzle

Training Mainland Chinese to be Cross-cultural Missionaries

L. K. Chiu

Among all debates and controversies about the Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) phenomenon, the issue of training Chinese missionaries seems to have fallen on the sidelines. More attention has been given to issues such as the controversial number of 100,000 missionaries, abuse of the genuine grass-root missionary spirit, and who has the right to represent BTJ. Despite the legitimacy of all these concerns, training—a critical component that determines the outcome of missions—has not been given enough attention.

One of the reasons for the lack of debate or discussion on training Chinese cross-cultural missionaries is that there is almost no dispute over the prevailing need for training. In fact, regardless of the kind of China work one is participating in, training in different forms is always involved. Therefore, when heated discussions of BTJ began to emerge, the issue of training simply was not perceived as an area of concern—it is just a matter of doing it. Sadly, it is exactly this kind of take-it-for-granted mentality that ultimately deprives us of the opportunity for a thorough treatment of this issue of such immense importance. Although it is undeniable that some of

the discussions of BTJ have led to futile debates, it is also true that constructive discussions have helped capture the imaginations of the Christian community worldwide and bring the vision to a higher level of understanding as well as appreciation. It is my prayer that constructive, sensible and thorough discussions over the issue of training will emerge. As a result, effective training that is catered to the needs of Chinese missionaries will become available.

The Need for Training

The question of the need for focused missionary training is still arguable for many people. Some mission agencies do

not even put appropriate training as a requirement for candidacy. When house churches in China began to send evangelists to the minority peoples, passion and vision were the major requirements for selecting and sending their young missionaries. Some churches may prefer general theological and biblical training, but they are still far from providing the knowledge and skills that are necessary for effective cross-cultural mission work. Others may see the importance of training but have to give in to the reality of inadequate resources and reduce training to a minimum. There is a missionary training center in Asia which used to provide a two year training pro-

gram when it first started, but today the training has been reduced to three months. The current director, a career missionary who spent over twenty years in one of the Muslim countries in Asia, lamented the fact that the current training is more like a survival skill program. With tears running down his face, this faithful servant of God shared how painful it was to even think of the many mistakes he made during his missionary work back then and how much he wished he could help the trainees to be better equipped to avoid those mistakes in the future.¹

The trainees are like merchandise on a production line, each coming and going in three months' time. Most unfortunate is that they are expected by their

aged because of a lack of training, on-field pastoral support, and a lack of finance.²

Attrition is not just a Third-World missionary problem; it is universal. It seems that the lack of training is almost always one of the major factors that contribute to this problem. If there is one thing that the Chinese churches should learn from their Latin American brothers and sisters about world missions, it should be the importance of training.

Not too long ago, I met with a brother in Beijing who shared with me his missionary expedition. This young man was sent by his church network as a missionary to Tibet with only a one-way ticket in his pocket and a heart full of passion and love towards the people.

before heading to the mission field again! When I prayed with this couple in that little hotel room, I felt I had a glimpse of the spirit of resilience and steadfastness that carried the house churches through all those years of persecutions and hardships. At that moment, the room became a sanctuary and prayer turned to worship!

I have no doubt that many of the house churches in China are committed to global missions. I believe with all my heart that God is going to use the Chinese to play a part in his master plan of world evangelization. However, let us be vigilant and stand in solidarity with the churches in China by partnering with them in preparing well-trained cross-cultural missionaries. I think Denis Lane's observation says it all when he writes about training missionaries for the Two-Thirds World:

In the past when we had no alternative but to go in our ignorance and in the strength and power of the Lord, God honored those who would launch out. Their sense of call and commission was incredibly strong, strong enough to overcome disease, loss of wife and family, persecution, learning a language with no help at all and starting from scratch in a highly hostile environment. There may be some places left where such ministry is called for, but by and large today's world is totally different. We do not bring honor to the Lord by launching out in naivety, when means of preparation are available to us. God's work calls for the best preparation.³

The Challenge of Training

Understanding the need for appropriate and adequate training is one thing; actually doing it is another! Anyone who is directly involved in this endeavor knows very well that there are a lot of challenges. They range from the background of trainees to the lack of qualified trainers and adequate Chinese training materials. Just think of how great a task it is to turn a junior high level trainee who is monocultural (having no, or very little, exposure to other languages, worldviews and culture) with few career skills into a mature tent-making missionary. He or she is expected to live and think cross-culturally and missiologically in a highly hostile environment.

→ **Just think** of how great a task it is to turn a junior high level trainee who is monocultural with few career skills into a mature tent-making missionary.

churches and mission agencies to be effective and productive once they have finished the training and land on the mission field! It has always puzzled me when pondering the fact that if Jesus spent three years training his twelve disciples to become church planters and missionaries (not to mention that one fell through the program and became a traitor), what makes us think that we can do a better job by finishing the training in three months' time?

When missions expert, Stan Guthrie, studies the emerging non-Western mission's movement, he writes about the alarming rate of attrition among Third-World missionaries:

During the Brazilian National Missions Congress in October 1993, participants were stunned to hear that of the 5,400 missionaries sent out in the previous five years, the vast majority had returned within a year. Worse, about ninety percent of the returnees did not go back. A Columbian missions leader has estimated that forty percent of all Latin American missionaries return from their assignments early and discour-

He spent almost a year there without prior training or support of any sort, and very soon he found himself begging for food on the streets of Lhasa in order to stay alive. This is just one of many sad stories in the recent history of missionary endeavors among the house churches in China. In my personal interactions with different house church network leaders, I can testify that a situation like this is definitely not intentional; rather, it is a painful reality when facing the lack of resources and expertise for cross-cultural missionary training.

In spite of all the problems, the story of this young missionary to Tibet has a happy ending; the experience did not crush his spirit nor alter his calling. He was more committed to cross-cultural missions than ever before. When I met with him again about a year later in Henan (he went back home after the ordeal in Tibet), he had brought with him a young lady who is also committed to missions. They wanted to get married and receive training together

The lack of qualified trainers makes it even harder. There are few experienced cross-cultural missionaries who understand the Mainland Chinese culture, have the ability to communicate in fluent “Mainland Mandarin” and are also capable of teaching and mentoring. Even when we have the right trainers, it is hard to find training materials in the Chinese language. The most comprehensive Chinese bibliography on missions in the world is about to be finished, thanks to the hard work of several mission leaders in Hong Kong. We learn from the book list that there are only a few more than four hundred titles of mission books in the Chinese Christian world. Many of these are testimonies, translated works and printed in traditional Chinese characters. There are not many Chinese books available that are really about mission strategy, anthropological and cultural studies or even the history or theology of missions. It is quite depressing for any trainer who wants to teach this subject of cross-cultural missions, particularly when it is so difficult to find appropriate materials. The reality is that when we look at the issue from the larger Chinese context, the whole infrastructure of global missions that includes missiological teaching, writing and research is still under construction.

The undertaking of the project of training is massive. Just naming a few challenges is enough for us to see the immense magnitude of it. Though it is like an uphill battle, it is also a battle we cannot afford to lose. No one has all the answers to these problems. The Chinese saying of “finding rocks to step on while crossing a stream” captures the essence of the current situation well. It is a path that no one has ever taken, and the things that many of us are doing now are just “finding rocks to step on.” Just as the Chinese word for crisis is made up of “danger” and “opportunity,” I believe that if we are willing to commit ourselves strategically to training, give enough time and patience to prepare the Chinese church at-large, utilize wisely our

unique Chinese culture and status around the world, engage the wealth of resources among the worldwide Chinese Christian community, then we should be able to rise above the challenge and seize the opportunity of bringing glory to the *Missio Dei*.

Are We Ready?

There is a frequently raised question: “Is the church in China ready for global missions?” I always answer by saying that the issue is not whether the church in China is ready, but whether the worldwide Christian community is ready to embrace this new missionary movement. Likewise, on a worldwide scale, the question is not if China is ready for her economic and political development, but if the global community is ready to receive her as a partner and a friend. Thomas Friedman states, “The world is flat.” In other words, we are in a new world, and we are desperately in need of a new paradigm. This is true of the socioeconomical and political worlds as well as the world of missions. One of the challenges to mission leaders around the globe is the capacity to think intentionally and creatively so that partnerships and interfaces for global missions between the East and West, and the First-World and Two-Thirds World can be built. I believe that one of the starting points to engage in such an endeavor is to respond to the need for training a new generation of global workers.

Endnotes

1. This is a first hand experience from the writer’s personal visit and interview.
2. Stan Guthrie, “Looking under the hood of the non-Western missions movement,” *EMQ*, January 1995, p. 92.
3. Denis Lane, *Tuning God’s New Instruments: A Handbook for Missions from the Two-Thirds World* (World Evangelical Fellowship: 1990), p. 31.

L. K. Chiu is involved in training mainland Chinese for cross-cultural Christian service as well as pastoring a local church in North America. © 2006 by L. K. Chiu. Reprinted from ChinaSource, Spring 2006, Vol. 8, No. 1. ■

INTERCESSORY notes

please pray

1. For those involved in developing and maintaining the ChinaSource resources: the new website; the monthly ChinaSource Online bulletin; the *ChinaSource* journal; research papers and others. Pray that these resources will be useful and effective for those using them.
2. For a Chinese language newsletter, now in development, designed for Chinese churches and organizations in Asia and North America to be published by ChinaSource.
3. That matching grants that will allow ChinaSource to carry on various projects and initiatives will be complete by the end of the year.
4. That the church in China will be a good steward of its resources, not only financial but the gifted, talented people from all walks of life who are within the church and will influence others as a result of their positions in society.
5. That all those involved in China service, both Chinese and those from outside China, will humbly seek the Lord and live in a manner pleasing to Jesus Christ.

“May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us.”



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The Challenge of **Returning Chinese Scholars**

Jeff Mennen

Zhang Hua's* year at the University of Iowa's Physics department was wonderful. His experience there was enjoyable and was influential in his getting promoted when he went back to China last year. However, more importantly, he will tell you, it was during that year that he came to know Jesus. Through the witness of a relative in the U.S. and the prayers and efforts of the Chinese fellowship that befriended him, he was a "success story" of the international student ministry.

However, when Zhang Hua returned to China, he struggled in his faith. It was hard for him to find a good fellowship in his area, and he went without for months. Finally, he contacted the Chinese brother I introduced him to, and he found a fellowship at which he has become a leader and has grown in his walk with God. Still, he told me last week that if it were not for the brother I had introduced him to, he probably would not be in a fellowship right now.

Why is it so hard for Christian returnees to continue in their faith once they have arrived back home? Is there anything we can do about it to help? First, let's look at some of the problems returnees face.

Four Problems for Returnees

1. Busyness: When I talked with Zhang Hua about his difficulties finding a fellowship back in China, he said that he was quite busy, and that the fellowship he heard about at first was quite far away. We concluded that if it is not a priority for the returnee to make time for a fellowship and take the initiative to find and become active in a fellowship, it just will not happen. Another friend involved with returnee work wrote me about the "killer hours" that many businesses require of their workers—roughly twelve hours a day. He wrote, "In North America we might think of this kind of schedule as an emergency overtime situation; for

Asians it's a normal work week." Clearly, these hours make it hard to find time for fellowship or personal Bible study and prayer. At the same time, foreign and Chinese Christians who are involved with fellowships back in China are also overwhelmed themselves, and even if they hear about some returning believers, they may not make the time to follow them up.

2. Faith/Life Conflict: Living out the Christian life in China is tough! At work, for example, supervisors may not only demand extra hours from the returnee, they may also expect that they would be willing to do immoral or illegal things for the sake of the company. This may mean dishonesty in negotia-

tions or taxes, or perhaps encouragement towards sexual immorality or greed. In the face of this pressure, it is easy to compartmentalize one's faith as being separate from the "real world," and this erodes one's walk with God. Similarly, these stresses and temptations can destroy marriage and family relationships. One Chinese returnee wrote, "I underestimated the situation when someone told me in general terms about this when I was in the U.S. The returnees need specific admonitions on what to avoid and how to live a victorious life."

3. Fitting in: This is especially true for those who have lived overseas for a number of years. In one sense, they have always felt that in their hearts they are Chinese, and this is largely still true. However, after learning a new culture and becoming more Westernized, they may not like the Chinese ways of worship, of leadership, of decision making and so on. Imagine a Chinese Ph.D. candidate who, after a period of searching, comes to Christ in the U.S. and becomes a part of a mainland scholars' fellowship at a local Chinese church. This individual may be used to a level of sophistication and education of believers that will be hard to reproduce back in China. So, a returnee may go to a nearby fellowship and conclude that it is not really an appropriate one for him or her.

4. Security: Although this area seems to be improving in general, it is still an important factor. Though the Three-Self Churches are legal, they are often crowded and may have other problems. Many house churches are officially illegal gatherings, especially if they have an outward ministry focus. Returnees may hear in the West a somewhat exaggerated version of the level of persecution in China and stay away from fellowships out of fear of this persecution.

The bottom line for returnees facing these difficulties is that too many of them gradually fall away from the Lord after returning to China. Following are some current efforts and sug-

gested areas for improvement to help more returnees find fellowships and continue to walk with the Lord.

Current Efforts

• **Resources and literature:** There are many good workbooks and resources for returnees such as Lisa Espineli-Chinn's *Think Home* or ISI's DVD *Welcome Home*. These are excellent heart preparation resources for returning to China. My informal survey of some international student workers indicates that the three keys to someone having a successful return to his country are: A close walk with the Lord; experiences in service/leadership; and good heart preparation for what is ahead. Churches and international stu-

OUR GOAL is not just to send believers back and help them get plugged in; rather, can we instill in these returnees a conviction that God is sending them back to China for a purpose?

dent ministries need to provide environments for the development of these keys as they launch their returnees back to China.

• **Networking:** Frequently, I receive emails from international student ministry workers or Chinese church pastors asking me to help a Chinese believer find a fellowship as he/she moves back to China. Multiply this by many other China-focused ministries and churches, and clearly there is a lot of networking going on. Even so, this is admittedly touching only a minority of the crop of believers returning to China. Also, the better the relationships are between the sending groups and the receiving groups, the more likely it is that the returnee will be brought into the local fellowship. International agencies have the potential to broaden the scope of this work, but it all comes down to trust and relationships.

Suggested Areas for Assisting Returnees

• **Paul exhorted the Thessalonian church to, "excel still more."** We need to continue to provide training and resources for our Chinese friends who return home and to connect people to fellowships in China, just as we are doing. However, we also need a shift in our emphasis. Our goal is not just to send believers back and help them get plugged in; rather, can we instill in these returnees a conviction that God is sending them back to China for a purpose? Can we help them to see that they are an important part of God's plan to turn China to Christ?

• **We need to gather to pray and discuss how God may want to use us**

to be a blessing to the Chinese church and the returnees God sends back to China. By "us," I mean the senders (Chinese churches, international student agencies) and the receivers (international agencies in China, Chinese church representatives) and even returnees themselves. Several agencies involved in Chinese student ministries are teaming up to discuss the issues involved with Chinese students returning to their country. I strongly believe that God has already raised up the resources and structures to allow for good communication of information about returnees to get back to fellowships in China. He has blessed many of our agencies with resources to set up safe communication channels. So, we should be able to increase greatly the percentage of successful handoffs of returnees to fellowships in China.

• **We should develop some structure to coordinate the efforts of our**

various ministries. If we do this, more senders would know how to connect their Chinese believers with fellowships in China through safe and trusted channels. Even if we do this, however, we need some kind of “filter” so that we send only the information of the most solid believers through this method, at least at first. As the receiving fellowships/ministries in China have time allocation and security concerns, we need to send the information of those who are the most likely to become leaders in the ministry, not just members. We need to establish that referrals they receive from senders are worth their attention and can influence their entire ministry.

• **We need to pray for wisdom.**

RETURNING CHRISTIANS

can be effective witnesses and

communicators, they can be donors who have a vision for the ministry, and they can be cross-cultural bridges.

There are so many unknowns involved with this, and we do not want to jeopardize any indigenous fellowships. We need God’s direction and wisdom.

• **There must be commitment levels for each group involved.**

* **Senders:** Many are called to cities or universities, and the priority is to reach out to the Chinese intellectuals in these places. We need to be committed to provide the best encouragement and exhortation for returnees before they get on the plane and then to follow through with them after they return to China.

* **Returnees:** These must be the most committed of all to their spiritual health upon their return to China. They must be committed to finding a fellowship—even though they are busy and even if the first few fellowships they encounter are not what they are looking for. Hebrews 10:24-25 needs to be etched upon their hearts.

* **Receivers:** The laborers in-country need to be committed to following-up

the returnees in a timely manner. Yes, these individuals are busy. However, returning Christians can be effective witnesses and communicators, they can be donors who have a vision for the ministry, and they can be cross-cultural bridges that can help make the whole ministry more effective. We need to let the in-country laborers see different returnees who have become coworkers at some level so that they can understand that they are mobilizing potential ministry leaders—not just bringing another person into their lives that they will have to care for.

Around the time of the American Revolution, there was a flag with several disconnected pieces of a rattlesnake on it.

Each piece had the name of a state of the nascent U.S. The motto on the flag read, “Unite or die.” The obvious point was that if the states could unite, they could be powerful—but if they could not, they would all die. We can make a difference in the spiritual lives of many China returnees if we can find a way to integrate our networks in a safe, timely fashion.

Note: If you are interested in networking for the purpose of following up on returnees, please email: return2china@gmail.com.

*Names and places have been changed to protect the people and ministries involved.

Jeff Mennen served in China for nine years and continues to work with Chinese international students who are in the US. His favorite activity is helping returnees successfully connect with other brothers and sisters back in China upon their return. Reprinted from ChinaSource, Fall 2006, Vol. 8, No. 3. ■

These Next Ten Years
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example, intentional connections would need to be made between those serving on the campus, those in the work world who could potentially serve as mentors to new graduates, and leaders in neighboring churches. This collaboration would of necessity require crossing organizational and cultural lines.

Jeff Mennen argues that the problem is not a lack of resources or structures: “International agencies have the potential to broaden the scope of this work, but it all comes down to trust and relationships.” Referring to the need to help build the Chinese infrastructure for training cross-cultural workers, L. K. Chiu says simply, “No one has all the answers.”

Embracing that which we do not know or are unable to accomplish on our own requires getting to know others along the value chain. It requires seeking out those who may be very different from ourselves in terms of background or expertise, but whose roles are inextricably tied to our own in the larger picture of what we are together seeking to see accomplished. It is not enough to simply be good at what we do; we need to also be good at relationships—the glue that ties together the otherwise disparate efforts of many within the Body.

Huo Shui’s examination of enduring Chinese cultural themes in this issue is thus an apt reminder, particularly for busy Westerners who typically put task ahead of relationship. Realizing that our “performance” over a meal or a cup of tea is of equal or even greater importance compared with the performance of our jobs is an important first step in this era of interdependence. The answer for the new paradigm we seek as we look ahead may well be found by looking back into the very culture in which we are called to serve.

Brent Fulton, Ph.D., is the president of ChinaSource and the editor of the ChinaSource journal. ■



Graham Cousins

Seeing China through the Lenses of History

Kay Danielson

In May 1999, I found myself on a train from Beijing to Jilin City, a backwater town in China's northeast. The weekend before, Chinese public opinion had exploded in a paroxysm of anger and anti-American vitriol over the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the U.S. State Department had urged Americans not to travel in China. I, however, had things I needed to do in Jilin and so was determined not to let events stop me.

I must admit to being a bit nervous that day as I boarded the soft sleeper car and found my berth. I had decided that, even though I speak fluent Chinese, on this trip I would hunker down with my book and pretend that I was an illiterate foreigner, all the while hoping that no one would directly ask me where I was from. Alas, it wasn't to be. There were two gentlemen already in the compartment when I got there, and as soon as I sat down, the older of the two looked at me and said, "Are you an American?" Hmm. That was going to be a tough one to evade! "Yes," I replied, and turned back to the book. Before I could focus back on my reading, he took his glass-

es off, stared coldly at me, and said, "*Ni qifu women lei,*"—"You (singular) have bullied and humiliated us."

In modern China there are two major "lenses" through which people have been taught to view historical events. The first is this notion of *qifu*, or humiliation. For the Chinese, the era that began with the Opium Wars in the mid-1800s until the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 is considered a century of humiliation. The outside world arrived at the shores of China at a time when she was internally weak and thus unable to withstand the pressures that were brought to bear on her. Taking advantage of her weakness, the Western powers bullied

their way into China, forcing her to sign unequal treaties and relinquish sovereignty over certain coastal cities.

Even after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1912, the humiliation of foreign domination continued. China was a member of the allied forces fighting against Germany in the First World War, but following Germany's surrender in 1919, her colonial holdings in China were not returned to Chinese sovereignty, but instead turned over to Japan. University students in China were outraged at this humiliation and launched a series of protests and demonstrations that were part of what has come to be known as the "May Fourth Movement."

So why do events of a hundred years ago matter so much today? There is a saying in China, *ji yi you xin*, which means, “to remain fresh in one’s memory.” I have a friend who put it more succinctly— “to treat the past event as if it were yesterday.” It is often difficult for Westerners to understand how deeply Chinese today can feel the humiliations of events that took place more than 150 years ago. But it’s important to remember that 150 years ago is three percent of Chinese history, which in fact makes it quite recent history. By comparison, three percent of American history would take us to 1993. So the humiliation of the Opium Wars of the mid-nineteenth century is as fresh to them as the Oklahoma City bombing is to most Americans.

This notion of humiliation is helpful for us in understanding how Chinese people react to world events. In 1999, the bombing of the Chinese embassy took place just two weeks after China had celebrated the 80th anniversary of the May Fourth Demonstrations. Having digested heavy doses of speeches, classes and activities hailing the May Fourth students as true patriots who had dared publicly to decry China’s humiliation by foreigners, people in China at the time were spring-loaded for the violent reactions that followed the bombing. Here it was, handed to them on a silver platter—the chance to emulate the May Fourth patriots and demonstrate against foreign humiliation. I saw it in my students the day following the demonstrations¹ at the US Embassy as they excitedly told me of their participation in the rock and paint throwing.

It was fascinating to see that many of the slogans used that weekend were the very same ones that had been used during the May Fourth protests. In the minds of the people, the incidents were similar in that they represented foreign bullying and humiliation of China. Further, it served to emphasize to them how weak they felt because of the nation’s seeming inability to fight back or exact some measure of revenge in any way.

The “Spy Plane Incident” in April

2001 also represented to the Chinese people another example of US bullying and humiliation. That US planes were regularly flying off their coastline was hard enough to swallow, but that a Chinese pilot had been killed in this particular incident was almost too much too bear, given that, once again, there was nothing that China could do about it. Although there were no protests and demonstrations (they were not allowed), the rhetoric of humiliation quickly returned to the front pages of the newspapers and on the Internet.

More recently, China’s feeling of past humiliation played itself out in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the US. While the public voice of China was

zation has existed in an unbroken line from antiquities to the present. Chinese today look back longingly at the Song and Tang and Han Dynasties in particular, as times when China was powerful and the superior civilization in the region, if not the world.

China’s national obsession with hosting the 2008 Olympic Games gives expression to this desire for restoration. The received wisdom is that this will allow China to demonstrate that it is a country to be taken seriously on the world stage. Its era of humiliation, isolation and backwardness will, once and for all, be put to rest. This desire for a return to glory has also been evident in China’s push to join the WTO, and other inter-



Nearly every tourist brochure or speech about Chinese history make some reference to China’s 3000 plus years of glorious history.

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pledging sympathy and support, a common sentiment bubbling not far from the surface was that the U.S. had finally gotten what it deserved for bullying and humiliating others.

This feeling of humiliation also remains the main sticking point in China’s present dealings with Japan. China demands that Japan own up to and apologize for the atrocities committed against the Chinese during the Japanese occupation during WW II. So this first lens—the *qifu* lens—causes Chinese to see their recent history through the eyes of the little guy, the one who got beat up after school by the tough guys and now wants an apology or a chance to fight back.

The second major “lens” through which modern Chinese are being taught to view history is that of restoration of glory. Nearly every tourist brochure or speech about Chinese history makes some reference to China’s 3000 plus years of glorious history. They are (rightly) proud of the fact that Chinese civili-

national bodies, where it can have a place at the table, so to speak, with the other great powers.

This, however, has not always been the interpretation of the past that Chinese have been taught. Paul Cohen, in his book *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* discusses the tension between various ways in which we “know” the past. Writing about the Boxer Movement at the turn of the century, he makes this observation:

The Boxers as event represent a particular reading of the past, while the Boxers as myth represent an impressing of the past into the service of a particular reading of the present. Either way, a dynamic interaction is set up between present and past, in which the past is continually being reshaped, either consciously or unconsciously, in accordance with the divers and shifting preoccupations of people in the present.²

This is a crucial point because in an authoritarian state such as the People’s Republic of China, citizens do not simply learn history and are not simply in-

fluenced by history. Rather, they learn and are influenced by a particular interpretation of history. There are no competing interpretations available (officially), but rather one “line,” determined by the Party, is followed in the media and endless political meetings that Chinese are still occasionally summoned to attend. Much of the history learned and taught here is in Cohen’s category of “myth,” not in the sense that it did not happen, but in the sense that “its meaning is governed to an overwhelming extent by the concerns of the present. As the center of gravity of present concerns shifts, therefore, the meaning of the past necessarily shifts along with it, sometimes to a quite extraordinary degree.”³

In modern China the “center of gravity” to which Cohen refers has seen an extraordinary shift in the past twenty years. This current official glorification of the past is vastly different from the vilification of the past that was in vogue in the Mao era. In fact, Mao not only decried the ancient culture and civilization, he sought to destroy it.

Following the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping and the promotion of the so-called “opening and reform” policy, the official line regarding China’s ancient past changed. Rather than view traditional culture as something to be destroyed, it is now promoted, and the Communist Party has been recast as the only institution able to return China to her former glory, the glory that existed before the era of humiliation. It is the current historical myth. The imperial glories have been reshaped to fit the current preoccupation of the rulers, namely the preservation of power and the establishment of legitimacy in the face of a bankrupt Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. Again, I quote a Chinese friend, an astute (and amazingly objective) observer of his own culture: “The emphasis on the past,” he says, “is used to encourage and emphasize the rising of China.” He even goes so far as to argue that the present popularity of *Tang Zhuang* (Tang dynasty style clothing—the silk jackets with embroidered emblems) is an expres-

sion of the desire to return to the glory days of the Tang Dynasty.

The Chinese, then, have two pairs of glasses that are interchangeable. They are the unfairly treated victims of the “hegemonists,” the big, powerful (read: Western) countries that routinely humiliate and exploit weaker countries. But at the same time, they are the phoenix, rising from the ashes of a century-and-a-half of destruction to a bright and noble future that is, in fact, but a return to the glorious heights of the past. It is critical for those of us who regularly engage with China to understand these two lenses.

As for the man on that train in May 1999, he was merely expressing to me his personal and communal frustration at the humiliating events of the week. China was again being bullied by the US; I was an American; so he had the opportunity to express his frustration to the responsible party—me. I responded by reminding him that I had done nothing of the sort, but instead had come to China many years ago, had learned his language, and was, in fact, a friend of China who also wanted to see his country strong, stable and respected in the world community. *I told him that I understood why he and the Chinese people were angry about what had happened, but that he shouldn't take that out on me, an American individual.* I held my breath and waited for his counter-response.

He looked at me for a few seconds, replaced his glasses, and said to the younger man with him, “She’s alright. Give her some tea.”

Endnotes

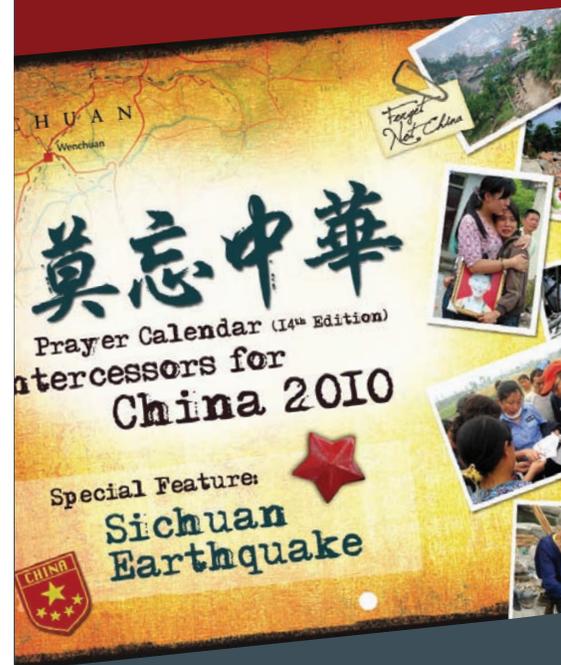
1. These demonstrations were not only sanctioned, but were organized by the government. My students had no choice but to board Party-supplied busses and go to the embassy to protest.

2. Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*, Columbia University Press, 1997, p. xii.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

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Living Wisely in China

Huo Shui

When Westerners come to China, how can they adapt to the Chinese culture? Many people immediately think of the language issue. Although language is crucial to interpersonal relationships and communication, it alone is not sufficient in dealing with Chinese people. Language is only the starting point for understanding the Chinese culture. Even a foreigner who has lived and worked in China may still have difficulty figuring it out. Following is an attempt to help one better understand the Chinese culture and how to relate to Chinese people.

To some extent, *Taiji* reflects the Chinese culture and its way of solving problems. No matter what changes the rest of the society has gone through during hundreds of years of history, *Taiji* remains exactly the same. Year after year Chinese practice *Taiji* in the morning. Some principles drawn from *Taiji* have been gradually made known to society. These principles, that go beyond the physical aspect, tell us that “the use of quietness overcomes motion,” “apparent softness overtakes toughness,” “apparent looseness outside, actual tightness inside,” “avoid tough hands but attack weak spots,” “surprise and win,” and “withheld

NO MATTER what changes the rest of the society has gone through during hundreds of years of history, *Taiji* remains exactly the same.

Taiji: a conversation of hidden strength

Any morning, before the city is awakened by the business and noise of the day, look at the parks throughout China. You cannot miss the crowds of people working out—among them the most visible are the *Taiji* (Taichi) lovers. These people slowly, yet constantly and gracefully, change the positions of their arms and legs as they concentrate and breathe deeply. Some of their slow movements seem useless and one might wonder what purpose they serve. Yet, those who understand Chinese martial arts know of the strength hidden in *Taiji* whose principles are “apparent softness overtakes toughness” and “gentle but firm.”

strength may go unnoticed.”

Later, when people described these skills or ploys adapted by politicians, warlords, entrepreneurs or merchants to be the winners in their respective fields, they used the term *Quanshu* (clever stratagems for politics and business). *Quanshu* also has the meaning of hidden conflict as drawn from *Taiji*'s character of hidden strength. When two individuals are in an unannounced struggle, they are said to be “playing *Taiji*.” Chinese often rely on this nonverbal message to make themselves understood in the struggle to protect their interests. This way of dealing with others is not found in the West; nevertheless, it is at the core of Chinese culture. Not knowing about it may be costly to the Westerner.

China continues to be in a technological growth period; it now boasts millions of Internet subscribers. Fashionable young people may care nothing about *Taiji* but admire basketball players like Jordan and Johnson; however, *Taiji* culture is still prevalent. When a Chinese responds to you slowly, you need patience. Practicing *Taiji* requires “inner strength.” “Inner strength” refers to the resilience that can absorb a punch as well as hit back, but in a pleasant manner. A fast-acting person often finds himself having to change his mind; but one who restrains himself from making a quick response usually has well balanced ideas for decision-making. The individual using this type of thought process is re-

Graham Cousens



ferred to by the Chinese as a “master of calculation” and cunning. He will never strike up an argument with you nor clearly announce his intentions. He never forgets to smile—but his smile is a bit mysterious. He does not necessarily have evil purposes in mind and cannot simply be labeled as a “good” or “bad person”; however, for self-protection he feels that “beating around the bush” is his only option. You may find that this person is more likely to be middle-aged and fits into a *Taiji* lovers category. This mental practice of *Taiji* is a part of Chinese wisdom; it follows the Chinese wherever they go.

Eating and drinking: the passport to Chinese society

“Have you eaten yet?” used to be the most common greeting in China. This greeting has now faded from use. Eating, however, still enjoys unshakable status in Chinese culture. No other people of the world are more serious about eating, more focused on eating or more capable of getting the best out of eating. Over 2000 years ago Confucius said: “Never settle on an imperfect meal.” China gave birth to world famous cuisines including Sichuan, Cantonese, Shandong, and others. China also has McDonalds, KFC and pizza. Wherever you go in China you will be impressed by the number of restaurant signs—even in poor backwoods areas. Likewise, Chinese restaurants are found in distant places.

Chinese love eating. Why? Eating in China is not just a simple personal activity; rather, it fits together the unrelated pieces of life. Eating is a cultural and social activity. Many events in life require a large get-together meal that is in accord with tradition, fosters the accomplishment of other activities and allows people to express their emotions. These events include Spring Festival celebrations, family or class reunions, weddings, funerals, admission to the Communist Party, promotions to leadership, asking for help, thanking others for help, opening a business, settling in a new home, farewells, conflict resolutions, celebrating successes—and the list goes on. Anything can be an excuse to go out for dinner.

Reports say that several hundred billion Chinese yuan are spent on banquets in China each year. Restaurants have become a performing stage for people eager to achieve their ends. They display intimate feelings, cope with bosses, negotiate prices and resolve conflicts. Obviously, food is not the real issue for either the host or the guest. Refusing to “perform” on this stage means that many things one may want to see happen will not be accomplished. Not understanding the significance of eating in Chinese culture means you



UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE actually “work” for *mian zi*. They leave home as usual in the morning as if they were going to work, but they do not end up at their previous workplaces but stay with friends or go to parks or cinemas to kill time.

will miss a valuable shortcut to getting complicated things done in China.

Eating is also a means for friends to express friendship and gratitude. If you would like to expand your network of relationships rapidly, invite your friends to the neighborhood eateries for simple meals. Over time you will acquire a long list of people interacting with you. If you do not take initiatives or accept invitations, you may be misunderstood and thought difficult to relate to as a person. Remember, the most appropriate occasion to exchange information, improve communication, resolve conflicts and affirm friendships is always at the dinner table.

Mian Zi (face): the treasure that never wears out

No one wants to be *diu ren* (embarrassed in front of people, a “lost person”); every individual has a sense of self-esteem. This human characteristic is extremely pronounced in Chinese culture; it has been observed to an extent that is beyond a Westerner’s imagination. For example, a Chinese may wrong you and be fully aware of his wrongdoing, but if you point this out to him or criticize him with another person present, he will desperately defend himself denying any offense. However, if the conversation takes place between just the two of you, he will readily accept your criticism. The facts

you point out are the same, but his reaction is different due to the changed situation. The reason: *mian zi*. This comes out in other situations as well. For example, if you ask someone for help, few people will give you a negative answer; most will say: “Sure, no problem.” Is it really “no problem?” In actuality, there may be many problems, but the individual will not admit it. When you follow up on the issue, the individual will say, “Oh, this needs to be delayed a little bit. Please be patient, because...” Eventually, you will find that from the very beginning this person was unable to help you. Another common example is seen when friends go out for dinner together. When dinner is over, since they have not talked about who will pay for it, everyone will be fighting to pay the entire bill. Each one is afraid of being thought of as a tightwad.

A story goes that many years ago in Shanghai a man lived in the slums. He would go out on the street only after putting on his one decent jacket, combing and slicking his hair back, shining his shoes and spreading pork lard on his lips to pretend to be a wealthy man who had just enjoyed a greasy meal. That’s what *mian zi* is. Today, similar incidents occur, only in more subtle ways. For example, unemployed people actually “work” for *mian zi*. They leave

Continued on page 15

The Growing Church in China's Cities

Frank Peterson

The year was 2002, and I couldn't believe my eyes and ears. I was sitting in a very modern condo in one of the largest cities in China, surrounded by perhaps 25 well-dressed, urban professional Chinese. A contemporary Christian praise music CD was playing on an expensive stereo system as the group joined together in worship. The worship time ended with a song of missionary commitment, with words stressing the desire of those gathered to take the message of the gospel across central Asia all the way "Back to Jerusalem."

As the strains of the final chord of

and told us his late father had been a Revolutionary.

This experience gave me an early insight into a powerful movement in the cities of China: the development of a new kind of house church among urban professionals, business people, government workers and other kinds of influential people in China.

The Other End of the Social Spectrum

That same week back in 2002, I was exposed to a ministry targeting a very different group: urban migrants. The setting was an apartment set up like a classroom. The students were all mi-

« **SOME** house church networks are now reporting that they have more churches and members in the cities than in the countryside. »

"Back to Jerusalem" faded, an articulate engineer, who had recently returned to the land of her birth to work after getting her Ph.D in the U.S.A., skillfully led the group through an interactive Bible study. At the end of the study, one of the other leaders clearly presented the gospel, and challenged several non-Christians present to make a decision for Christ.

Our host later told us that there were decisions to trust Christ almost every week at this Bible study. The host himself had only been a Christian a few years, having been led to Christ by his son, who had come to know Christ as an international student in America. He introduced us to his aged mother, who had been a Red Guard,

grants from other parts of China to this mega-city, and most had been working in factories when they were recruited to join this training program. The training program was designed to equip them to go back into factories as bivocational missionaries, with the intent of planting churches among the migrants from the countryside who live and work in those factories.

These students sang indigenous praise songs for us, simple folk-style songs accompanied only by their clapping and dancing. They shared their testimonies, many of them heart-breaking stories of poverty and other hardships; but their joy was evident, and it was clear that God had his hand on these young people.



And Everywhere in Between

On Sunday we visited a TSPM church where a special service had been started to minister to the needs of young adults who had come to Christ through Bible studies that started as English classes around tables in McDonald's restaurants—McMinistry, some called it. The entire service was led by young adults brought to Christ and disciplined through this ministry.

On another occasion, in another mega-city, we found churches multiplying among working people with one of the congregations meeting in a sales training center. Five churches had been started in six months by this group. We have also found churches meeting in restaurants, factory headquarters and retail shops.

God is Up to Something in the Cities of China!

Church growth in China, until the last few years, has been largely a rural phenomenon. The large house church networks we have heard so much about have historically been made up primarily of rural Christians. Early attempts at urban evangelism and church planting by these networks were largely unsuccessful, due to the cultural divide between urban and rural Chinese.

However, that is all beginning to change. Some house church networks are now reporting that they have more churches and members in the cities than in the countryside. In addition, God is using other means to draw peo-

ple to Christ and build his church in the cities of China. Christian educators, businesspeople and professionals (both Chinese and non-Chinese) are effectively bearing witness among various segments of the urban population in China. An ever-increasing number of returning international students are bringing Christian faith back with them and sharing it with coworkers as they re-enter the marketplace in China.

Urban professionals are studying Christianity as they look for alternatives to Marxism, which is widely viewed as a failed ideological system. Not all who study Christianity become Christians, but many do, and their influence is considerable.

It is clear that God is stirring up his people to bring about growth of the body of Christ in China's cities through the multiplication of communities of believers.

Some Concerns and Answers to Prayer

When I first began studying this phenomenon, I noted some worrisome trends that I felt must be addressed if the new urban church planting and church growth movement was to reach its full potential.

At that time, a large percentage of students won to Christ on campuses, in both China and among Chinese studying abroad, were not going on to become active church members when they graduated and moved from the campus into the marketplace. That issue is now being more effectively addressed as campus ministries work more closely with existing local churches and partner with church planting ministries to establish new churches.

The young leaders of the new churches that are springing up among urban professionals often struggle to know how to lead these young flocks. A great need continues to exist for leadership training, not in Western or even traditional Chinese ways of doing church, but in basic biblical theology (including ecclesiology) and obedience-oriented discipleship.

Another observation I made when I began studying the urban church in China was that many professing Christians migrating from the rural areas to China's cities were not connecting with churches in the city. That, too, is beginning to change, as house church networks learn to adapt their approaches to evangelism and church planting to fit the realities of their new urban setting. According to the leaders of these networks, leadership training provided by groups that understand urban ministry has been a key factor in enabling them to make this transition.

The relative lack of systematic, strategic approaches to reaching whole cities in China for Christ continues to be a serious problem. Evil is systemic in cities, and a systematic, strategic and coordinated approach to discipling the cities of China continues to be urgently needed. We must continue to grapple with the question "What will it take to transform the cities of China?" We must continue to pray for the cities, pleading with God to open the skies over them, thus changing the spiritual dynamics at work in them. We must continue to widely plant the seed of the gospel in the cities, by all possible means. We must nurture the development of more church planting movements in the cities. We must challenge and assist God's people in China's cities to be salt and light, meeting social needs and challenging injustice. All of these things and more are being done to some extent, but we must persevere and significantly expand these efforts if we are to see real change and lasting results.

Much more could and should be said about this subject, but space does not permit us to go into more detail here. For more information on how churches inside and outside of China can work together to reach the cities of China, write info@chsourc.org.

Frank Peterson has been involved in China ministry for 26 years, and currently serves as China Director for an international leadership training ministry. He can be contacted through ChinaSource. ■

Living Wisely in China, Continued from page 13

home as usual in the morning as if they were going to work, but they do not end up at their previous workplaces but stay with friends or go to parks or cinemas to kill time.

When you invite friends over or to join you for an outing, you need to first examine each person's special needs. How free is this person? Has he or she eaten yet? If expenses are involved, who will pay for them? You need to think these through and not ask your friends for information. Even if you do, you will only get polite answers that do not reflect what is truly on their mind. Chinese deem it a virtue not to bother others with questions. Between friends and acquaintances it is harder to ask for a favor precisely because of the relationship.

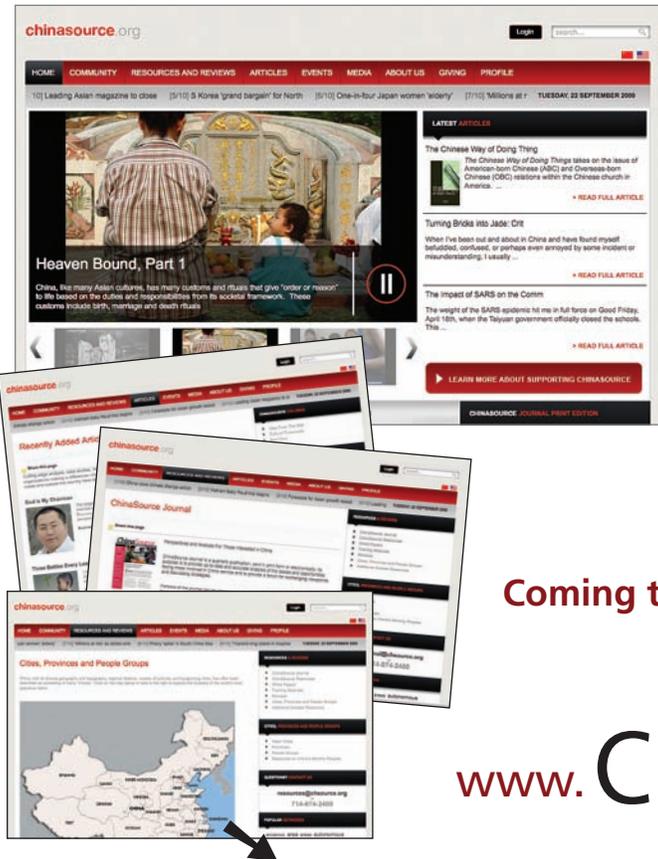
Zhong Yong: the moderate way

Zhong Yong, or "being moderate," is the most essential principle for living in China and the primary principle that the Chinese subscribe to. What does it mean to "be moderate" in the Chinese context? Put simply, it means never going to extremes, never confirming things absolutely (always leave some margin or wiggle room), never pushing ahead to be first—yet avoiding being left behind. People may say they see things in black and white, but in reality they favor gray. Gray seems less risky and allows flexibility.

Five thousand years of Chinese tradition defies anyone who tries to fully understand it. While one need not fully grasp the meaning of these traditions, these four seemingly simple principles discussed above should be taken seriously. It is wise to deal with the Chinese in the Chinese way. If you are not convinced, try it your way—and see what happens!

Huo Shui is a former government political analyst who writes from outside China. Translation is by Ping Dong. Reprinted from ChinaSource, Fall 2000, Vol. 2, No. 3. ■

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