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The Maoist Annihilation of Femininity: A Comparative Analysis of a Political Misrepresentation

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Introduction

Assessing the Chinese Cultural Revolution in terms of a gender perspective is complicated, considering that the public justifications of the campaign aimed to eliminate the "feudal practices" ¹ negatively affected women's lives ². This historical thesis seeks to make the reader wonder if political foundations almost wholly accepted do not operate as "return of the removed" based on elitist practices. These stable **political identities** underpin political movements that can invariably come to be threatened by the same instability created by the gesture of foundation. Therefore, the necessary starting point is the historical present. The challenge lies in formulating, within this constructed framework, **a critique of the categories of identity generated in the Maoist period against the female born population**, which were naturalized and fixed by the regime's legal structures. As the historian Will Durant explains, "The Chinese feudal regime has probably downgraded the woman and reduced her political and economic rank in the country because the feudal regime itself is based on a system of living that is strictly patriarchal."

The condition of women in Chinese civilization has been the subject of significant variations. In general, we can say that before the period of Confucius, she benefited

¹ As the historian Will Durant explains the decay of the female situation: "The Chinese feudal regime has probably downgraded the woman and reduced her political and economic rank in the country, because the feudal regime itself is based on a system of living that is strictly patriarchal."

² The condition of women in Chinese civilization has been the subject of great variations. In general, we can say that before the period of Confucius, she benefited from some respect. China, formerly, was renowned for the importance it gave to family life. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that the Chinese mother, constituted the axis around which revolved all the members of the family cell.

from some respect. China, formerly, was renowned for the importance it gave to family life. The reason is in the fact that the Chinese mother constituted the axis, which revolved all the members of the family cell. In my opinion, the attempt to establish a **polarization between the theory of psyche and power** could be confusing. The social forms of this kind could be oppressive due to the psychic difficulties they produce.³The advent of communism in the Far East shifts from politics to civic ethics. Despite the diversity of systems of government, it is in the Confucian⁴ countries where the individual is educated to renounce certain freedoms and rights in the name of social interest. From the bowels of the collective subconscious emerges the "Eastern despotism"⁵, that is, the idea that Asia is that portion of the world where the community prevails over the individuals. The duties of the community come before their rights.⁶ Calls for gender equality and the active participation of the fair sex in the conflict led to the weakening of the female sphere. This dissertation aims to identify how gender equality has been conceptualized and the practices it implemented, with specific attention to the regimen and self-perception of the female gender. I also aim to examine the rhetoric behind the **Maoist eradication of femaleness** adopted by the communist party, comprehending the

³ I tried to consider the ways Foucault and psychoanalysis can be thought of together in *The Psychic Life of Power*, originally published by Stanford U.P. in 1997.

⁴ Confucius's interpretation in a paternalistic-authoritarian way sees society as organized according to the same hierarchical principles as a family.

⁵ The formula of Eastern despotism has become one of the keys to reading used by many other authors, including Marx. Even today, the idea that China can only be governed by a dictatorial system is widespread: because of its size, its complexity, its history.

⁶ In perpetual dependence on men, "her" life flowed in obedience, deprived of all economic and social rights. She could not become independent and the man assured her a permanent protection in every single field.

political impasses which impeded the discourse from reaching a definitive conclusion. By analyzing the underestimated gendered identity of the **Maoist rhetoric**, I strive to provide the reader with an analysis of this subject in a way that rejects the simplistic focus towards the binary's struggle among disowning and redemption. Moreover, I will consider the multiple agencies shaping the discourse at a national and intergenerational level. In delineating the polemics and deadlocks that characterized the *woman annihilation of femininity*, denied gender recognition until the recent days, we necessarily questioned the fate of this debate.

In **Chapter 1**, the Maoist annihilation of femininity issues is introduced from a **historical perspective**. The development of the first emancipation's waves is traced from its origins in China to the vast and organized structure that escalated the spreading of communism. In this segment, particular attention will be dedicated to western influence's responsibility in the institutions, management, and system of education in and out of the family, beyond the governmental organs' implicit participation and the Kuomintang ideology's active involvement.

In **Chapter 2**, the emphasis will shift towards the post-Chinese civil war through a **political perspective**. In this regard, 1949 will serve us as the year 0 of the current dispute between Maoist feminist-friendly communist and Maoist deconstruction of gender identity, with the sudden emergence of the victims' testimonies and the discovery of official records reaffirming this statement.

Lastly, in **Chapter 3**, this dissertation analyzes the private sphere's hidden issues, which has been related to the impact and the immediate afterward of the cultural Revolution from a feminist's historical point of view. Through a **comparative analysis** between the **post-communist Russian** situation and contemporary China, this thesis aims to involve the reader in a critical and tedious reflection on the possible consequences of the apparent gender-based appeasement.

This idea of gender equality, which can be represented as an aspiration for a moment in social recovery of echoing and tangible consequences, is a **two-pronged path to emancipation**.

Literature review

Traditional approaches to the study of power are now commonly viewed as inadequate as they do not consider the relevance of sexual roles in determining power dimensions.⁷ Despite the proliferation of gender studies in the past two decades, the study of women in Southeast Asian politics has not gained momentum.⁸ Theoretical approaches to the subject of women and politics have been concerned with broadening the traditional definitions of the political world that exclude women, breaking down the dichotomy of public-male/ private-female spheres of political,

⁷ See for example Kathleen Jones and Anna Jonasdottir, *The Political Interests of Gender* (London : Sage), 1985; Jill Vickers, "Feminist Approaches to Women in Politics," in Kealey and Sangster, *Beyond the vote: Canadian Women and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 1989; Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (eds.), *Gender and International Relations* (Buckingham [England]: Open University Press), 1991; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* (London : Pandora), 1987.

⁸ An article by Anthony Day is a marvelous attempt to bring women into the picture of Southeast Asian political history. See "Family Ties that (Un)Bind," in *Journal of Asian Studies* September 1996. The pre-colonial period has been barely touched, with the exception of Anthony Reid's contributions. See for example , "Female roles in Pre-colonial Southeast Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 22, No. 3, 1988, pp. 629-645.

social, and economic roles, focusing on the gendered dimensions of politics and notions of power.⁹ The nullification of gendered expression through egalitarian propaganda inquiry was ignored governmentally and academically for approximately half of a century since the termination of the Maoist era in 1976.

The coerced revolutionary hero representing the societal model imposed by the Chinese communism ensnared millions of women throughout the entire Chinese region resulted absent from the allegations presented in the critics of the Maoist regimes shortly after the death of the leader. Even though evidence has shown that the (female) politicians of the government were aware of their existence, the recognition of freedom of expressing an identity different from the proletarian revolutionary worker received complete indifference and **disinterest by the western nations**, who considered it neither a violation nor political issue. Absence from the media coverage allowed the existence of these "denied" women to be rejected for half a century. University researches contributing to the study of the Maoist annihilation only developed in the period signing the end of the 1980s and reached its peak in the 2000s, revealing painful truths to the public and contributing to boosting the scandal within the post-Maoist government.

Consequently, when carrying on our research, we had to adapt to the shortage of historical resources annihilation of Chinese **women's political identity** issues. Plenty of documents and authoritative records had been indeed destroyed by China during the Deng Xiaoping era in the 1980s, in a strange attempt to erase any possible evidence of the State participation in the negation of (many) abuses of civil rights committed by the **cultural regime**. With a piece of scarce information available regarding such a theme, recent speculation over the Maoist erosion of female gender identity issue results based, for the most part, on a limited number of researches,

⁹ In addition to the references cited above, see also V. Spike Peterson and Ann Sisson

Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press), 1993, chapter 5.

which shared what had been left from the official archives and the testimonies accessible by the victims later in the 1990s. Along with the lack of extensive historical documentation, the extent of the bibliography available to our examination has been sharply limited by the linguistic barrier we encountered during the research.

Most of the literature regarding the erosion of the private sphere of women issues have been produced in Chinese, Japanese, and, additionally, English. Our missed understanding of both Japanese and Chinese confined us to trust exclusively on deciphered documentation, and academic investigations carried on in a limited spectrum of languages of our comprehension, mainly English, Italian, and potentially French.

In the analysis of the historical events, the planning and **construction of the universal revolutionary (male) human being** and the consequential institutionalization of the proletarian with only masculine characteristics between 1942 and 1975, we heavily relied on the documentation collected by Professor Elisabeth Croll and Professor Jude Howell, which constituted our primary indirect source for the consultation of official records and data belonging to the case studies interviews and government testimonies concerning their involvement in the annihilation of women case.

Other sources contributing to the development of our dissertation, including Ka Yee Tsui Justina's "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996." were based on the previously published studies carried on by Xing Shenglin in the early 1990s. The publication of his researches nationally exposed the first communist government to the evidence of its systematic involvement in the non-consideration of women, causing a massive political scandal that never contributed to its very first admission of responsibility. Professor Neil Diamant's study on Chinese women also constituted a valuable source for the secondary analysis of the documentation offered by Chinese, American, and Australian Records on the topic discussed. Thanks to his researches

inside official records and articles collected by the Chinese emigrated scholars at the end of the Cultural Revolution. We were able to critically evaluate the degree of Western responsibility towards the feminine equality issues issue by examining the discrepancy between the crimes prosecuted during the Maoist period and those the "capitalist" powers were aware of.

In the second and third part of the thesis, our thesis was mostly supported by academic journals and volumes – dating among the end of the 20th century and the recent years – inscribed both by East Asian and Western professors, in the attempt to offer a critical historical viewpoint over the period preceding and then following the rise of the erosion of gender identity issue in China. Most of the sources selected helped provide a detailed understanding of the political and social background that characterized the post-civil war transition of the country. The preeminent academic view emerging from the sources analyzed offers a critical picture of the long-lasting philosophical debate that has invested the East Asian region for over two decades, evaluating the development of the political discussion engaged by the historic University department of Hong Kong and the United States among the controversies arising from the sporadic unauthorized apologies. In this regard, Xu Guoqi's writings constituted a fundamental source for the understanding of the political turmoil in the "making of" the erosion of the private sphere in early communist China debate, which shaped the commemorating approach and general behavior of the government in dealing with the issue.

The documentation we inspected in this respect presents an overall neutral perspective over the Chinese communist party's behavior when confronted with the privates' sphere erosion issue, highlighting its faults and responsibilities and some constructive acts of engagement that the country endeavored throughout and after the '90s. According to the numerous authors we had to consult, the struggle at the heart of this historical dispute could not be solely reduced to the innumerable political quarrels and controversial declarations that characterized the Chinese government in

the last two decades. The instability surrounding the political representation of women has been indeed interpreted by the vast majority of our sources as **collective obstinacy** to accept a painful legacy of the past rather than just the result of terrible coerced political naiveté of the revolutionary person. After having analyzed the current progression – or rather stagnation – of the comfort women issue within the philosophical aspects of gender identity and deconstruction of the self, we as well agreed in seeing the missed reconciliation of past colonial memories and the divergent perspectives of history the common obstacle in the concluding resolution of this political struggle.

In this dissertation, I desired to provide the reader with a more wide-ranging picture of the current debate surrounding **women's political representation during regime periods**, which could investigate the fragile lands of Chinese communist propaganda, conflictual historical perspective, and gendered discernment.

To do so, we scrutinized the various currents that influenced the discourse through the years, from the traditionalistic approaches of the topic to the more feminist analysis of the event. In this respect, we attempted to shift the general awareness from the historical research towards the philosophical issue of political representation, which rarely had been framed as an active agent contributing to women's suffering. However, it surprisingly bears some – untold – responsibility in their procurement and perpetration of the social shame. Indeed, only a few authors (accessible among the sources collected) expressly examined the actual agency that **the discrimination of half of the population** had in the lives of the victims during and after their obscure years of forced proletarianism. Above all, in this considerable lack of critical academic perspectives over early communism's management of the discourse, the works by Professor Nihua Zhang constituted a valuable source of information for the provision of a cross-sectional overlook of the political misrepresentation of women issue within the Communist Republic of China.

Chapter 1 :

The first wave of female emancipation

At the turn of the 19th, education was the battleground of new women to achieve greater independence.¹⁰ Foreign schools run by missionaries were gradually opened to women, where many became aware of a different way of living and communication.¹¹ The real figure of teachers, mainly women, carried with them a new feminine model: women with authority and prestige that did not depend on either those of their male relatives, those women moved freely through the streets, went out in public, laughed, and spoke at ease with men.¹²

During lessons, girls heard about unusual concepts for the Confucian tradition, such as "personal freedom," "equality between the sexes," "self-realization," ideas that also had **precise political connotations**.¹³

¹⁰ Professor Józefa Joteyko – The distinguished polish
<http://nauka-pan.pl/index.php/nauka/article/view/802>

¹¹ Tonglin Lu, "Introduction," in *Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature and Society*, ed. by Tonglin Lu (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 1.

¹² Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in Early China* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 1.

¹³ Li, Zongren. *Memoirs of Li Zongren*.

Moreover, mothers' role was even more ambiguous, so much that many writers later recounting their youth lived in the early 20th century, interpreted this period as a moment of significant change intended to put mothers and daughters together against the others. While daughters expected their mothers to understand and encourage their struggle for emancipation, mothers could not free themselves from the heaviness of the Confucian tradition. The importance is given by "right behaviors" and family ties.

As Tang Sheng ¹⁴ pointed out in an autobiographical passage, Chinese girls had become "hybrids" between the Western culture learned at school. The Confucian culture of which the family environment was permeated: two "currents." They converged in the life of these generations. Still, They had not yet amalgamated, leading to the birth of a "*new generation*." It could not be defined either as Chinese or Western, and that found a harder battleground for her independence in a familiar frame.

This first women's movement centered on a core of six fundamental rights:

- 1) right to access education
- 2) right to freely choose the husband
- 3) right to do business

¹⁴ Tang sided with Chiang Kai-shek and helped him to secure control of northern Beijing and the Tianjin region by removing Bai Chongxi, a Guangxi warlord who was in actual control of the region but ostensibly allied with Chiang Kai-shek. Later Tang commanded armies to fight other warlords for Chiang Kai-shek with great success. However, after these potential rivals were defeated, Chiang enraged Tang when he attempted to remove him and as a result, Tang defected to warlords in Guangxi and Guangdong to help them fight Chiang.

- 4) right to have personal property
- 5) right to freedom of movement
- 6) the right to be recognized as independent beings and not just as wives and mothers.

To conclude this paragraph, it is worth mentioning that this movement found strong opposition from his male counterparts. Many women were forced to threaten suicide or abandon their families to follow the aspirations generated in them by schools but at odds with their daily lives.¹⁵

The second wave of independence (1911-1949)

After Sun Yat-sen's proclamation¹⁶, the reactionary General Yuan Shikai¹⁷ made a shred of his promise to expand the right to vote for women¹⁸. Women were left to

¹⁵ Lin Yu-tang, "Feminist Thought in Ancient China," in *Chinese Women*

Through Chinese Eyes, ed. Li Yu-ning (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc, 1992), p.38.

¹⁶ On 29 December 1911 a meeting of representatives from provinces in Nanking (Nanjing) elected Sun Yat-sen as the "provisional president" (臨時大總統). Sun is credited for the funding of the revolutions and for keeping the spirit of revolution alive, even after a series of failed uprisings.

¹⁷ Yuan Shikai, provisional president of the Chinese Republic during the revolution.

¹⁸ Women in China were first granted the right to vote in 1947 through the Constitution of the Republic of China but were not explicitly enfranchised until 1953.

continue their political battles within Guomindang¹⁹, to claim their rights and counter the insensitivity of the Japanese masters of large areas of the country.²⁰ The initial women's association in China aimed at removing the belief that women were inferior to men²¹. The early activists assumed that womankind required support to enhance their attitudes regarding themselves, as even the women commonly judged to be inferior to men. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had displayed an **initial fascination** in defending the **women's civil rights**.

Moreover, the expansion of the textile industry offered unprecedented bargaining power and emancipation opportunities for Chinese women.

In the first decades of the 20th century, in conjunction with the development of the labor movement²² and the significant strikes of wage demands and improvement in working conditions, the Chinese discovered women's solidarity. They envisaged the possibility of having their work rights respected. In the factory, they created mutual-rescue leagues.

In 1921, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), founded in Shanghai, became a reference point for women's emancipation. Many ladies joined the party, having

¹⁹ Guomindang (GMD) Chinese Nationalist Party. It was founded in Canton by Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yatsen) in October 1912..

²⁰ Bergere, Marie-Clare. "Sun Yat-sen." Trans. Lloyd, Janet. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998.

²¹ Ka Yee Tsui, Justina. "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1998.

²² A number of things were introduced such as the republic calendar system and new fashion like Zhongshan suits.

completed their political apprenticeship alongside factory workers.²³ The period of the Jiangxi Soviet²⁴ was the turning point in this process. Party leadership, still loyal to its urban constituency, introduced a legal framework for women's rights. It granted women equal rights to land shares, equivalent pay for equal labor, and freedom of marriage and divorce. Throughout the 2nd National Congress in 1922, **the CCP released a declaration arguing for the end of Chinese traditions that inhibit womenfolk.**

Moreover, the CCP circulated a formal letter guaranteeing equality under the law for mutually men and women and assured equal pay for both genders through the 3rd National Congress. As soon as the CCP joined the First United Front²⁵ to engage in battle against warlords and unify China from 1924–27 with the Kuomintang (KMT), each party launched its women's department throughout this time. Though, the United Front culminated with the White Terror²⁶(1927), where the KMT launched an attack

²³ One of these women was the writer Ding Ling, who debuted at a young age with some compositions in prose, including *The Diary of Miss Sofia*, which represented the first account of the history of Chinese literature written by a woman for women.

²⁴ Jiangxi Soviet, Wade-Giles romanization Chiang-hsi Soviet, also called Kiangsi Soviet or Chinese Soviet Republic, (1931–34), independent government established by the communist leader Mao Zedong and his comrade Zhu De in Jiangxi province in southeastern China. It was from this small state within a state that Mao gained the experience in guerrilla warfare and peasant organization that he later used to accomplish the communist conquest of China in the late 1940s.

²⁵ also known as the KMT–CPC Alliance, of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China, was formed in 1924 as an alliance to end warlordism in China. Together they formed the National Revolutionary Army and set out in 1926 on the Northern Expedition.

²⁶ The Shanghai massacre of April 12, 1927, known commonly in China as the April 12 Purge or April 12 Incident, was the violent suppression of Communist Party of China organizations in

to purge the communists and laborers. The theories about **freeing Chinese women from Confucian morals** were barely authorized inside the region under CCP rule. These areas were known as soviets and were the locations the CCP fled to following the White Terror since they were not underneath the control of the KMT.

The KMT championed traditional Confucian ideas about women. They established the New Life Movement²⁷, which sought to counter the **gender role embraced by the Chinese Communist Party** traditional Confucian gender roles supported by the KMT. The Chinese Communist Party period in the soviets from 1927–1945 likewise gave them the occasion to cultivate the aptitudes for managing confederations and governing, which significantly accelerated the creation of the ACWF soon after²⁸.

No sooner had Party cadres attempted to carry out these codes than they faced resistance from male peasants, who feared the possibility of losing their wives and their wives' estates. By the time the party left Jiangxi²⁹ during 1934, it had distorted its attitude towards the achievement of gender equality in a way that foreshadowed the future. The Chinese women's movement earned a brand-new impetus by the

Shanghai by the military forces of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and conservative factions in the Kuomintang.

²⁷ A government-led civic movement in 1930s China to promote cultural reform and Neo-Confucian social morality and to ultimately unite China under a centralized ideology following the emergence of ideological challenges to the status quo.

²⁸ Howell, Jude. "Organizing around women and labour in China: Uneasy Shadows, Uncomfortable Alliances." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, no. 3 (2000): 355–377

²⁹ (江西省S, Jiāngxī Shěng) It is a southern province of the People's Republic of China, stretching from the banks of the Yangtze River in the north to the hilly areas in the south. The name of the province does not mean "west of the Blue River" as the Chinese characters of the name would literally imply, but it derives from "Jiangnan Xi"(江南西; "West of Jiangnan", or more literally, "the west of the south of the Blue River").

Second Sino-Japanese war (1937–1945)³⁰. Heads of the women's movement conveyed nationalist³¹ sentiments regarding the menace the warfare presented to their quotidian existence. These chiefs called for **the release of women to stand for their homeland**. The number of official women's organization inside the CPC at one of the soviets, Yan'an, flourished throughout the assault. During March 1938, at the First Women's Congress organized by the Women's Federation of Shaan-Gan-Ning, the heads of the women's movement began to shape their nationalist ideas into a plan. Women in attendance indicated that the goal of the women's movement ought to bring together women and to **perform collectively to free the Chinese nation**.³² The First Women's Congress additionally defined targets for the women's movement, such as: assisting women in evading violent matrimony, enhancing women's health, destroying the tradition of foot binding, concluding household abuse, and shielding women's heritage rights.³³ The ACWF would implement numerous of the same goals in 1949.³⁴

³⁰ Ka Yee Tsui, Justina. "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1998.

³¹ Nationalism is an idea and movement that promotes the interests of a particular nation (as in a group of people) especially with the aim of gaining and maintaining the nation's sovereignty (self-governance) over its homeland.

³² Tonglin Lu, "Introduction," in *Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature and Society*, ed. by Tonglin Lu (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 1.

³³ Howell, Jude. "Organizing around women and labour in China: Uneasy Shadows, Uncomfortable Alliances." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, no. 3 (2000): 355–377.

³⁴ Ka Yee Tsui, Justina. "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's

When there was controversy among women's rights and the claims of impoverished peasant men, the party supported the latter. The CCP allocated each individual to ascribed political groups based on household backgrounds, settled along a scale of goodness to badness – from the 'good' and 'red' farmworker, wage earner, revolutionary unit, and revolutionary combatant, to the 'bad' capitalist, landholder, petty middle-class, and 'rightist.' Patterns of class labeling was a decisive factor in determining whether someone was attacked and re-educated or not. People associated with 'good class' could quickly obtain political credentials and empower their political identity. Moreover, a good class background was also an essential criterion for adequate job allocation, promotions, wages, housing, migration to cities, and social services.³⁵

The most **pronounced inequalities were defined not by gender but by political criteria** that ranked individuals by class background and workplace activism to cultivate loyal revolutionary subjects and brainwash people with the proper revolutionary attitude toward socialist construction. State media glorified women's public roles as proletarian fighters and socialist constructors via images such as the Iron Girls, as mentioned above.

Newspapers emblazoned with the slogan 'women hold up half the sky,' gave importance to women who joined anyone who could perform all the same jobs as their male counterparts.³⁶ Disseminated by state media, this **public imagery of**

Federation, 1949–1996." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1998

³⁵ 时代不同了, 男女都一样

³⁶ See Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, The gender of rebels (Cultural Revolution), in Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (eds) Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities: A Reader, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 251–3; Hershatler, State of the field; and Xueping Zhong, Wang Zheng, and Bai Di (eds), Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing up in the

masculine femininity became more prominent, as traditional images of soft femaleness disappeared. Such 'feminine' qualities had no place among revolutionary successors. They were required to perform and **act like men to fulfill their revolutionary potential**. Gender was construed as secondary, even bothersome, to the larger project of the Revolution. For 'socialist' women, be dressed in pants with leather belts, cutting their hair short, and abstaining from sex signaled one's rejection of a bourgeois lifestyle. It was even more dangerous than a blurring of gender labor distinctions. Furthermore, failing to display such 'un-gendered' behavior could cause to be denounced for political incorrectness, seriously impeding one's healthy life and career prospects.

Second, from a culturalist perspective, the state rhetoric appropriated the **prominent symbol of the cult of Mao to displace gender** from the political agenda. Through radical rhetoric that insisted upon the reality of gender equality and the importance of class, the state denied existing gender inequality. It used **Mao's utopian images to supersede any discussion** of women's liberation. The zealous cult that surrounded Mao influenced the political meaning and deployment of gender symbols. The cult of Mao was not an entirely new phenomenon; indeed, he had long occupied a semi-sanctified position in the eyes of his more devoted followers.³⁷ Before the 1960s, his acclaim developed relatively organically, fueled mostly by the enormous contribution he made to the history of the Chinese Revolution³⁸. By 1959–60, however, there was a concerted and conscious effort to promote a nationwide cult of Mao was publicly proclaimed 'the most outstanding contemporary revolutionary, statesman, and theoretician of Marxism-Leninism.'³⁹

Mao Era, New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

³⁷ *Holding Up Half the Sky: Women in China*, Susan Perry, 2016

³⁹ V. Spike Peterson and Ann Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press), 1993, chapter 5.

As part of this cultural campaign, the Chinese people were told to study Mao's words, follow his teachings, act corresponding to his instructions, and be his terrific fighters. The sacredness of '**Mao's Thought**' **was emphasized**, as was the need to live up to its tenets through personal dedication. Such passionate worship of Mao and zealous adherence to the state's mandate to apply Mao's Thought to everything politicized gender among Chinese women⁴⁰. One example was the preference for young girls to wear plain colored clothes rather than colorful, flowery prints, which first emerged in response to Mao's famous poem 'Militia Women' (七绝为女民兵题照) in 1961. Mao had initially inscribed the poem on a photograph of himself standing with a group of women army combatants, each holding a rifle.⁴¹ Paradoxically, this repudiation of traditional femaleness and declaration of **supposed gender equality marked the subordination of femininity to masculinity**. Women were coerced to dress and act like men, but not the other way around; likewise, women were now measured by customarily male standards of success.⁴² Any discussion of women's specific problems was declared bourgeois and counter-revolutionary. Femininity or any assertion of a specifically female identity was denounced and labeled a 'backward element.'

The women's liberation movement in Mao's China

⁴¹ 1976-1978

⁴² December 1978

Women's community roles as proletarian combatants and revolutionaries **were worshipped**⁴³. The awakening of the Chinese working class, and with it the awareness of the browbeaten multitudes, expanded, as I hitherto held, substantial feminine support. Meanwhile, it called for a revolution in the outmoded Confucian gender relationships that downgraded women to a law-abiding existence.⁴⁴

Because Marxism emphasized class as the agent for change, conversely, Chinese women were encouraged more than ever before to **enter the workforce to gain their liberation**.⁴⁵ The All-China Democratic Women's Federation was founded on March 24 1949 as China's first country-wide women's organization. It would be retitled the All-China Women's Federation afterward that same year⁴⁶. Women who had been influential in the women's movement and the CPC were incorporated in the federation's governance. Cai Chang⁴⁷, a leading leader in the women's movement,

⁴³ See Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, *The gender of rebels (Cultural Revolution)*, in Susan Brownell and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (eds) *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities: A Reader*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 251–3; Hershatler, *State of the field*; and Xueping Zhong, Wang Zheng, and Bai Di (eds), *Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing up in the Mao Era*, New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

⁴⁴ Tonglin Lu, "Introduction," in *Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature and Society*, ed. by Tonglin Lu (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 1.

⁴⁵ Françoise Thébaud, "Explorations of Gender," in *A History of Women: Toward Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 1994, p.4.

⁴⁶ Ka Yee Tsui, Justina. "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1998.

⁴⁷ a Chinese politician and women's rights activist who was the first chair of the All-China Women's Federation, a Chinese women's rights organization.

was the first chair of the organization⁴⁸. The organization commenced as a federation of various regional women's groupings with the dual goals of building a socialist China and fostering the status of women⁴⁹. The ACWF soon developed beyond its original mission of promoting gender equality, and it became a **tool used by the party to mobilize women** for economic, political, and ethical motives⁵⁰.

The initial phases of the organization were typified by an emphasis on Marxist–Leninist ideology.⁵¹ The CPC regarded the women's movement as a fragment of the more significant Chinese Revolution in contradiction of the feudal past. However, some leaders in the CPC claimed that since most of the women sustained to perform domestic labor and did not dynamically contribute to the Revolution, this **challenged the Marxist–Leninist dogma**⁵². The ACWF opposed this statement, conveying that the economic circumstances were not at the FOCAL point where jobs could be supplied to each woman. Consequently, housekeepers, wives, and mothers devoted to their job could undeniably be seen as supporting socialism.

⁴⁸ Tao Jie, Zheng Bijun, Shirley L. Mow (eds), *Holding Up Half the Sky: Chinese Women Past, Present and Future*, New York: First Feminist Press, 2004.

⁴⁹ Zhang, Naihua. "Searching for 'Authentic' NGOs: The NGO Discourse and Women's Organizations in China". In Ping-Chuna Hsiung, Maria Jaschok, and Cecilia Milwertz (eds), *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminist, Muslims, Queers*, Oxford: Berg, 2001

⁵⁰ Howell, Jude. "Organizing around women and labour in China: Uneasy Shadows, Uncomfortable Alliances." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, no. 3 (2000): 355–377

⁵¹ Ka Yee Tsui, Justina. "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1998

⁵² the official state ideology of the Soviet Union and other ruling parties making up the Eastern Bloc as well as the political parties of the Communist International after Bolshevization.

Consequently, they were mobilized to contribute to socialist construction, rather than fight for gender equality. Besides that, the **proletarianization of women's work**, the presence of numerous communist militants in factories, and almost a decade of anti-imperialist struggles and strikes contributed to the awareness of the working class, bringing them closer to the Communism' ideals.

Throughout 1957, the ACWF joined a different chapter, declining "Democratic" from its name,⁵³ as the federation was officially absorbed in the party composition. **It penetrated the executive pyramid of the state** and proclaimed itself a gathering association.⁵⁴ Official annexation into the national apparatus modified some of the duties of the ACWF.⁵⁵ The ACWF was accountable for propagating party-political propaganda between women, promising the insertion of womenfolk in partisan crusades, promoting the campaigns to Chinese women, organizing parades, and marches to inspire female involvement politicking. The CPC sought after to make use of the ACWF to advertise its **gender-specific initiatives** and build an excellent network to activate women.⁵⁶ The ACWF moreover launched connections in conjunction with new mass movements: The YWCA of China and the Women

⁵³ Judd, Ellen R. *The Chinese Women's Movement between State and Market*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002

⁵⁴ Zhang, Naihua. "Searching for 'Authentic' NGOs: The NGO Discourse and Women's Organizations in China". In Ping-Chuna Hsiung, Maria Jaschok, and Cecilia Milwertz (eds), *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminist, Muslims, Queers*, Oxford: Berg, 2001

⁵⁵ Ka Yee Tsui, Justina. "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1998

⁵⁶ Howell, Jude. "Organizing around women and labour in China: Uneasy Shadows, Uncomfortable Alliances." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, no. 3 (2000): 355–377

Personnel Section of the Trade Union.⁵⁷ Given their commitment to the Cultural Revolution, young women were **manipulated by new dogmatic images of femininity**. Immersed as they were in a Maoist political doctrine, the female part became markedly gender-neutral and politicized.

The women's movement throughout the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, not unlike more campaigns in this era, appeared to be contingent on the cult of Mao Zedong.⁵⁸ For The Duration Of the Cultural Revolution, the women's movement was perceived as **bourgeois** and extremist because it was coined in the Westward. The ACWF cessation occurred in 1968 as it was judged anti-revolutionary. The party disagreed with the fact that the women's movement required to be wholly engaged in the revolutionary movement as a replacement for holding its program. The armed forces inhabited the headquarters of the ACWF, and several of the female factions who had been participating with the women's movement were relayed to labor camps in the rural area. Women's work terminated to operate until the detention of the Gang of Four⁵⁹ occurred in 1976.

The problem of the further development of women's emancipation could not be separated from the context of this historical experience. It was, in fact, a significant

⁵⁷ Bohong, Liu. "The All-China Women's Federation and Women's NGOs". In Ping-Chuna Hsiung, Maria Jaschok, and Cecilia Milwertz (eds), *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminist, Muslims, Queers*, Oxford: Berg, 2001.

⁵⁸ Ka Yee Tsui, Justina. "Chinese Women: Active Revolutionaries or Passive Followers? A History of the All-China Women's Federation, 1949–1996." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1998

⁵⁹ The Gang of Four was a political faction composed of four Chinese Communist Party officials. They came to prominence during the Cultural Revolution and were later charged with a series of treasonous crimes. The gang's leading figure was Jiang Qing (Mao Zedong's last wife). The other members were Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen.

acquisition, from which women would have to leave to face a new stage towards their liberation.

The politicization of marriage

On the way to fulfill this **purpose of liberation**, the new marriage law was endorsed in May 1950, by Mao Zedong⁶⁰. In this respect, it comprehended a raise of the marriageable age to 20 for males and 18 for females, a civil registry for legal marriages, and banned marriage by proxy; both parties had to consent to a wedding.

It instantly became a part of land reform as women in rural communities stopped being sold to landlords.⁶¹ Because of yearly propaganda campaigns from 1950 to 1955 to popularize the law, further than 90% of marriages in China were registered, and thus reconsidered to be compatible by the New Marriage Law.

⁶⁰ The young Mao was a champion of women's rights. In early published essays, he attacked the arranged-marriage system and the way women were treated in the family. Later, in his reports on rural areas, he consistently gave attention to women's issues. The revolution that he led accepted the equality of the sexes as a major objective. Although it did not fully succeed in achieving even its own limited vision of equality, it did transform the roles of women in Chinese society. Yet Mao's treatment of the women in his own life did not reflect his ideals. The one thing that his wives had in common was that they suffered through their association with him. In old age, he indulged a lascivious fondness for pretty young nurses and assistants.

⁶¹ The official slogan was "Men and women are equal; everyone is worth his (or her) salt"

Nonetheless, Women's Federation reports indicated instances of **aggression when women tried to exercise the rights to divorce** conferred to them by the law: the Shaanxi Women's Federation⁶², for example, counted 195 instances of death linked to marriage cases by the end of 1950 in that province. As a method, the Women's Federation encouraged and established "Marriage Law Month" in 1953, as an attempt to dampen the conflict which resulted from the law's passing.

During the Cultural Revolution, one's class status was primarily determined by their family class status. More specifically, for single unmarried people, regardless of gender, their class status was categorized according to their father's class status. Nevertheless, once a girl married, her class status was determined not by her father's status but by her husband. The same did not hold for married men. **When a man married, his class status affected that of both his wife and children.**⁶³

⁶⁴ With little control over their future and facing a harsh life in rural areas, many female sent-down youths turned to male peasants when choosing their partner. Given China's dual residential registration system differentiating rural and urban areas, whether or not to stay in the countryside was a life-long decision for sent-down youth.

Since 1974, the state launched a **nationwide propaganda campaign framing female sent down youth as revolutionary models**. They, through their marriage choices,

⁶³ This finding is consistent with Liu Xiaomeng's research. See Liu Xiaomeng 刘小萌, 《中国知青史: 大潮 (1966-1980年)》 (The history of Chinese sent-down youth: Climax (1966-1980)), Beijing: 当代中国出版社 (Contemporary China Publishing House), 2009, 511.

⁶⁴ Sun Peidong 孙沛东, 《时尚与政治: 广东民众日常着装时尚 (1966-1976)》 (Fashion and politics: Everyday clothing fashion of the people in Guangdong Province (1966-1976)), Beijing: 人民出版社 (People's Publishing House), 2013.

could level out the differences between urban and rural areas.⁶⁵ Simultaneously, the government disseminated its class policy that, when judging a person, family class status was one criterion. However, it was not the only one – **political performance** should be given more significance.

In this way, poor or lower-middle-class peasants – previously, far from ideal partners for young urban citizens – became the most desirable marriage candidates, **practically guaranteeing sent-down youth a promising political future**. Following the economic reforms introduced by Deng Xiaoping, however, such state propaganda turned out to be baseless. With the expanding gap between rural and urban areas, females sent-down youth who elected to get married local peasants found themselves either trapped in the countryside or returning to the city with a failed marriage.

Chapter 2

The Communist vision of gender

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) implemented an amalgamation of institutionalist and culturalist methods to encourage the Maoist rhetoric of gender **perfect uniformity**. Primary, institutionally speaking, the party-state built a tightly **controlled political hierarchy** and implemented Maoist class leveling, which superseded gender hierarchies. The objective of this political arrangement was to **quash conflict over gender hierarchies** and undermine potential challenges to these hierarchies by insisting upon the importance of class and its supposed gender

⁶⁵ Ibid.

neutrality. By the mid-1960s, China's revolutionary regime had consolidated its power by establishing the most carefully organized and repressive political hierarchy in the world. The CCP assigned each person to ascribed **political categories based on family origins**, arranged along a scale of goodness to badness – from the 'good' and 'red' peasant, worker, revolutionary cadre, and revolutionary soldier, to the 'bad' capitalist, landlord, petty-bourgeois, and 'rightist.'⁶⁶

Patterns of class labeling were a decisive factor in determining whether someone was attacked and re-educated or not. People associated with 'good class' could quickly obtain political credentials and **empower their political identity**.

The most pronounced inequalities, therefore, were defined not by gender but by political criteria that **ranked individuals** by class background and level of workplace activism.⁶⁷ State media glorified women's public roles as proletarian fighters and socialist constructors via images such as the Iron Girls, as mentioned earlier. Newspapers and magazines, emblazoned with the slogan '**women hold up half the sky,**' valorized women who joined fishing teams, drilling teams, oil teams, and well-sinking teams, and could perform all the jobs as their male counterparts.⁶⁸

Furthermore, failing to display such 'un-gendered' behavior could cause one to be denounced for political incorrectness, seriously impeding one's healthy life and career

⁶⁶ Gordon A. Bennett, Political labels and popular tension, *Current Scene* 7(4), 1969: 1–16; Lynn T. White, *Policies of Chaos: The Organizational Causes of Violence in China's Cultural Revolution*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989.

⁶⁷ Nancy Hartstock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in Linda Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge), 1990.

⁶⁸ Honig, Iron Girls revisited, 97–100; Emily Honig, Maoist mappings of gender: Reassessing the Red Guards, in Brownell and Wasserstrom (eds) *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities*, 255–68; Huang Wei 黄巍, 《自我与他我: 中国的女性与形象 (1966–1976)》 (Ego and other ego: Female and female image in China (1966–1976)), Beijing: 社会科学文献出版社 (Social Sciences Academic Press), 2016, 90–1.

prospects. Second, from a culturalist perspective, the state rhetoric appropriated a prominent symbol – the cult of Mao – to displace gender from the political agenda. Through radical rhetoric that insisted upon the reality of gender equality and the importance of class, the state denied existing gender inequality. It used Mao's utopian images to supersede any discussion of women's liberation.

Before the 1960s, his acclaim developed relatively organically, mainly fueled by the enormous contribution he made to the history of the Chinese Revolution. By 1959–60, however, there was a concerted and conscious effort to promote a nationwide cult of Mao.⁶⁹ Mao was publicly proclaimed 'the most outstanding contemporary revolutionary, statesman, and theoretician of Marxism-Leninism.'⁷⁰

Mao had initially inscribed the poem on a photograph of himself standing with a group of women army combatants, each holding a rifle.⁷¹ **Traditionally male standards of success now measured women.**⁷²

⁶⁹ Xiaowei Zheng, *Passion, reflection, and survival: Political choices of Red Guards at Qinghua University, June 1966–July 1968*, in Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew Walder (eds) *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006, 29–63.

⁷⁰ 中国共产党是中国人民建设社会主义的最高统帅 (The Chinese Communist Party is the supreme commander in building socialism for the Chinese people), *人民日报* (People's Daily), 28 September 1959, 1.

⁷¹ Emily Honig, *Socialist sex: The Cultural Revolution revisited*, *Modern China* 29(2), 2003: 143–75.

⁷² See Hershatler, *State of the field*; Honig, *Socialist sex*; and Larson, *Never this wild*.

The confrontation between China and North Korean in the demolition of the gendered private sphere

It emerges that the treatment of women by North Korean governance depends on the structure of gender in several new collectivist organizations. **Formally, socialist systems endorse gender equal opportunity:** all socialist nation-state constitutions declare that males and females are the same, and as a result that it is illegitimate to victimize based on sexual role, age, etcetera.⁷³ Though, in reality, all through the communist sphere, leftist principles, programs, and party-political proclamations disguise the perseverance of conventional male-controlled collective beliefs. These maintain to **enlighten occupation procedures** and opinions regarding the responsibility of women in the home environment, long afterward, the formation of communism.⁷⁴ In North Korea, women have correspondingly accomplished some recognized parity. However, practically gender discrimination has been ubiquitous in equally the workplace and household. Nevertheless, the North Korean circumstance diverges from that in other communist structures in, at least, two key respects.

⁷³ Ryang, "Gender in Oblivion," p. 343

⁷⁴ See, for example, Marian Adnanes, "Youth and Gender in Post-Communist Bulgaria," *Journal of Youth Studies* 4:1 (2000), pp. 25–40; Jacqueline Heinen, "Public/Private: Gender-social and Political Citizenship in Eastern Europe," *Theory and Society* 26:4 (1997), pp. 577–97; Jacqui True, "Expanding Markets and Marketing Gender: The Integration of the Post-socialist Czech Republic," *Review of International Political Economy* 6:3 (Autumn 1999), pp. 360–89

In Eastern European socialist states, as Fodor claims, "Patriarchy was not altered or eliminated: it was **forced underground** (or into the private sphere of the family) by the communist rhetoric on women's liberation."⁷⁵

Although in North Korea, patriarchy **persisted at the superficial level** while the headship cult provided patriarchal relations a noteworthy enhancement, reorganizing the entire country in line through traditional secluded constructions. **The analogy of pater** has been used unswervingly to personalize the position of the spearhead then the metaphor of offspring to characterize the individuals. Women's dependence on the state for nourishment and societal facilities strengthened this patriarchal arrangement. For instance, it is recurrently conveyed that before eating meals, progenies were likely to look upon a portrayal of "Father of the Nation" and provide cheers. The systematic political procedure, therefore, openly prolonged gender subservience. This phenomenon is interrelated to the degree to which **the community was secluded plus threatened to stringent communal regulatory guidelines**. These controls effectually stamped out the prospect of existence autonomous of the government. As Cotton points out, in East Asian countries with Confucian philosophies, and North Korea, the state has controlled the private sphere. Consequently, this sphere has not been so much separated from the country as an extension of its domain, albeit an environment likely to generate space where anti-regime contestation can take place.⁷⁶

Undeniably, in **the North Korean framework** where the state's authority is extraordinarily persistent, it is controversial whether the term "private" can be functional to any public phenomena. A subsequent feature typical of the North Korean circumstance from Maoist China has appeared meanwhile the famine and financial crisis. Some academics who studied the evolution of communist

⁷⁵ Eva Fodor, "The State Socialist Emancipation Project: Gender Inequality in Workplace Authority in Hungary and Austria," *Signs* 29:3 (2004), p. 787.

⁷⁶ James Cotton, "Civil Society in the Political Transition of North Korea," *Korea and World Affairs* 16:2 (Summer 1992), pp. 319–37.

administrations to market countries in Central and Eastern Europe have contended that women are inclined to become further marginalized throughout such changeovers. Researchers have similarly emphasized that **gender discriminations are being imitated underneath the new regimes.**⁷⁷ Even though women in North Korea have agonized inestimably from malnutrition, sexual violence, and abuse, several of them—distinct from other communist arrangements—became **empowered during the actual progression of conversion.** In a position here, the PDS collapsed, and numerous men were not able to afford enough resources for their relatives. Women succeeded in originating minor-scale commercial actions such as manufacturing, procuring, and selling nourishment and merchandise over an ever-intensifying web of home-grown marketplaces.

Some academics claim that the entrepreneurialism of North Korean women rendered into a noteworthy enhancement in the economic strength and rank of women over the past decades.⁷⁸ It is probable that although the effort of a myriad of homemakers was narrowed to the household, their national location stayed subsidiary to that of the domiciliary head. New undertakings exterior the family might be interpreted into **better-quality social standing**⁷⁹. Furthermore, evidence advises that at the actual least, this new role in the informal economy provoked a transformation in women's

⁷⁷ Chris Corrin, ed., *Superwomen and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (London: Scarlet Press, 1992); Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, eds., *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern*

Europe and the Former Soviet Union (London: Routledge, 1993); Barbara Einhorn, ed., *Cinderella*

Goes to Market: Citizenship, Gender, and Women's Movements in East Central Europe (London: Verso, 1993).

⁷⁸ Lim Sun-hee, *Change in the Role and Consciousness*, pp. 94–95

economic power.⁸⁰ By the 1960s and 1970s, separation and divorce rates are at present comparatively elevated; more and more, women are conveyed to be unenthusiastic to get married or have offspring. Lim claims that greater economic independence has allowed many women to leave violent or unfaithful husbands.⁸¹

It is not hitherto clear whether this could be considered as an emblem of a more profound, further enduring modification in the role and standing of females. North Korea is still in the throes of financial and societal, if not party-political, evolution. Such conversion has discernably transformed the position and status of women.⁸²

More specifically, **females converted into dynamic economic agents** in evolving marketplace progressions positioned on home-grown markets; this shaped new prospects for them and new challenges for those who pursue to defend traditional gender **role prospects**, counting the state. By what method the spread of capitalist relationships and vicissitudes in the public position of women, in the long run, will distress social relations—and in theory, the rightfulness of the regime—warrants weighty additional study.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 95.

⁸² Shin En-young, “Ideology and Gender Equality: Women’s Policies of North Korea and China,” *East Asian Review* (Seoul) 13:3 (2001), pp. 81–104.

⁸³ Choi Jin-ye, “A Study on Relevant Methodology,” p. 11

The impact of the cultural Revolution, an academic debate

This chapter will analyze the case for clarifying this phenomenon in terms of 'political religion.' It will mention that there is a robust case for debating that the illogical and totalistic personality of the mass movement throughout the CCP can be understood successfully as a secular doctrine.

Maoism can be seen as a **strategic approach**.⁸⁴ It urges prudence, though, in applying the term universally when judging the elite debate which commenced the Cultural Revolution, and which did not pursue aggressively to create a secular priesthood and religious community. It also suggests that the devout models most correct for analogy are not those of pre-modern China. However, more accurately, the European stemmed **religious models** that sculpted Western political religions and were well-known and established by Mao and the Chinese Communist Party.

Scholars and academics continue to debate on why events unfolded the way they did, Mao's role, how the Cultural Revolution began, and on what remained. These arguments have transformed over the decades as academics **explored new causes**.

In the 1960s, whereas numerous intellectuals discharged Mao's initiatives as philosophical and unhelpful, others empathized with his "apprehension" for gender equivalence, in antagonism to bureaucratism and dishonesty, besides individual self-centeredness. They saw Maoism as anti-elitist perseverance on mass involvement, mass condemnation, and the right to nonconform and willpower to wipe out a new dominant class.

⁸⁴ The Sacred in Twentieth-Century Politics: Essays in Honour
<https://epdf.pub/the-sacred-in-twentieth-century-politics-essays-in-honour-of-professor-stanley-g.html>

By the 1980s, however, Harvard University sociologist A. Walder wrote that the "public opinion in the field had changed markedly." Most in the field now "seem persuaded that the Cultural Revolution was a human disaster, even a historical crime, something on the order of Hitler's holocaust and Stalin's great terror."

Walder argued that the Cultural Revolution's breakdowns did not come from poor enactment, administrative interference, unfaithfulness, or enduring class antagonisms. If historical effects turned out differently from what Mao projected, as Walder theorizes, this was "probably because Mao did not know what he wanted, or that he did know what he was doing, or both.... the consequences are what one should have expected, given the Maoist doctrine and aims." ⁸⁵

Some intellectuals confront the conventional interpretations of the Cultural Revolution and suggest comprehending it in an **auxiliary constructive light**. Mobo Gao, composing in "The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution,"⁸⁶ maintains that the "red crusade" affected positively millions of Chinese inhabitants, predominantly agronomic and manufacturing workforces, and distinguishes it as classless and sincerely anti-elitist, revealing the relentless Maoist melancholy in China nowadays as remnants of its constructive heritage.

Some draw a **dissimilarity among purpose and performance**.⁸⁷ Although Mao's leadership was fundamental at the commencement of the party-political movement, Jin Qiu⁸⁸ contends that as measures proceeded, it diverged suggestively from Mao's

⁸⁵ Walder, Andrew (1987). "Actually Existing Maoism". Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs. 18 (18): 155–166.

⁸⁶ Pluto Press, About Us Archived January 1, 2011, at the Wayback Machine

⁸⁷ Walder, Andrew (1987). "Actually Existing Maoism". Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs. 18 (18): 155–166.

⁸⁸ Qiu Jin (Xiamen, 8 november 1875 - 15 juli 1907) (jiaxiang: Zhejiang, Shaoxing, Shanyin) was seen as a Chinese feminist.

utopian vision.⁸⁹ In this sagacity, the Cultural Revolution was mainly a much further decentralized and varied movement that increasingly **vanished cohesion**, spawning several 'local revolutions' which diverged in their nature and objectives.⁹⁰

Academic responsiveness has correspondingly focused on the movement's association with Mao's temperament. Mao projected himself as a wartime guerrilla frontrunner, which made him suspicious of the administrative nature of peacetime governance. Through the Cultural Revolution, Mao was basically "**returning to form**," once more taking on the position of a guerrilla spearhead belligerent in contradiction of longstanding party officialdom. Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals describe the program as neither a bona fide war over ideological limpidness nor meager supremacy struggles to eradicate Mao's partisan challengers.⁹¹

They resolved that the "red crusade" was, at least in part, a legacy mission to strengthen Mao's place in history, aimed to enhance his reputation. At the same time, he was alive and preserved the invulnerability of his ideas after his death.⁹² The mass hysteria encircling the Cultural Revolution was also unprecedented. Historiographer Phillip Short contends that the Cultural Revolution contained elements that were akin to religious worship.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–76) has long been characterized as a period of 'gender erasure.' The rhetoric of equality aimed at homologating the partner-worker

⁸⁹ Jin, Qiu (1999). *The Culture of Power the Lin Biao Incident in the Cultural Revolution*. Palo Alto, California: Standard University Press. pp. 2–3.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*

⁹¹ MacFarquhar, Roderick; Schoenhals, Michael (2006). *Mao's Last Revolution*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

⁹² MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, Introduction

with the partner-worker. Furthermore, women's public roles as proletarian fighters and revolutionaries were **glorified**.⁹³

Through films or magazines, we can still see the asexual silhouettes of Chinese workers in their work estates engaged in redoing the roads and driving tractors or working in construction sites representing the female part of the **avant-garde of the working class** and peasant sand, to fortifying the theme of the hegemony of the proletariat.

It must be remembered that already being a cultural sign, the body places limits on the imaginary meanings to which it originated but is never free from an imaginary construction. The fantasized body can never be conceived concerning the body considered as real. It can only be understood concerning another **culturally established fantasy that claims the place of the "literal" and the "real."**

Socialization of children - born on the right **impulse of the annulment of the historical separation between the public and private spheres** – emptied the family of any role. During the "cultural revolution," decisions about marriage and divorce or how to raise children were often taken during the critical and self-criticism sessions of party committees or labor brigades.

Finally, with the trials conducted by the Red Guards, for the purge of the "bourgeois elements," many intellectuals were unfairly confined to labor camps. During the Maoist experiment, there were also excesses. As part of this cultural campaign, the Chinese people were told to study Mao's writings, follow his teachings, act according to his guidelines, and be his good fighters. The sacredness of 'Mao's Thought' was emphasized, as was the need to live up to its tenets through personal dedication.

Case study: Sent down youth

Consultations with former 'sent-down' youth exemplify how state-run rhetoric defrauded a treatise of women's equal opportunity to silence women and depoliticize gender as a political classification. For urban sent-down youth, gender dissimilarity was absent-minded from society discourse, and conflict between the sexes was obscured by a state discourse that constructed class fight as paramount.

Given their deep involvement in the Cultural Revolution, sent-down youth, young women, in particular, were heavily influenced by these new prescriptive images of women. Immersed as they were in Maoist political doctrine, female sent-down youth became markedly gender-neutral and politicized.⁹⁴

Masculine mode of labor

Over the establishment of communist China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party applied Marx's theory about women's **labor-force attachment**. The theory said that it would bring approximately a gender-**egalitarian humanity** by assimilating most inner-city ladies into industrial employment release women's devotion to domestic housework. The aim of this was to hearten them to participate in socialist production by working outside the home. The party advocated a proletarian class identity distributed by all workers, flattening out any terminologies of gender dissimilarity and contrast. Mao endeavored to shift women's image from that of weak-willed

⁹⁴ Freud's assertion that "I am primarily a bodily entity" suggests that there is a concept of the body that determines the development of the ego. Freud continues the above sentence by saying that "the ego is not only a superficial entity, but also the projection of a surface".

beings who might barely lift their baggage to heroines who could murder a tiger through a single knock.⁹⁵ By partaking in collective manufacture, women could accomplish a little economic autonomy from their father's or spouse's management, making occupation a critical move in women's emancipation. It was further contended that a proper category of labor concerning the two genders should be concerned about equally biological and cerebral or physical characteristics. Repeatedly, on the other hand, bureaucrats were so enthusiastic in their effort to produce a gender-neutral division of labor **that actual physical disparities were neglected** or mistreated. For instance, Yue Lin, an author, recalls in her memoir:

"When other people had finished their work and went back home, our girls still had much work to do, and we were about to cry! Nevertheless, crying would not help us at all! The rest of the two-li (one li equals 500 meters) ridges would not disappear by itself."⁹⁶

Many ladies themselves were involved and passionate about the subject of the new gender-neutral approach of labor. On several occasions, female sent-down youth purposefully **requested to execute intense physical work far beyond their physical capability**, so willing were they to demonstrate their usefulness and revolutionary strength of character.⁹⁷ In most cases, those women were afraid that others might

⁹⁵ 毛主席刘主席畅游十三陵水库 (Chairman Mao and Chairman Liu swam in the Ming Tombs Reservoir), 人民日报 (People's Daily), 27 May 1965, 1.

⁹⁶ Lin Yue 林樾, 黑土地上的收获 (Gains from the black land), in Liu Zhonglu 刘中陆, Zang Jian 臧健, and Tian Xiaoye 田小野 (eds) 《青春方程式: 五十个北京女知青的自述》 (Formula of youth: Narratives of fifty Beijing female sent-down youths), Beijing: 北京大学出版社 (Peking University Press), 1995, 11.

⁹⁷ See Rosemary Roberts, Positive women characters in the revolutionary model works of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: An argument against the theory of erasure of gender and sexuality, *Asian Studies Review* 28(4), 2004: 407–22; Rosemary Roberts, Gendering the revolutionary body: Theatrical costume in

consider a request for rest a form of bourgeois hedonism. The risk of being perceived as a 'bad element'⁹⁸ was an extremely effective deterrent. Women performed manual work to prove they had the same working capabilities as men. After all, Mao had previously claimed this to be accurate, so who were they to disagree? Once More, though, it is vital to mention that women had to adapt to men's standards to receive their prestige in polite society. This gender-neutral form of labor primarily functioned to disavow or reject any different female gender physical characteristics. Additionally, even when women forced themselves to execute backbreaking physical work, they were **merely expected to obtain equal remuneration.**

While the traditional belief was that women were merely competent in executing the calmer and softer job, Mao asserted: 'Whatever men comrades can accomplish, women comrades can too.' In this sense, 'No one took periods and dysmenorrhea seriously. Some even continued doing arduous **farm work during pregnancy.**'⁹⁹

Indeed, work interactions with team-mates broadened metropolitan women's collective web outside their birth and conjugal families, explicitly contemplating the comparatively settled neighborhoods in the rural area. Nevertheless, the gender-

Cultural Revolution China, *Asian Studies Review* 30(2), 2006: 141–59.

⁹⁸ People labelled as 'bad elements' were either class-based dissidents who sneaked into the revolutionary team or people among the revolutionary mass whose behavior was not approved by the party-state.

⁹⁹ See Thomas P. Bernstein, *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977; Yihong Pan, *Tempered in the Revolutionary Furnace: China's Youth in the Rustication Movement*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009; and Michel Bonnin, *The Lost Generation: The Rustication of China's Educated Youth (1968–1980)*, trans. Krystyna Horko, Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013.

impartial type of labor did not provide to the gender-equal opportunity of the sent-down youth. Through the Cultural Revolution, the Maoist party-state judged sent-down women an essential and 'undiscovered' labor force supply to build countryside China. This matter supplanted women's emancipation in the advancement of **countryside civilization**. Associated with class struggle, party-political commitment, and construction advantages, gender fairness between sent-down youth was given continuously a significantly smaller main concern.

Gender-neutral appearance in sent down youth

A pair of years before the commencement of the Cultural Revolution, like most metropolitan regions of China continued the gradually convalescing since the Great Famine of 1959–61; young citizens started to adhere to fashion. Chemises in a diversity of shades, as well as chic adornments, were accessible in stores.¹⁰⁰

In conjunction With the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, nevertheless, such exhibitions of beauty and manner were judged a guilt-ridden vestige of bourgeois concepts. Quotidian individual effects, such as coiffure as well as clothing, were endowed with party-political connotation.

For the Duration Of the "crusade" to demolish the 'Four Olds' – old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits – females' high heels and cosmetics were criticized as bourgeois. As well as medieval and were meticulously outlawed. As Soon as Red Guards uncovered women clothed in **'less-revolutionary' garments**, they would coerce them to alter their attendance. Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals mention an incident in which '[Red Guards] remained on boulevards and prevented

¹⁰⁰ Sun Peidong 孙沛东, 《时尚与政治: 广东民众日常着装时尚 (1966–1976)》 (Fashion and politics: Everyday clothing fashion of the people in Guangdong Province (1966–1976)), Beijing: 人民出版社 (People's Publishing House), 2013.

pedestrians from cutting off their tight legged pants then wipe out their sharp-toed or high-heeled shoes. Misses' extended tresses were supposed feudal leftovers and slashed employing force'.¹⁰¹

In adjunct to pragmatic considerations, the mannish presence of female sent-down youth was intimately correlated to their party-political purpose. As Hung-Yok Ip establishes, throughout the revolutionary period, sophisticated young women were projected to accomplish the threefold assignment of campaigning against the patriarchal structure of the private property, carrying out the penalizing procedures against the adornment of the female body, and renouncing their attachment to self-adornment.¹⁰²

This ideological orthodoxy was intensified during the Cultural Revolution. Restraints on apparel and hairstyle were not limited to females; to be sure, male sent-down youth were also required to abandon their mixed Dacron shirts and cut their hair. However, it is important to emphasize once again that it was women who were compelled to wear men's clothes, and not the other way around. Feminine beauty, as represented by women's clothes, was politically taboo and therefore devalued. Dressing like their male peers enabled female sent-down youth to signal their membership in the proletarian majority, regardless of their actual class background. This socialist revolutionary aesthetics reached extreme during the Cultural Revolution. Communists had long-held pragmatic views regarding women's non-adornment.¹⁰³

Furthermore, it was pointed out that standards of beauty and femininity were socially constructed. Thus, if women sought true liberation, they should cast off such gendered labels. Though such arguments used the discourse of women's liberation,

¹⁰¹ Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, 116.

¹⁰² Ip, *Fashioning appearances*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

the eradication of femininity and women as a distinct 'gender' was motivated more by a **desire to shore up patriarchal privilege**.

In short, women were expected to conform to a **male aesthetic standard** – the value and universality of which was taken for granted.¹⁰⁴ This shift not only ignored individual differences among various women but also disavowed their very existence as a distinct gender with needs, experiences, or contributions different in any way from those of men.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Tonglin Lu, "Introduction," in *Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature and Society*, ed. by Tonglin Lu (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 1.

Demolition and (re) construction of gender identity

a. The Erosion of the private sphere

A debate about the Chinese Cultural Revolution applies to the study of the intersection of gender and conflict since it was a conflict that, on a superficial level, promoted gender equality and a fight in which women were actively involved **in perpetrating violence**.¹⁰⁶

It seems women have been influenced to join violence as Red Guards because of the depletion and rejection of females' spaces, as well as the adoption of masculinity as a "**generic human**," or in this case, a generic Chinese citizen who, as a man, reflects and realizes the compliment of the communist cultural Revolution.¹⁰⁷

Operating from the essential principles of communism¹⁰⁸, the Revolution promoted people's participation in the public sphere by promoting **stereotypically** masculine

¹⁰⁶ Françoise Thébaud, "Explorations of Gender," in *A History of Women: Toward Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 1994, p.4.

¹⁰⁷ V. Spike Peterson and Ann Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press), 1993, chapter 5.

¹⁰⁸ *Principles of Communism* (German: Grundsätze des Kommunismus) is a brief 1847 work written by Friedrich Engels, the co-founder of Marxism. It is structured as an instruction book, containing 25 questions about communism for which answers are provided. In the text, Engels presents core ideas of Marxism such as historical materialism, class struggle, and proletarian revolution.

attitudes¹⁰⁹. At the same time, it sought to eliminate the private sphere's existence, stripping the woman of her (commonly perceived) role within society. After leaving her at the mercy of both political and identity alienation, she could no longer perceive herself in the idea of herself socially constructed during her lifetime.¹¹⁰ This fact had significant implications for "female issues," as they had been traditionally thought of in **the private sphere**. Meanwhile, men and masculinity still dominated the public sphere.¹¹¹ China has historically been a male-controlled culture. Even though the communist Revolution had brought greater awareness of gender equality, this equality was, in fact, unbalanced. While the precise "**ethos**" that "**shapes**" the **genre** is comprehended in terms of that regulation or set of laws, the genre ends up seeming motionless and single-minded as in the construction for which **biology is destiny**. Subsequently, it is not biology but culture that develops into a future.

Nevertheless, gender does not stand up to culture as a genre is to nature; gender is correspondingly a **conversational/cultural means** by which "sex nature" or "natural sex" are shaped and static as "pre-speechary" philosophy, an impartial surface on which culture performs. For instance, Mao famously stated: "Women raise half the sky," which means that women have a significant and equivalent role in **public** society.

While the encouragement to be involved in public and be part of political life was a step towards greater gender equality, this impartiality was not concrete as the Cultural Revolution did not address nor relieve women's responsibilities within the private

¹⁰⁹ For Beauvoir, in the existential analytical of misogyny the "subject" is always already masculine coincides with the universal and differs from an "Other" to the feminine that stands outside the universalizing norms that govern being a person and that is always and in any case special.

¹¹¹ Nancy Hartstock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in Linda Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge), 1990.

sphere. Neither suggested that men should expand their family roles.¹¹² A couple of years before the Cultural Revolution's commencement, as almost urban areas of China were gradually recuperating from the Great Famine of 1959–61, young people began to follow fashion. However, with the start of the Cultural Revolution, such exhibitions of beauty were thought a **guilty legacy of bourgeois ideas**.

Daily personal impacts, such as hairstyle and apparel, were endowed with political meaning. Both men and women all wore outfits of neutral colors. In China, regular clothing consisted of the same blue or grey jacket and trousers for men, women, and children, with no concession to aesthetics. Nevertheless, numerous testimonies reveal the emergence of gender identity through women to put in those clothes a personal touch of care and attention, through patches embroidered mostly. Young women either elected or were forced to cut their long hair and to start wearing pants during the campaign to destroy the 'Four Olds'¹¹³ high heels, and cosmetics were also condemned as bourgeois and feudal and were meticulously forbidden.

When Red Guards discovered ladies wearing 'less revolutionary' clothes, they would coerce them to adjust their appearance. For example, Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals cite a case where [Red Guards] stood on the streets and stopped passersby from cutting their narrow-legged pants and destroying their sharp-toed or high-heeled shoes.

¹¹² Yiching Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014, 11–13.

¹¹³ old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits.

Girls' long braids were deemed **feudal remnants** and cut by force'.¹¹⁴ Limitations on apparel and coiffure were not reduced to females; to be sure, males were correspondingly required to abandon their assorted Dacron shirts and to cut their hair.

Though, it is central to highlight once again that it was women who were compelled to wear men's clothes and not the other way around. Feminine beauty, as represented by women's clothes, was **politically taboo** and, therefore, devalued. Femininity was erased into the confinement of the female dress with the bourgeois, the last enemy of the proletariat.¹¹⁵

This demonization of femininity and the fusion of women's space, jobs, and clothing with the bourgeois meant that (urban) females could not be overtly and safely feminine, for fear of violence. It, therefore, appears that the female body is marked by masculine discourse. Where the male body, coinciding with the universal, remains unmarked but looking more closely at historical events, we realize that both the marker is marked taken within a masculine model of meaning, in which the female body is "separated," so to speak, from the scope of the signification. In post-Hegelian terms, it is **"passed" but not preserved**.

Mao's declaration of equality represented a double bond, forcing women to hold up much more than half the sky.¹¹⁶ Due to **the nonexistence of true equality** and dependence of patriarchy, one would suppose the hypotheses of masculinity academics such as Hearn and Dolan to envisage that men would react to the struggle by joining the fight. In contrast, women would be bound in the opposite system:

¹¹⁴ Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, 116.

¹¹⁵ and consequently, of all China.

¹¹⁶ Lisa Raphals, *Sharing the Light: Representations of Women and Virtue in*

Early China (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 1.

inhabiting care characters such as cooks or nurses. Nevertheless, young inner-city men and women worked very likewise since **femininity in its wholeness was already expunged.** ¹¹⁷

To elucidate further holistically: the revolutionary woman will now have to be displayed not only by erasing her femininity but moreover by praising the masculine facets of her self-expression. Masculinity has become the Chinese **collective genre** for all "revolutionaries." Culturally associating the mind with masculinity and body with femininity frequently occurs in philosophy and feminism. ¹¹⁸

Consequently, any **uncritical reproduction** of the distinction between mind and body ¹¹⁹ should be rethought precisely because of the implicit gender hierarchy, produced, maintained, and rationalized by that same distinction. ¹²⁰

Moreover, these appeals to masculinity were not only attractive to women but also called on men to act. The impact of universalized masculinity and **masculinized discourse** on men can be seen in the mobilization of the rebel workers in Shanghai and their invocation of ideas of brotherhood and fraternity.

¹¹⁷ V. Spike Peterson and Ann Sisson Runyan, *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press), 1993, chapter 5.

¹¹⁸ Cfr. E.V.Spelman, *Woman as a Body: Ancient and Contemporary views*, in "Feminist studies", VIII,1982,1.

¹²⁰ In the philosophical tradition that begins with Plato and is perpetuated with Descartes, Husserl and Sartre, the ontological distinction between soul (consciousness and mind) and body invariably sustains hierarchical relationships and psychic and political subordination.

Maoist's confines of gender representation and the Russian shift to post-communism gendered depiction

Throughout the Cultural Revolution¹²¹, **gender parity was an idea trapped in several paradoxes**. Initially, the party-state and media asserted equivalence between the genders and distinguished the role of women positively in the Revolution. Nevertheless, afterward, women themselves were forced or discouraged in their everyday lives from evolving a specific gender consciousness, and even strenuously warned against gender issues given the unquestioned supremacy of class issues.

Women's liberation was diminished to a sort of **friendly competition between females and males** in their revolutionary endeavors. Governmental and legislative intervention by the government stimulated the process of Chinese women's equality. However, the system's structure impeded and even discouraged women's gender awareness at the equivalent time. Women's liberation came to them as passive recipients of legislation and administration – something **(male) power holders bestowed upon women as a concession** or prize.

The radical dependence of the male subject on female otherness suddenly highlights the topic's illusory autonomy. However, those regulated by these structures, for being subjugated, are defined and reproduced following those structures' needs. If this analysis is correct, then the legal formation of language and politics representing women as a politically represented subject reveals how to be indirectly constituted by the same political system supposed to promote emancipation.

¹²¹ Chinese (Pinyin) Wuchan jieji Wenhua Dageming or (Wade-Giles romanization) Wu-ch'an Chieh-chi Wen-hua Ta Ke-ming, upheaval launched by Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong during his last decade in power (1966–76) to renew the spirit of the Chinese Revolution. Fearing that China would develop along the lines of the Soviet model and concerned about his own place in history, Mao threw China's cities into turmoil in a monumental effort to reverse the historic processes underway.

All of this becomes politically problematic if it can be shown that that system produces gender-connoted subjects along a differential axis of domain or subjects that it assumes are masculine, as in our case.¹²²

Nevertheless, paradoxically, in cases where women were seen as failing to achieve equality in status, they were reminded that equality was, in fact, their responsibility rather than their natural right.¹²³ In the initial few years of the Cultural Revolution, the media emphasized the implication of recruiting supplementary women into political officialdoms and factories, implying that it was women's duty to participate and contribute.

In addition to the overall structural flaws of women's liberation in communist China, issues of gender inequality posed a complicated dilemma in the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution intended to criticize and destroy two targets: bourgeois ideas and lifestyle and the Four Olds. In Western society, feminism had developed to a comparatively mature stage; however, in traditional Chinese culture, discrimination against women had been promoted for **over 2000 years**. Therefore, the dilemma facing advocates of the Revolution was that criticizing bourgeois thought equaled promoting gender discrimination, and attacking conventional view meant promoting Western feminism. To solve this dilemma, the party leaders re-evaluated major conflicts in China. They concluded that class struggle superseded all other issues.¹²⁴

Therefore, the party leaders acquiesced in the ongoing discrimination against females in rural areas – revealing that in reality, they cared little about gender equality or inequality as long as it was **consistent with the socialist utopia they were**

¹²² In such cases, uncritically appealing to this system of women's emancipation can have no other outcome than to inflict a defeat.

¹²³ Neil J. Diamant, *Revolutionizing the Family: Politics, Love, and Divorce in Urban and Rural China, 1949–1968*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

¹²⁴ *Gendered States, and Grant and New land*, (eds.) *Gender and International Relations*, op cit.

attempting to construct. Although the Cultural Revolution was premised on the quest to 'fight the Four Olds,' the top leaders of this movement eventually took the puritanism of socialist morality to new heights. Conventional feudal beliefs were easily concealed in the extreme, ascetic anti-bourgeois vernacular of this decade, leading to what was mostly a contraction of the personal sphere and social gender equality.

From what concerns the Russian case, the time of progression to post-communist Russia has destructively constricted Russian womenfolk's existence. The deprivation of women's monetary, governmental, and societal status in Russian civilization has prompted administrative reactions; nevertheless, women's movements in Russia have repeatedly been ineffective and ordinary and have mostly continued disjointed and undeveloped. Throughout the time cycle of Communist Russia, the organizations contained by the Communist regime did not support the homogeneity and uniqueness essential for agreement amongst women. This unison's unavailability gave activist factions and associations deprived of developing into a collaborative organization for women's constitutional rights. These advocacy groups experienced the influence of disconnectedness and minimal numbers in participation, a destiny not dissimilar from that of labor unions in Russia then. Even though Russia's changeover phase has established additional prospects for political action and deployment, regular class and gender pursuits have yet to be made known.¹²⁵

Before 1991, the USSR promoted equality among sexes by offering social services such as guaranteed employment, childcare, substantial maternity leaves, and easily accessible miscarriages. Alongside these services, there was the apparent guarantee of women's depiction in state bodies. The reality was substantially distinct from what was publicized. Even Though women were in the labor force, they were typically in the lowest-status jobs with little to no mobility. Women netted less than men who

¹²⁵ Dawson, Jane. "Egalitarian Responses in Post-communist Russia." *International Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 13-40. Wiley on behalf of The International Studies Association. Web. 6 Feb. 2013.

performed in similar stances. Ahead of being a part of the manual labor force, women had to do the "double shift." Due to the standardization of gender roles in Russia, many men did not take on any household or childcare obligations. This fact supposed that women were doing household chores and child-rearing while also working their day to day jobs. As for the promise of a better portrayal of women in government bodies, it was almost non-existent. Since the power at that time was in the hands of the Communist Party elites, which females were seldom a part of, women did not receive the representation promised by Russia's egalitarian administration.

In post-communist Russia, sex unfairness in the workplace has been normalized. Women are often the first to be left off at their jobs because men are still seen as the "bread-winners" of the family. Corporations openly advertise for young, alluring women to work as receptionists and other comparable jobs. Russia has no laws to safeguard women from inequitable pay, unfair job loss, discrimination, or sexual harassment. If females are so poorly treated on a basic societal level, there is little hope for improvement and clearer representation within Russian politics.

The establishment of Women of Russia advocated for a better portrayal of women in polls under Russia's new democratic electoral system. Women of Russia are an illustration of the electoral system affecting females' representation in Russian political affairs. Due to the positive relationship among the new democratic electoral system, women of Russia made up 36% of women elected to the Russia State Duma in 1993 due to the Proportional Representation (P.R.) tier¹²⁶. For the 1993 Russia State Duma poll, this group received 100,000 signatures and ended up winning 8% of the vote. Even Though Women of Russia did well in 1993, they failed to preserve the support necessary to hold their place in the 1995 elections legally. Whenever these movements become effective, they suffer from political demands to keep social

¹²⁶ The Limitations of Women in Russian Politics in Post
https://liberapedia.wikia.org/wiki/The_Limitations_of_Women_in_Russian_Politics_in_Post-Communist_Russia

support to preserve their accomplishment. This endorsement contributes to both the influencing policy and balloting results. The achievement of the Women of Russia may not have survived. However, it made an effect on women's representation in Russian politics. Their **triumph led to other political parties in Russia to nominate women.**

b. Is Women's liberation in Communist China: Is it a valid issue?

The Communist Revolution of 1949¹²⁷ carried Chinese women to a different phase of women's liberation. Even though, as I will point out throughout this dissertation, some of the advances were mostly hypothetical and conflicting. Since the CCP was founded in 1921, the CCP encouraged women to be released from the "Three Mountains." The essential tactic of the CCP was to put into practice the independence of marriage to get the utmost encouragement from the Chinese population, involving Chinese women. The CCP gave special consideration to the women's movement since it viewed Chinese women as the vast stockpile of manual labor and realized that "the family must be changed."¹²⁸ The CCP furthermore enthusiastically emboldened Chinese women coming out of the home to join up the communist uprising. Nevertheless, since the CCP not once recognized government power in a specific

¹²⁷ Keys to women's liberation in communist China: an
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Keys+to+women%27s+liberation+in+communist+China%3a+an+historical+overview.-a0113055175>

¹²⁸ Shelah Gilbert Leader, "The Emancipation of Chinese Women," World Politics 26:1 (October 1973), pp. 55-79.

municipality before 1949, barely an insignificant proportion of Chinese women enjoyed women's rights in the autonomous provinces.

Following the CCP came to power in 1949, women's status was enhanced in numerous facets underneath the Mao government. Underneath the People's Republic of China's Constitution, Chinese women and men enjoyed the equivalent constitutional rights in each meaning and had identical individual dignity. Three groundbreaking variations were incredibly valuable to Chinese women. Initially, the Marriage Law of 1950 granted women freedom of marriage and divorce, as I previously said. Next, founded on the Election Law of the PRC of 1953, Chinese women have the same rights as men. Tertiary, Chinese women's right to acquire or inherit property equivalent to that of men.

The new government also introduced the land reform movement and distributed land to peasants, including female farmers. The party encouraged Chinese women to step outside of their houses and participate in social production. That is, to participate in the formation of a modern society built on the doctrines of socialism.¹²⁹In 1957, almost seventy percent of rural women and nearly 3.286 million metropolitan women participated in constructive activities. In pre-modern China, schooling was a wealthy family's privilege.¹³⁰

Ninety percent of Chinese women were unschooled earlier than in 1949. By 1958, 16 million women discovered to read and turned out to be literates. Moreover, because the CCP came to power, prostitution and concubine have been out of the law.

¹²⁹ Keys to women's liberation in communist China: an
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Keys+to+women%27s+liberation+in+communist+China%3a+an+historical+overview.-a0113055175>

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Consequently, the Chinese governance has proclaimed that "Chinese women have achieved truly historic advances toward "equality, development, and peace."¹³¹

Presented this chronological environment, we can turn to the present day to request: Is the motto of women's liberation still applicable if the CCP accomplished excellent achievements in freeing Chinese women? Can the CCP secure Chinese women the full enjoyment of women's rights in the contemporary party-political structure?

It is essential to investigate the issue of Chinese women's emancipation from a worldwide perspective and to analyze women's condition in present-day China. The international women's human rights movement has pushed human rights bodies in the United Nations to recognize that women's rights are human rights. Resulting from World War II, the United Nations took the preliminary step to announce the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "as a common standard of achievement for all citizens and all nations."¹³² The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including thirty articles, concisely defines the fundamental theory of human rights, and necessitates each country to "place social, economic and cultural rights on the same level as civil and political rights."¹³³

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights might be judged as an intercontinental directive for women's liberation from 1948 to 1978¹³⁴. Still, women's rights were not

¹³¹ White Paper: The Situation of Chinese Women. Released by Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China June 1994, Beijing, China, p. 1.

¹³² A. I. Melden, ed. Human Rights (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc. 1970), p. 145.

¹³³ Asbjorn Eide, ed. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Commentary (New York: Scandinavian University Press, 1993), p. 6.

¹³⁴ Will China dare challenge the UDHR?, by Katrin Kinzelbach <https://mondediplo.com/outsidein/will-china-dare-challenge-the-udhr>

wholly referred in their expressions while waiting for the implementation by the General Assembly in 1979 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Inserted into force in 1981, the CEDAW set forth a transnational guideline for women's rights and emancipation. The CEDAW Containing a preamble and 30 articles. It is frequently portrayed as a universal bill of women's rights.¹³⁵ The document explicitly examines each form of favoritism against women, offers the foundation for achieving equal opportunity among women and men, and ensures women's rights, including marriage, property, employment, education, nationality, health, and to vote, etc. Inspired by the CEDAW, several administrations have passed legislation to encourage egalitarianism between women and men, determine national mechanisms **to safeguard the mainstreaming of the viewpoint of gender fairness** in each sphere of influence of culture, and undertake a series of measures to protect women's rights. Involving legislature and provisional specific actions, and end to bigotry against women in each form.

Nevertheless, for many decades, the CPC has resisted applying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the CEDAW mutually into practice and even rejected human rights matters in China. Human rights, feminism, and women's rights were regarded as Western consumerist notions and religious pollutions. From the CCP's perspective, fostering the transnational community's requirements of women's s rights is a considerable danger to the leadership of the CCP. The most important reasons for the CCP in refusing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the CEDAW were: In The Beginning, China holds a collectivist political structure, and the CCP is the only headship of the socialist nation. Women's rights should be performed under the direction of the CCP.

¹³⁵ CEDAW reservations and the prospect of Bangladesh.
<https://www.ourtimebd.com/beta/2018/11/01/cedaw-reservations-and-the-prospect-of-bangladesh/>

Secondly, the goal of Marxism, interpreted by the CPC, is to liberate the entire humanity. However, the concept of human rights is to connect the demands of individual egos. Third, China is an emerging country, and the immediate urgency is to enhance the Chinese people's living standards. Fourth, China has no such tradition in exercising human rights. It is not wholly able to execute such practices as its population of 1.3 billion consists of 70 percent of unschooled farmworkers.

The Chinese government progressively transformed its tone toward women's rights after China introduced the Reform Movement. In 1995, China held the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. The Declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women accepts women's rights as an inalienable and fundamental part of all human rights.¹³⁶

To advance women's rights, comprising the rights to freedom of thought and involvement based on equivalence, endorses the right of every woman to control all healthiness characteristics and eradicate all forms of discrimination against women¹³⁷ in marketplaces.

Nevertheless, there is even now a massive gap among the Chinese government's statements and efforts. A significant obstacle is that China's law has remained an instrument of the party's strategy, rather than an autonomous mediator. There is abundant proof suggesting that Chinese women's condition has been getting harsher ever since the reform movement started.

Nobody of the intellectuals is contrary in that respect, and even the Chinese authority has admitted: "*the condition of Chinese women is still not wholly satisfactory. There exist various difficulties and resistance which have prevented the full realization of*

¹³⁶ Keys to women's liberation in communist China: an
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Keys+to+women%27s+liberation+in+communist+China%3a+an+historical+overview.-a0113055175>

¹³⁷ Ibid.

equal rights to women concerning their participation in political and government affairs, employment, access to education, as well as marriage and family."¹³⁸

Still, there are underlying discrepancies concerning the resulting issues: In what aspects have Chinese women's status improved? Why have Chinese women not achieved great liberation? How can Chinese women accomplish the goal of women's liberation?

Firstly, it is crucial to point out that the terminology "women's liberation" is a "by-product of the development of society." despite the constraints enforced by the CCP, notions of women's human rights are destined to penetrate women's debate.

Nevertheless, the path and development of this debate are undeniably connected to the CCP. The communist party-political system is anti-democratic. Beneath the leadership of the CCP, it will be impractical to open up civilian society to expand in an independent women's movement in China. Some Chinese academics contend that "the status of Chinese females in social life and the level of perception by society has been relatively high" as "compared with the status of women in the West,"¹³⁹ since Chinese women and men have equal rights lawfully and practically.

Nevertheless, it is meaningless for women and men to have the same rights when the Chinese political system harms both men and women. Corresponding to several Chinese specialists, the vital benchmark for women's liberation is "human freedom and overall development," whereby "women's liberation is both a social issue and an individual one." The notion of "overall development" encompasses several topics involving individual, material, and religious existence and lawful rights to employment, property, political involvement, schooling, and religious conviction. It is

¹³⁸ Xiaojiang Li, "Economic Reform and the Awakening of Chinese Women's Collective Consciousness," in *Engendering china: Women, Culture, and the State*. ed. By Christina K. Gilmartin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 372.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

categorically accurate that **women's status in China has diminished in certain areas**, notably in education, social welfare subsidies, work, and political contribution.

Various academics perceive that "the Chinese revolution **merely reconstituted gender inequality in a separate form**,"¹⁴⁰ because the communist Revolution of 1949 was a peasant uprising.

The triumph of communism intended that the **male-controlled habit** succeeded once more in China. The CCP opposed political changes and tried to safeguard the interests of the governing class. For instance, to achieve productive forces, the government initially endorsed the marriage law of 1950 to release women from the chains of prearranged weddings. Though, the party's attempts were provoked by substantial opposition from peasants and peasant-minded leaders. To maintain the support from peasants, the CCP forfeited women's pursuits and surrendered to the peasants devoid of hesitancy.¹⁴¹

The party received barely a few attempts in women's liberation just "for a brief period in late 1952-53."¹⁴² To obtain available assistance, the party introduced a land reform movement that distributed land to peasants involving women. Although not long after Chinese women had the right to acquire land, the new government in 1953 introduced the cooperative organization that collectivized peasants' land into Soviet-style collective farms.

Subsequently, the Great Leap Forward and the Commune Movement caused the downfall of the Chinese financial system and a considerable scarcity of food. At least

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Lisa Rofel, "Liberation Nostalgia and a Yearning for Modernity," in *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*. ed. by Christina K. Gilmartin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 234.

¹⁴² Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 218-19.

10 million Chinese people starved to death in the early 1960s.¹⁴³ The political party did not gain a warning from the price. As an alternative, Mao called for a new political and ideological campaign—the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), that took China into unparalleled and overall anarchy. It is a misunderstanding that the CCP has been dedicated to Chinese women's emancipation from its creation of the CCP to the present day. The reality is that the CCP never had a robust dedication to women's liberation.¹⁴⁴

Since the exercise of communism flopped at each stage under the Mao regime, to maintain its dominance, in 1978, the CCP had no choice but to campaign for the reform movement, which is extensively regarded as the second communist Revolution and a prodigious contribution to women's liberation in Chinese history. Over the past two decades, China has attained the **quickest economic expansion rates in the globe.**

On the one hand, the expansion of the economy has had a significant influence on Chinese women in freeing women's potential aptitudes, offering women additional chances for **competition in a diversity of areas**, and offering supplementary employment chances, especially in East coast zones and distinct economic regions.

In the post-Mao era, Chinese "women's emerging consciousness" has been substantial.¹⁴⁵ Conversely, the Reform Movement has not been continuously sympathetic to women's liberation.¹⁴⁶ It produced significant economic momentum

¹⁴³ Keys to women's liberation in communist China: an
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Keys+to+women%27s+liberation+in+communist+China%3a+an+historical+overview.-a0113055175>

¹⁴⁴ Emily Honig, "Socialist Revolution and Women's Liberation in China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 2 (February 1985), p. 329.

¹⁴⁵ Li, "Women's Consciousness and Women's Writing," p. 299.

¹⁴⁶ Keys to women's liberation in communist China: an
<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Keys+to+women%27s+liberation+in+communist+China%3a+an+historical+overview.-a0113055175>

and established a considerable number of prosperous individuals, although most wealthy people are male. Certain freshly rich Chinese men utilized the wealth for concubinage and prostitution, fostering male-controlled culture. Significant numbers of countryside women are flowing into urban neighborhoods, eyeing for additional chances to enhance their living standards. Still, they are without residency permits as well as medical and academic subsidies for their infants. While commercial advancement generates additional positions for Chinese women, for the most part, women can barely get entry-level positions. The difficulty of “same work-different pay” has likewise arisen.¹⁴⁷

Another fundamental problem is that women are losing occupations because of the “household responsible system, which **idealizes women’s roles in the home, but concurrently expects women to work outside.**

Nevertheless, this, combined with the “**optimization of labor**” idea, which seeks male employees, presents women's contradictory expectations. Chinese Women now complain that they have remained the last hired and the first to be laid off.¹⁴⁸ Besides, the enrollment of female students has diminished. Thirty-six percent more males than females have a primary school schooling; 60-70 percent more males than females have a secondary school education;¹⁴⁹ then, nearly three times as many males as

¹⁴⁷ Li, “Economic Reform and the Awakening of Chinese Women’s Collective Consciousness,” p. 362.

¹⁴⁸ Ziyun Li, “Women’s Consciousness and Women’s Writing,” in *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*. ed. by Christina K. Gilmartin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 301.

¹⁴⁹ Keys to women's liberation in communist China: an
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females have some college education.¹⁵⁰ All these problems are not practical challenges but structural issues.

¹⁵⁰ Ann Kent, "Waiting for Rights; China's Human Rights and China's Constitutions, 1949-1989," *Human Rights Quarterly* 13, p. 174

Conclusion

The Cultural Revolution case reinforces the idea that gender is not binary but somewhat fluid and can change interculturally. Depending on the gender expectations defined by those in power.

This complex system of interpretations explains why **masculinity** is often interpreted **as generic and universal**. In times **when femininity is erased**, expectations of manhood can also encourage women to enter the role of fighters. I hope that such a thesis will evince the complexity of extra-political gender uniqueness and its involvement in different discursive and institutional power dynamics.

I continue to believe that obtaining recognition of one's identity status, even if it is a difficult task within the dominant discourses on law, politics, and language, is necessary. Making representative groups mobile to make them political always runs the risk that identity will become an instrument of the power to which it opposes us. This fact is not a reason to use distinctiveness and not to be used by it.

China has now removed the Cultural Revolution for over forty years. However, it is essential to consider the impact this tumultuous period has had on gender dynamics in its immediate and long-term consequences. **With Maoism, the woman had acquired male dignity**. Today, she is trying to build herself a role of "part of the sky" interjacent with the other, complementary.

The Chinese Communist Party adopted a combination of institutionalist and culturalist approaches to promote the Maoist rhetoric of gender equality. This political arrangement's objective was to quash conflict over gender hierarchies and

undermine potential challenges to these hierarchies by insisting upon the importance of class and its supposed gender neutrality.

Gender as a category was attributed to exclusively party-political and practical meaning. It was employed as a means for the communist regime to achieve its party-political and **intellectual utopia**. This statement is not to say that the public sphere completely forgot gender issues, but they were framed as less critical, even dangerously distracting.

Across political rhetoric, women were granted a superficially equal social status equivalent to that of men. However, the price was the annihilation of femininity and individuality. However, relations between the sexes were framed so that they seemed simultaneously central and irrelevant to the broader issue of class struggle and socialist development. Women were allowed to be as **exhaustively 'red' and revolutionary as their male equivalents**. The only thing they were necessitated to do was to become indistinguishable from their male counterparts – that is, to forget that they were women.

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The Maoist annihilation of femininity: analisi comparativa di una falsa rappresentazione della politica rappresentativa femminile

In questa tesi si affronta il delicato tema della **rappresentazione politica ed identitaria delle donne** all'interno delle **dinamiche di regime**, in particolare sarà messa in luce l'eradicazione del genere femminile nel quadro politico del Maoismo. Un dibattito sulla rivoluzione culturale cinese è applicabile allo studio dell'**intersezione di genere** poiché si trattava di un conflitto che, a livello superficiale, promuoveva l'uguaglianza di genere tramite una mobilitazione politica di *stampo rivoluzionario* nel quale le donne sono state attivamente implicate attraverso la **perpetuazione della violenza**. Questo lavoro di **ricerca** valuta in maniera analitica il dibattito storico/politico che mira a **destrutturare criticamente** l'idea, molto diffusa in Occidente, concernente *l'apparente* adozione di una situazione politica di eguaglianza tra i sessi presumibilmente avvenuta tramite l'ideologia comunista cinese. Attraverso l'analisi storica degli eventi che portarono alla nascita dei movimenti pionieri di emancipazione femminile, originati nei primissimi anni del Novecento, si cerca di trattare l'evoluzione che portò *all'estremizzazione dell'attuazione delle politiche di genere* dal quale derivò il **sopruso identitario** oggetto di tale studio.

In questa riflessione critica sono ugualmente rappresentate le implicazioni **della proiezione sociale** che si manifesta ogni qual volta si riduca l'importanza di un genere rispetto ad un altro, attivando un'**azione socialmente attiva e discriminante** che va ad incidere nella comunità in contrapposizione con la rappresentazione politica.

La sfida consiste nel formulare, all'interno di questo contesto storico, una **critica delle categorie di identità** non rappresentate politicamente e generate nel periodo di riferimento contro la popolazione femminile, **naturalizzate e fissate dalle strutture**

giuridiche del regime. Come chiarisce lo storico Will Durant, "Il regime feudale cinese ha probabilmente **declassato la donna** e ridotto il suo rango politico ed economico nel paese perché il regime feudale stesso si basa su un sistema di esistenza che è *strettamente patriarcale*."

La scarsità di documentazione accademica, dovuta **alla tardiva conoscenza del fenomeno a livello internazionale**, ha rappresentato la difficoltà maggiore nello svolgimento del presente elaborato. Nonostante la proliferazione degli studi di genere negli ultimi due decenni, lo studio delle donne nella politica del sud-est asiatico non ha ottenuto un interesse sufficiente a livello internazionale. Gli approcci teorici al tema delle donne e della politica si sono preoccupati di ampliare le definizioni tradizionali del mondo politico che escludono le donne, abbattendo la **dicotomia delle sfere pubbliche-maschili/private-femminili** dei ruoli politici, sociali ed economici. Numerosi documenti e fonti accreditate furono concretamente distrutti dalla Cina durante l'era Deng Xiaoping nel 1980, in uno strano tentativo di cancellare ogni possibile prova della partecipazione dello Stato alla negazione di (numerosi) abusi dei diritti civili commessi dal regime culturale. Le recenti ponderazioni sull'erosione maoista della questione dell'identità di genere femminile si basano, per la maggior parte, su un numero limitato di ricerche, che possedevano ciò che era rimasto dagli archivi ufficiali e dalle testimonianze raggiungibili dalle vittime, soprattutto negli anni '90. Oltre alla mancanza di un'ampia documentazione storica, l'entità della bibliografia a disposizione della nostra ricerca è stata fortemente limitata dalla barriera linguistica che abbiamo incontrato durante lo studio. Non avendo a disposizione sufficiente conoscenza né della lingua cinese, né di quella cantonese, ci si è dovuti affidare soprattutto a fonti documentali direttamente tradotte o redatte in lingua inglese. **L'assenza dalla copertura mediatica** ha permesso di respingere l'esistenza di queste donne "*negate*" per mezzo secolo. Ricerche universitarie che contribuiscono allo studio dell'annientamento maoista si sono sviluppate soltanto nel periodo circoscritto tra la fine degli anni '80 ed il secondo millennio, rivelando dolorose verità al pubblico e contribuendo a stimolare lo scandalo all'interno del governo post-maoista.

Per risalire alle fonti storiche primarie si è quindi dovuto scavalcare **il silenzio dogmatico** dell'amministrazione pubblica, In questa tesi, pertanto, si provano a sinterizzare questioni

non recentissime di storia contemporanea e questioni di genere, utilizzando più forme dubitative che assertive. E ciò per due motivi: perché non ci sono risposte univoche e facili a molti dei temi portati in queste pagine all'attenzione del lettore; e perché, nonostante lo sforzo di concentrare in un numero limitato di pagine riflessioni che avrebbero meritato spazi anche più ampi, si ha piena consapevolezza del fatto che qualche dettaglio sia stato sacrificato a vantaggio di una visione più d'insieme. Solo con una certa dose d'empirismo si riesce a comprendere la coerenza tra un determinato impianto teorico e l'esperienza delle donne che hanno vissuto questo fenomeno sulla propria pelle ogni giorno. Il profilo concettuale e operativo rilevato dalle testimonianze fornite da chi ha vissuto quel periodo fa leva su un'enorme discrezionalità, collocabile dentro il recinto della rigida regolamentazione del regime Maoista. Valutare la rivoluzione culturale cinese in termini di **prospettiva di genere** è complicato, considerando le giustificazioni pubbliche del **motore propagandistico** del Partito Comunista Cinese tendenti ad *eliminare le "pratiche feudali"*, tipiche della Cina imperiale. Questa tesi storica cerca di **spingere il lettore a chiedersi** se le fondazioni politiche tipiche del Maoismo e quasi interamente accettate non funzionino come "**ritorno dei rimossi**" sulla base di **pratiche elitarie**. Queste *identità politiche stabili* sono alla base di movimenti sociali che possono invariabilmente essere *minacciati dalla stessa instabilità creata nel gesto di fondazione*. Pertanto, il punto di partenza necessario alla riflessione è il **presente storico**. La condizione delle donne nella civiltà cinese è stata oggetto di variazioni significative durante il secolo scorso. La Cina, in precedenza, era rinomata per *l'importanza* che dava *alla vita familiare*. La ragione risiede nel fatto che **la madre cinese costituiva l'asse** al torno alla quale **ruotavano tutti i membri** della cellula **familiare**.

Le forme sociali di questo tipo potrebbero essere **oppressive** a causa delle **problematicità' psichiche** alle quali, *inevitabilmente*, conducono. L'avvento del comunismo in Estremo Oriente passa, infatti, **dalla politica all'etica civica**. Si evince che, nonostante la diversità dei sistemi di governo, sia proprio nei paesi di impronta caratteristicamente confuciana che l'individuo viene istruito a **rinunciare a libertà e diritti in nome dell'interesse sociale**. Dalle viscere del **subconscio collettivo** emerge perciò il "*dispotismo orientale*", vale a dire l'idea che l'Asia sia quella porzione del mondo dove la comunità prevale sugli individui.

Infatti, **i doveri della comunità vengono prima dei loro diritti**. In contrapposizione al paradigma sociale occidentale dove questo archetipo appare rovesciato.

Tramite tale sentimento di **autorappresentazione identitaria riflesso** nella comunità di appartenenza, la complicità delle donne nel conflitto *armato e ideologico* non sorprende. Tuttavia, gli appelli alla parità di genere e alla **partecipazione attiva** delle donne al conflitto hanno portato **all'indebolimento della sfera femminile**. Al contempo, il tentativo di stabilire una **polarizzazione tra teoria della psiche e del potere** potrebbe essere fonte di confusione. In quanto mette in luce gli aspetti della **produzione regolativa degli effetti di identità**. Di conseguenza, qualsiasi **riproduzione acritica** della distinzione tra mente e corpo dovrebbe essere ripensata proprio a causa della **gerarchia di genere implicita**, prodotta, mantenuta ed infine razionalizzata da quella stessa distinzione iniziale. Un dibattito sulla rivoluzione culturale cinese si applica allo **studio dell'intersezione tra genere e conflitto**, poiché si trattava di un conflitto che, a *livello superficiale*, promuoveva l'uguaglianza di genere e una lotta in cui le donne erano attivamente coinvolte nella perpetrazione della violenza. Non si può negare, infatti, che nell'era post-Maoista, la "coscienza emergente delle donne" sia stata concreta.

Analizzando l'identità di genere tramite la prospettiva della retorica maoista, mi sforzo di fornire al lettore un'analisi di questo argomento in modo **da respingere l'attenzione semplicistica** verso la **lotta binaria** tra **riappropriazione e redenzione**. In tutta la **retorica politica di regime**, alle donne è stato concesso uno status sociale **superficialmente** uguale a quello degli uomini. Nondimeno, le relazioni tra i sessi sono state **incorniciate** in modo che sembrassero allo stesso tempo **centrali** ma **irrilevanti** per la più ampia questione di lotta di classe e dello sviluppo socialista. Avrebbero potuto essere esaurientemente *'rossi'* e rivoluzionari come i loro equivalenti maschili. Al genere come categoria è stato attribuito un **significato** esclusivamente **pragmatico di partito**. È stato impiegato come mezzo per il regime comunista atto a realizzare la sua **utopia amministrativa** e ideologica. Associare culturalmente la mente alla mascolinità e al corpo con la femminilità è qualcosa che spesso si verifica nel pensiero comune ed in quello economico. Inoltre, questi appelli alla mascolinità non erano soltanto affascinanti per le donne, bensì invitavano ugualmente gli uomini ad agire. Sembra che le donne siano state

influenzate ad unirsi alla violenza come Guardie Rosse a causa dell'esaurimento e del rifiuto degli spazi femminili, così come **l'adozione della mascolinità** come "*umano generico*", o in questo caso, un generico cittadino cinese che, come uomo, **riflette e realizza** il complimento della rivoluzione culturale comunista.

Nel primo capitolo, l'annientamento maoista delle questioni femminili è introdotto a partire da una **prospettiva storica** che posa il suo fondamento nel periodo *antecedente* all'ascesa del comunismo, in modo da sottolinearne il contributo fondamentale all'ascesa del consenso del socialismo. Particolare attenzione è dedicata alla **responsabilità dell'influenza occidentale** nelle istituzioni, nella gestione e nel sistema educativo dentro e fuori il nucleo familiare, al di là della partecipazione implicita degli organi governativi e del coinvolgimento attivo all'ideologia Kuomintang. La Cina è stata storicamente una cultura controllata dagli uomini. Anche se la rivoluzione comunista aveva portato una maggiore consapevolezza sulla questione dell'uguaglianza di genere, questa **uguaglianza** era, di fatto, **squilibrata**. Mentre l'"**ethos**" **che "modella" il genere** è compreso in termini di codificazione di leggi, il genere finisce per sembrare immobile e compatto come nella costruzione per la quale la *biologia è destino*. L'obiettivo consiste nello spiegare che non è la biologia, ma bensì **la cultura**, che **si trasforma in destino**.

Nel secondo capitolo, il focus si sposta verso il periodo post-bellico della guerra civile cinese. A questo proposito, il **1949** ci serve come **anno 0** dell'attuale disputa tra decostruzione maoista filo-femminista e decostruzione maoista nell'identità di genere, con l'improvvisa comparsa delle **testimonianze delle vittime** e la scoperta **di documenti ufficiali** che confermano questa affermazione. Dal momento che l'esercizio del comunismo si rivelò più **distruittivo** che proattivo in ogni fase sotto il regime di Mao, per mantenere il suo **dominio**, nel **1978**, il Partito Comunista Cinese non ebbe altra scelta se non nel fare campagna per il movimento di riforma culturale, diffusamente considerato come *la seconda rivoluzione comunista*. Il caso della Rivoluzione Culturale rafforza l'idea che il genere non sia binario ma, bensì, fluido e possa **cambiare secondo i dettami culturali**. A seconda delle *aspettative di genere* definite da coloro che sono al potere.

Questo complesso sistema di **interpretazioni** spiega perché la mascolinità è spesso interpretata come **generica e universale**. In tempi in cui la femminilità viene cancellata, le aspettative di virilità possono anche incoraggiare le donne ad entrare nel ruolo di combattenti. Auspico che tale tesi evincerà la complessità dell'**identità extrapolitica del genere di appartenenza** e il suo coinvolgimento in diverse *dinamiche di potere discorsive* e istituzionali. A causa della **parvenza** della vera uguaglianza e della *dipendenza* dal patriarcato, si potrebbe supporre che le ipotesi accademiche di mascolinità teorizzate da Hearn e Dolan pensino che gli uomini avrebbero reagito alla lotta unendosi alla rivoluzione. Eppure, al contrario, le donne sarebbero state incatenate al sistema opposto: abitare personaggi di cura come cuoche o infermiere. Tuttavia, giovani uomini e donne residenti nelle aree urbane hanno lavorato allo stesso modo poiché la femminilità nella sua interezza era già data per cancellata. Il PCC ha attuato una combinazione di metodi istituzionalisti e culturalisti per incoraggiare la retorica maoista dell'uniformità di genere perfetta. Inizialmente, dal punto di vista istituzionale, il partito unico ha costruito **una gerarchia politica strettamente controllata** e ha implementato il **livellamento delle classi sociali**, che sostituiscono le gerarchie di genere. L'obiettivo di questo *accordo* politico era quello di annullare i conflitti sulle gerarchie di genere e minare le potenziali sfide a queste gerarchie insistendo sull'importanza della classe e della sua presunta neutralità ideologica. Verso la metà degli anni '60, il regime rivoluzionario cinese aveva consolidato il suo potere stabilendo la gerarchia politica più attentamente organizzata e repressiva *del mondo*. Le disuguaglianze particolarmente pronunciate, pertanto, sono state definite non per genere, eppure per criteri politici che classificavano gli individui in base alla provenienza di classe e al livello di **attivismo preteso** sul posto di lavoro. I media statali glorificarono i ruoli pubblici delle donne come combattenti proletarie e costruttrici socialiste attraverso **immagini**. Giornali e riviste, decorati con lo slogan "**Le donne alzano metà del cielo**", hanno valorizzato per decenni il ruolo delle donne in modo da glorificarne l'attivismo politico. Paradossalmente, le donne erano sotto pressione per vestirsi ed agire allo stesso modo degli uomini, ma non viceversa; allo stesso modo, le

donne erano costantemente valutate da standard di successo tradizionalmente maschili.

Infine, nel **terzo Capitolo**, questa tesi analizza le **questioni nascoste della sfera privata**, ricollegandosi all'impatto sociologico manifestatosi all'interno del nucleo familiare susseguentemente la rivoluzione culturale, utilizzando un approccio ispirato dalla filosofia politica di stampo femminista. In particolare, attraverso un'**analisi comparativa** tra la situazione Russa post-comunista e la Cina contemporanea, tale argomentazione si propone di **coinvolgere il lettore** in una **riflessione critica** e tediante sulle possibili conseguenze dell'apparente appiattimento di genere. Come si evince nell'**ultimo paragrafo** del terzo capitolo, le conseguenze della rinuncia forzata alla propria femminilità hanno portato, in **tempi odierni**, ad un graduale ma costante **peggioramento** all'interno della sfera pubblica e privata della condizione lavorativa femminile, come dimostrano i **dati empirici** riportati. La discussione tutt'oggi in atto sull'argomento offre, quindi, uno spunto di riflessione in vista di un'analisi più ampia riguardo la **dicotomia tra le visioni storiche proposte**, che contrappongono la visione di emancipazione con quella di assoggettamento.

La Cina ha rimosso la rivoluzione culturale per oltre quarant'anni. Tuttavia, è essenziale considerare l'impatto che questo periodo tumultuoso ha avuto sulle dinamiche di genere nelle sue conseguenze immediate e a lungo termine. Con il maoismo, la donna aveva acquisito dignità maschile. Oggi, sta cercando di **costruirsi un ruolo di "parte del cielo"** interagente con l'altro, **complementare**.
