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Making the Great Wall Great:
The Architecture of Biopolitics and Chinese Nationalism

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The Great Wall shall never fall down; The Yellow River shall roll on and on. This land is charming with mountains and waters, How come you call it an invalid? Charge forward now and save our nation from decline. This land will tolerate intrusion no more; All Chinese should shoulder the mission. This sleeping lion is about to wake up.

-Lyrics to the theme from *Legendary Fok*, a popular Chinese drama

In the periods of territorial conflicts among nation or states, building walls has been the guiding policy. As Robert Frost noted in his poem *Mending Wall* “good fences make good neighbors.”¹ History has seen Hadrian’s Wall in Roman Britain, the Great Wall of China, Maginot Line and lately the Israeli Separation Barrier. The large number of walls built in the past, and the ease with which states today rally support for wall building, provoke us to ask why we need walls in an age of the Internet, cellphones, Facebook, and cyber warfare? In contemporary China, the Great Wall functions as a national device which creates the idea of one China within clear boundaries. Maintenance of the Great Wall reflects the need for historical roots for Chinese identity, but that maintenance is unevenly distributed. Finally, the Great Wall served to encourage Chinese politics to focus inward; a condition which has only recently began to change, especially by China joining the WTO in 2000, supporting America’s war on terror, and holding the 2008 Olympic Games. China’s evolution into biopolitics is different from the Western story and does not entirely fit the same mold. This project is an attempt to trace the differences which make biopolitics relevant in China, ancient and modern, without simply attempting to create historical continuity by reading the present into the past.

Fortifications: The Architecture of Qin Shihuang

¹ Robert Frost, “Mending Wall”, n.d., <http://writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/frost-mending.html>.

On January 10, 2007 Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert visited the Great Wall of China before meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Wen Jiabao. Although Olmert claimed he was paying homage as a private tourist, China seems to have been aware of Olmert's political targets behind his tourist visit. The Chinese Foreign Ministry insisted that Olmert's visit to the Great Wall should be carried out before holding the official welcome ceremony. Olmert was not the first Israeli head of state to visit the Wall. In an overt attempt to link both walls in the international imagination, when construction on the Israeli Separation Barrier first began, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the Wall in 1998. In response, the then Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji told Netanyahu "Our Wall was built on Chinese lands, while you are building your barrier on territories belonging to others."² In a feat of diplomacy, Rongji added "The real security during the age of planes and intercontinental ballistic missiles will not be achieved through building barrier fences and walls but with building bridges of confidence and peace among peoples"³ displacing the colonizing effect of wall building and attempting to redirect the discourse toward the walls efficiency instead.

What these meetings represent is an attempt to create a natural history of wall building in Israel, by use of the Wall in China. Rongji's assertion that the Great Wall was built on Chinese territories obscures the historical reality of the making of Chinese territory by building a wall which, during its construction, was constructed on contested lands and justified by the need for defense. Similarly, the Israeli Separation Barrier has been used to create Israeli territory which is then folded into a discourse of defense.⁴ Both barriers are also built on the land which may be miles away from borders drawn on maps. Also, both barriers reflect two dimensional thinking

² Ezzat Shahrour, "Olmert in China, Between Two Walls, Israeli Barrier...Chinese Wall - Ikhwanweb", n.d., <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=2681>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (Verso, 2007).

which has become increasingly difficult to justify as movement over and under these barriers has become increasingly simple (i.e. airplanes, satellites, missiles, Internet, cell phones). As physical materials, both barriers have also become the canvases for various works of art, unofficial graffiti in Israel and state-sanctioned sculpturing or restoration in China. Finally, both Israel and China expend enormous amounts of money and labor power maintaining, policing and building new sections.

In *Hollow Land*⁵, Eyal Weizman discusses complaints made by architects about the ugliness of the Separation Barrier in Israel. His source is an article from the most influential newspaper in Israeli, Haaretz, and his quote from architect Gideon Harlap. The architect complained a convention the Israel Architects Association that no professional architects were involved in designing the Separation Barrier. Harlap's complaint was that the Barrier, is not beautiful like the Great Wall of China, but ugly "and architects could have contributed to its aesthetic design had they been allowed to participate in its planning in time."⁶ Weizman did not go on to discuss the remainder of the article which deals with an artists' project to make a section of the wall "transparent" by setting up cameras and screens to show real-time video of each side of the Barrier. The hope was to make a window through digital transmission, which begs the question as to whether the Barrier is out of date in an age of communication through barriers is an everyday event. After Harlap's quote, the article focuses on earlier projects by artists to make the Barrier beautiful using art. The article notes "The need to beautify concrete walls is also expressed on the protective wall that was built in Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood to protect residents from fire coming from Beit Jala. That wall...was covered by immigrant artists from the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Dana Gilerman, "Trying to Make the Wall Transparent," *Haaretz.com*, April 4, 2004, <http://www.haaretz.com/culture/arts-leisure/trying-to-make-the-wall-transparent-1.118566>.

former Soviet Union with paintings of Beit Jala, which was concealed behind it.”⁷ Simply because no architects were involved in the Barrier’s design, does not mean artists have not been using the space as a canvas for beautification. More importantly, the idea of the Great Wall as beautiful or monumental was a product of western myth making. To the Chinese people, until the early 20th century, the Wall represented suffering and the legacy of despots. Only westerners who had not slaved over the Wall for 2,000 years could find it beautiful and it was through westerners that modern Chinese would begin to share this positive opinion.

Building the Great Wall

The title “Great Wall of China” was not given by the Chinese. The title was endowed by Westerners in the last few hundred years. When the first emperor of China, Qin Shihuang, united six other warring states in 200 B.C., he immediately began also uniting several smaller walls in these states into what became the first portion of the Great Wall. Before Qin Shihuang, many of the small states in China employed walls against non-Chinese and against their Chinese neighbors. After Qin Shihuang took power and united the walls, he also ordered the destruction of walls separating the former small states within his new wall.⁸ Uniting the walls took Qin ten years and the laborers building the Wall were typically soldiers, criminals or conscripted peasants. Qin built the Wall to protect his empire against nomadic tribes in the north of China. States have always had difficulty with nomadic people within their own borders (Native Americans moved to reservations, aborigine tribes in Australia, Roma in Europe), but ancient China chose to exclude the nomads with the barrier. After the Qin dynasty ended, during the Han

⁷ Dana Gilerman, “Trying to Make the Wall Transparent,” *Haaretz.com*, April 4, 2004, <http://www.haaretz.com/culture/arts-leisure/trying-to-make-the-wall-transparent-1.118566>.

⁸ “Great Wall of China (wall, China) : Introduction -- Britannica Online Encyclopedia,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/243863/Great-Wall-of-China>.

period, Emperor Liu Xiu continually repaired the Wall as a barrier against another nomadic group, the Xiongnu. During the Mongol dynasty (1206-1328 A.D.), the Wall was again repaired, but this time as a means of controlling trade and to prevent rebellions from Han Chinese or other nationalities.⁹ Nearly every dynasty since the Qin had enacted projects to repair the Wall as either a barrier to nomads or to centralize trade.

When the Ming finally managed to expel the Mongols and came to control China (1368-1644 A.D.), the Wall was greatly expanded and maintained to prevent another invasion by Mongol forces. The Ming also built several parallel sections of the Wall, two to three sections in some areas, but the majority of the Great Wall which stands today was done during the reign of the Hongzhi emperor (1487-1505).¹⁰ During Hongzhi's construction, the Wall was split into two lines, name the Inner and Outer walls. Along the Wall many strategic gates and fortresses were added with the three closest to the Ming capital of Beijing which were called the Three Inner Passes. Farther to the west, three gates were established which became known as the Three Outer Passes. Each of these passes was heavily garrisoned as protection for Beijing.¹¹

Architecture of the Wall

The architecture of the Wall has three major elements; passes (gates and fortresses), signal towers (beacons) and walls. Passes are placed along strategic entrances through the Wall and were typically built at intersections with trade routes. The gates within the passes are typically protected by a huge wooded double door topped by a tower used to watch those beyond

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Stephen Turnbull, *The Great Wall of China 221 BC-1644 AD* (Osprey Publishing, 2007), 42.

¹¹ Andrew Nathan and Robert S. Ross, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1998).

the wall and direct troops.¹² Signal towers were often built on hilltops for maximum visibility and served as signal beacons for military communications. Communication along the Wall was made possible by lighting fire beacons, smoke signals, raising banners, or firing a gun in later periods. The Wall itself is usually constructed with tamped earth sandwiched between stone or adobe brick, depending upon the building materials available at the sites. The Wall has an average height of 23 to 26 feet, depending upon the steepness of hills.¹³ On the top of the Wall are large openings which were used to watch and shoot at attackers and the top is also wide enough to drive a car on it, averaging 22 feet wide.¹⁴ The sides of the Wall often have extensive drainage ditches for the large amount of rain water displaced by the sheer size of stone and brick.

Over the 2,000 years it took to construct the Wall, but particularly during the Qin unification of the Wall, thousands of workers (some estimate millions¹⁵) were killed by rocks, cave-ins, overwork and exhaustion, as well as diseases. It has been estimated that nearly 70% of China's total population at the time (3,500,000) people built Qin's Wall.¹⁶ As the cost on China's population grew (six people were required to feed and support every one worker) and the death toll from construction mounted, Qin's imperial project became one of the most hated in Chinese history. Many of these dead workers were buried inside the Wall itself. A popular Chinese myth today asserts that during Qin's time it was believed that the spirits of these dead laborers would serve to protect the Wall from invaders. However, the architecture of walls in China during Qin's time is much more intensely focused on the massing of bodies than on spirits.

¹² "Great Wall of China (wall, China)."

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Louise Chingley Slavicek, *The Great Wall Of China* (Chelsea House Pub (L), 2004).

¹⁶ Paul Noll and Bernice Noll, "Defense and Cost of The Great Wall - Page 3", n.d., <http://www.paulnoll.com/China/Tourism/history-Great-Wall-3-defense.html>.

Architecture of Bodies

Qin's other great project was the construction of the Terracotta Army discovered in 1974. In ancient China, the counting and mobilization of populations presents an interesting comparison with the biopolitics discussed by Foucault.¹⁷ Mobilizing 70% of China's population to build a massive Wall falls in line with other great monuments built in ancient times such as the pyramids in Egypt and South America. Similarly, several ancient cultures build statues and dummies intended to serve leaders after death like the shabti, shawabti and ushabti worker figurines found in Egyptian mummy tombs. However, in addition to massing large numbers of workers, the Terracotta Army suggests an architecture of bodies comparable in scale to the Great Wall. Current estimates about the number of intricately detailed individual statues which comprise the Terracotta Army include 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots with 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses, and other non-military figures such as officials, acrobats, strongmen and musicians.¹⁸ These figurines were created in sections and assembled by laborers and craftsmen. The figures were complete with armor and weapons. Additionally, each figure was carefully painted and made to look as lifelike as possible. No two identical soldiers have been found at the site. Most speculations as to why Qin should build the Terracotta Army are that Qin believed they would protect him in his afterlife and to make sure that he had people to rule over. Qin could expend human life in the Wall project and also create life to rule over after death. 700,000 forced laborers constructed Qin's tomb which was begun as soon as he ascended the throne at the

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics* (Palgrave, 2008); Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (Picador, 2003).

¹⁸ Jane Portal, ed., *The First Emperor: China's Terracotta Army* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

age of 13. After his tomb and Terracotta Army were complete, Qin killed all its craftsmen and his childless concubines by burying them in his tomb to safeguard its secrets.¹⁹

Qin is reported to have had two obsessions; one to unite China and the second to live forever. He believed that he could become immortal if he could only find a substance called the elixir of life. During his reign, Qin made five journeys to mountains considered to be sacred in search of the magical potion. He also said to have sent an expedition of 8,000 people to find the elixir.²⁰ A popular Chinese myth is that some of these people travelled to Japan and later became the Japanese people. Qin relied on mercury tablets in increasing doses, until they killed him at the age of 50. At the same time Qin worked on building the Terracotta Army, his wall project was taking the lives of thousands of Chinese. Applying Achille Mbembe's concept of *Necropolitics* is more appropriate when considering Qin's project than the Euro-centric theory of discipline in Foucault. The building of the Wall does have some parallels with Foucault's argument that "the sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring" in pre-modern Europe. However, the initial projects which resulted in the Great Wall required a great deal of killing. The Emperor was less concerned with exercising a right of life and more with exercising his power to kill. Mbembe's concern in "those figures of sovereignty whose central project is not the struggle for autonomy but *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and*

¹⁹ "Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor - UNESCO World Heritage Centre", n.d., <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/441>.

²⁰ Ibid.

populations”²¹ ought to include the Qin Emperor. Qin focused intensely on the continuation of his own body while destroying the bodies of countless others.

The Chinese perception of the Wall as being oppressive and destructive began an entire genre of writing about the Wall after Qin’s death. One example is the story of a wall builder’s suicide because he had sinned by cutting the veins of the earth, not geologically, but by conscripting forced labor and doing nothing “to alleviate the distress of the common people, support the aged, care for the orphaned, or busy himself with restoring harmony among the masses.”²² This contemporary story reverses the mass technology described by Foucault when he writes “So after a first seizure of power over the body in an individualizing mode, we have a second seizure of power that is not individualizing but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but at man as species.”²³ When construction of the Great Wall began, the first seizure was of masses and perhaps never became individual. However, individual accounts of the atrocities related to building the Wall did come later with the story of Meng Jiangnu, a woman who went in search of her husband after he was pressed into building the Wall. When she finally found where he was supposed to be working, she discovered he had died and his body tossed into the rubble filling the Wall. On hearing this, her weeping tears moved Heaven and the Wall broke open, revealing her dead husband’s bones. Hearing that a woman defeated his wall, Emperor Qin immediately orders her death but, when he sees her beauty, he asks her to become his concubine. She agrees on the condition that her husband’s bones receive a proper funeral. The Emperor agrees and Meng Jiangnu, at the funeral kowtows before her husband’s golden coffin crying before leaping into the river and killing herself (or becoming a silvery fish in some

²¹ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 14.

²² Ch’ien Ssu-Ma, *Statesman, Patriot, And General In Ancient China: Three Shih Chi Biographies Of The Ch’in Dynasty, 255-206 B. C.*, trans. Derk Bodde (Literary Licensing, LLC, 2011), 64.

²³ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 243.

versions), much to the humiliation of the Emperor.²⁴ This ancient story remains popular in China today and fascinated Mao Zedong. Death and the Great Wall were directly linked in the minds of the Chinese people before the 20th century. A popular ballad about the Wall, kept alive by ancient Chinese literati, warns parents:

“If a son is born, mind you don’t raise him!

If a girl is born, feed her dried meat.

Don’t you just see below the Long Wall.

Dead men’s skeletons prop each other up.²⁵

The first stanza warns that sons will be forced to work on the wall. The second stanza encourages parents to feed their daughters (who did not have to work on the Wall) well and not waste food on sons. The final stanza suggests that starving sons to skeletal figures does not matter as they will end up as skeletons working on the Wall either way. The message is clear; raising your children is futile because they will end up dying in the emperor’s pursuit of building the long wall.

The Great Wall as a National Monument

Positive attitudes toward the Great Wall did not start with the Chinese, but were imported by westerners. Beginning with the Jesuits, Westerners developed a romantic image of the wall as majestic and uniquely Chinese. In the 17th century, Father Ferdinand Verbiest argued that “the seven wonders of the world put together are not comparable to this work; and all that Fame hath

²⁴ “The Tears of Meng Jiang Nu”, n.d., <http://www.asiawind.com/pub/forum/fhakka/mhonarc/msg00796.html>.

²⁵ Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 45.

published concerning it among the *Europeans*, comes far short of what I myself have seen.”²⁶ In 1909, William Edgar Geil came up with the erroneous idea that the Great Wall would be visible to the naked eye from the moon.²⁷ The positive Western attitude toward the Wall would only begin to be shared by Chinese after the end of the Ming Dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China by Sun Yat-sen. The attitude became more prevalent among common Chinese after the war with Japan broke out. In 1935, when the Communists fled to Yanan, Mao Zedong wrote the famous poem which would later inspire Tian Han’s lyrics to the People’s Republic of China. Mao wrote “We’ve scored a march of twenty thousand li/ We shall the Great Wall reach,/ Or no true soldiers be!” When Mao came to power, there was a short project to reconstruct damaged portions of the Wall, something which would later be repeated on a massive scale a few decades later. The triumphant new national anthem which greeted Mao as he entered the Forbidden City sounded:

Arise, ye who refuse to be slaves!

Let us amount our flesh and blood towards our new Great Wall!

The Chinese nation faces its greatest peril,

The thundering roar of our peoples will be heard!

Arise! Arise! Arise!

We are many, but our hearts beat as one!

Selflessly braving the enemy's gunfire, march on!

Selflessly braving the enemy's gunfire, march on!

March on! March on! on!²⁸

²⁶ Noel Golvers, *Ferdinand Verbiest, S.J. (1623-1688) and the Chinese Heaven: The Composition of His Astronomical Corpus and Its Reception in the European Republic of Letters* (Leuven University Press, 2003), 52.

²⁷ William Edgar Geil, *The Great Wall of China* (Nabu Press, 2010).

²⁸ Tian Han, “The March of the Volunteers”, 1935, <http://www.nationalanthems.info/cn.htm>.

The Great Wall had officially become a symbol of Chinese nationalism and became disassociated with the tyrannies of the emperors who ordered its construction. Along with the positive turn in considering the Great Wall, more recent attempts have been made to rehabilitate Emperor Qin Shihuang image. In 2002, the Chinese government commissioned the film *Hero* centering on the attempted assassination of Qin by Jing Ke. In the film, several assassins decide to kill Qin, but realize the emperor is the only person who can bring peace to the Warring States by uniting China. The protagonist assassin, Nameless, sacrifices his life to remind Qin about the need for a united China. The film has been criticized outside China for its pro-Chinese unification and pro-totalitarian messages,²⁹ but at the time was China's most expensive and highest grossing film in Chinese history.³⁰

Restoring and Maintaining the Wall

Despite Mao's poem about the Wall, on several occasions he encouraged people to use the Wall as a source of building material for homes, power grids and factories. Before Mao, following the Manchu invasion in the 1700s, the Wall was largely abandoned as a military device. The Manchu, it seemed, had little interest in wasting time and money on something which had failed to keep them out. Many parts of the Wall had been overgrown by vegetation, destroyed by earthquakes, and eroded by the elements. The original portions of the Wall connected and built by Emperor Qin have been almost totally erased today. When the Japanese invaded, many portions of the Wall were subjected to high power assaults. Afterward, road

²⁹ "Zhang Yimou Withdraws from Cannes Film Festival," *BBC*, April 21, 1999, sec. Asia-Pacific, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/325392.stm>.

³⁰ Roger Ebert, "Hero", August 27, 2004, <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20040826/REVIEWS/408260304/1023>; "The Numbers - Keyword Foreign Language", n.d., <http://www.the-numbers.com/keyword/Foreign-Language>.

crews knocked holes through the Wall to build highways. Though the Wall was no longer reviled and was increasingly a source of pride, for the most part the Wall was left to crumble.

It was not until the 1980s that people became concerned with the destruction of the Wall and its effects on the nation.³¹ Using language from the Cultural Revolution, a widely distributed newspaper article reported that the “wind of tearing down the wall” was already “blown as far as Badaling” and this meant the symbol of “the Chinese nation” was in danger of “disappearing from the face of the earth.”³² Several years later, Deng Xioping initiated a project which can be translated as “Let us love our country and restore our Great Wall.”³³ Committees were formed to survey the damage and inventory the ruins. Just as Weizman described the “petrification” of Jerusalem to appear biblical, the Chinese also encouraged “the disciplines of archeology and architecture to merge” in the reconstruction projects.³⁴ Now that the Wall has become a symbol of Chinese nationalism, soldiers and peasants pressed into cruel service have been replaced with professionals and skilled craftsmen. The famous “old dragon’s head,” where the Wall ends at the sea near Shanhaiguan, had crumbled to a few bricks. In 1985, that portion of the Wall was totally rebuilt. Ordinary citizens donated money to the Wall’s restoration projects and during the late 1980s; portions of the Wall began appearing in popular television shows and movies. The Wall had not only become a symbol of the People’s Republic of China, but also a popular image in the Chinese imagination. Rather than being a military device for protection, the discourse among Chinese turned toward protecting the Wall itself. Laws were established preventing structures being built within several hundred feet of the Wall. Heavy punishments and fines were imposed

³¹ Waldron, *The Great Wall of China*, 43.

³² “Jinji Huyu: Baohu Changcheng!,” *Guangming Ribao*, May 25, 1980.

³³ “Deng Xiaoping Wei Xiufu Changcheng Zanzhu Huodong Tici ‘Ai Wo Zhonghua Xiu Wo Changcheng’,” *Renmin Ribao*, September 3, 1984.

³⁴ Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 42.

on people who defaced the Wall with graffiti or, more recently, advertisement signs. But protecting the Wall extends beyond simply maintaining a symbol of national sovereignty. As a People's Daily newspaper article from 1990 argues "in recent times China has been more backward than certain countries. But this backwardness is not because of the Great Wall or the culture that it represents...To devalue the Great Wall is part of the total rejection of national culture."³⁵

After the Wall became a symbol of Chinese nationalism, through the Western positive appraisal of the architecture, we now see what Foucault described in Europe's 18th century "the emergence of something that is no longer an anatomo-politics of the human body, but what I would call a 'biopolitics' of the human race."³⁶ The Wall as a symbol of the human race is also evidenced by the UNESCO declaration of the Wall as a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1984.³⁷ (The tomb of Qin, including the Teracotta Army, was also declared a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1987) In a worldwide contest conducted by the New7Wonders Foundation, an organization dedicated to increasing awareness about man-made and natural structures, held an online and telephonic vote to determine the modern-day Seven Wonders of the World. The Great Wall was inducted by the Foundation along with the Taj Mahal in India, Mancu Picchu in Peru, Petra in Jordan, the Colosseum in Italy, the Statue of Christ Redeemer in Brazil and the Chichen Itza pyramid in Mexico.³⁸ The Wall has become one of the most popular tourist attractions in China which both continually attracts masses of foreigners and also requires the Wall's continual maintenance. For years, tourists have been taking pieces and bricks from the Wall as souvenirs. They have also etched their names into the stone and Chinese businesses have increasingly used

³⁵ Jiashu Lin, "Chaicheng Yu Xiucheng," *People's Daily*, January 12, 1990.

³⁶ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 243.

³⁷ "The Great Wall - UNESCO World Heritage Centre", n.d., <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/438>.

³⁸ "New7Wonders", n.d., <http://www.n7w.com/>.

the Wall for advertisement signs. The tourist attraction also attracts preservationists and continually reinforced the need to rebuild damaged structures while making them look authentic and old. In China, the Wall has established its own form of material politics which focuses on the damage done to the monument by human populations while also encouraging human populations to consume the site as a symbol of the human race.

Biopolitics with Chinese Characteristics

It is common in China to refer to Deng Xiaoping as "the architect" of a new kind of socialist thinking, which he called "Socialism with Chinese characteristics." As the leader of the second generation of the Communist Party in China, Deng's declaration for market reform in the late 1970s opened China to foreign investment, the global market and limited private competition. Deng is often credited with China's economic success over the past 30 years and with improving the standard of living for most Chinese. Deng's declaration marked the end of Maoist conceptions of sovereignty, what might be called a move from a discipline society of confinement to a control society like the one described by Deleuze in his *Postscript on Control Societies*.³⁹ It also represents a shift in Chinese nationalism as it entered the global market, with the Wall representing the borders of Chinese racial identity. Fears over the Wall's degradation paralleled fears over the loss of Chinese identity as people began dealing with foreign capitalists. The People's Daily article I quoted from above ends by declaring "People don't want only to destroy the wall; they want to scatter the Chinese race and become citizens of the world."⁴⁰ A common criticism of the Ming Dynasty politics, usually considered a major reason for its

³⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (Columbia University Press, 1997), chap. Postscript on Control Societies.

⁴⁰ Lin, "Chaicheng Yu Xiucheng."

downfall, is that they were too concerned with what went on inside China and cared too little what happened outside.

Before the Opium Wars and colonization by the British, Chinese were reluctant to think beyond the Wall.⁴¹ Foreigners were all considered barbarians. Periodically, foreigners were purged from China or outright killed. Few Chinese leaders left China during their lifetime. Even Mao only left once to visit the Soviet Union by train. When Mao allied China with Stalin's Russia, the Great Wall fell behind the Iron Curtain (or Bamboo Curtain) and China became even more isolated from the rest of the world. When relations between the Soviet Union and China became tense and the U.S. was engaged in a war with Viet Nam, China began making overtures to the U.S. China sent a delegation of ping pong players to compete with Americans in the United States, paving the way for President Nixon to visit Beijing. When Nixon went to China, a required stop along his tour was a visit to the Great Wall. While on the Wall, Nixon made a small speech, "I think that you would have to conclude that this is a great wall and it had to be built by a great people."⁴² Shortly after Nixon's visit, the U.S. and China quickly Normalized Relations and became a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

China began to increasingly look outside the Wall as its economic interests became more globalized. When the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong in 1997 finished, China allowed the island to retain its governmental structure pretty much as it had been under the United Kingdom. The semi-autonomy of Hong Kong is unprecedented in Chinese history, even more recently with the One-China policies toward Taiwan and the insistence that Tibet remain part of China. After

⁴¹ Waldron, *The Great Wall of China*.

⁴² Dirck Halstead, "With Nixon in China: A Memoir by Dirck Halstead", January 2005, <http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0501/halstead.html>.

joining the World Trade Organization in 2001 and hosting the 2008 Olympic Games, China has become increasingly concerned with the outside world.

In 2 A.D., the Han Dynasty administered what is considered to be the first accurate census in history.⁴³ Counting people and the use of statistics is a very old practice in China. As demographics of population, it would take 1977 years before Chinese would "begin to observe the more or less spontaneous, more or less compulsory techniques that the population actually used to control the birth rate,"⁴⁴ as Foucault puts it, with the institution of the One-Child Policy in 1979. Additionally, the kind of army creation that Foucault describes was different in China. Until very recently, armies were made up of volunteers and conscripts who disbanded after short engagements. Discipline which focused on the body did not evolve in China as it did in Europe. Only when China began looking outside its Wall did it become biopolitical in the Foucaultian sense, and even then, not consistently. In 1997, during riots in Indonesia, several ethnic Chinese living there were specifically targeted victims of rape, murder and vandalism. China remained silent and did not attempt to intervene. Hong Kong and Taiwan arranged transportation for ethnic Chinese wishing to flee Indonesia. In contrast, earlier this year, when war began in Libya, hundreds of Chinese construction workers were left with no way to leave. The Chinese government chartered several flights and evacuated the workers back to China. This would have been unthinkable even ten years ago. The Western importation of Foucault's biopolitics continues today. Now the Western romantic vision of the Great Wall argues that China, in the age of the Internet, exists behind a Great Firewall. Again, the Western imagination romanticizes the image of Chinese walls, this time as representative of an oppressive regime of censorship. While China imprisons more journalists and bloggers than any other state, according to Amnesty

⁴³ "Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)", n.d., <http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=39&catid=2&subcatid=2>.

⁴⁴ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 243.

International,⁴⁵ the Chinese government's control over the Internet affects daily experience in China very little. The Wall is so fixed in the Western understanding of China that it is not surprising that they should invent a Great Firewall surrounding the country rather than look at how Internet in the West is pervasively controlled by marketing and surveillance technology. Occasionally, Western thinkers recognize their own bias, such as Deleuze when he wrote "Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money -- and not by accident but by their very nature."⁴⁶

Conclusion

The Great Wall of China demonstrates a difference between the biopolitics described by Foucault in Europe, though it was successfully imported recently, but it is a biopolitics with Chinese characteristics. While building the Wall might have increased or maintained Chinese territory, it was also a project oriented toward "*the material destruction of human bodies and populations*"⁴⁷ without necessarily disciplining those bodies. Individualization projects are a much more recent in China and developed along with the nationalism which turned the Wall from something hated to a beloved monument in the minds of the Chinese people. Currently, the Separation Barrier in Israel is controversial and reviled by people on both sides. The international community often condemns Israel's Barrier construction projects. It is not difficult to imagine that, given a few hundred years, the Separation Barrier might lose its negative connotations and become a symbol of national pride for the people living there. Once the destruction of bodies which the Barrier requires is forgotten, it could become a tourist attraction or even a World Cultural Heritage Site or a Wonder of the World. As China continues to expand

⁴⁵ "Global Internet Freedom Consortium", n.d., <http://www.internetfreedom.org/background>.

⁴⁶ Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, 175.

⁴⁷ Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 14.

its Open Door policies toward the West, it seems likely that it will also import biopolitical technologies which have been operating in other parts of the world. However, we should not assume that China will apply these technologies in the same way as the West, at the same speed and scale, or that China will follow the same evolutionary paths.

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