

Elaine Jeffreys and Su Xuezhong (2016) ‘Governing through Lei Feng: A Mao-era role model in reform-era China’, in David Bray and Elaine Jeffreys (eds) *New Mentalities of Government in China*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 30–55.

3 Governing through Lei Feng: A Mao-era Role Model in Reform-era China

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This chapter demonstrates China’s changing and hybrid mentalities of government by examining the revival of Lei Feng (雷锋) – a 1960s socialist role model – as the public face of a 2012–2013 government advertising campaign to promote civic behaviours, especially volunteering. Lei Feng, depicted in Figure 3.1, was a peace-time soldier with the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), who died in an accident in 1962. He became famous in 1963 when his life-story, encapsulated in a diary that celebrates Mao Zedong Thought and the ‘socialist’ values of altruism, thrift and working hard for public goals, was promoted through a national mobilization campaign as a model of socialist citizenship. Media statements by Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai urged the Chinese populace to ‘Learn from Comrade Lei Feng’ and to ‘Learn the Correct Class Stance and How to Practice the Revolutionary, Proletarian-communist Spirit of Selflessness from Comrade Lei Feng’ (‘Zhongguo Qingnian chuban’ 1963). Subsequent commemorative events have ensured that most people in China are familiar with the Lei Feng ‘spirit’ of selfless public service. That spirit is sometimes

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caricatured as 'old-fashioned' through spoofs and the sale of retro-revolutionary fashion and kitsch (Steen 2014), and even ridiculed for its 'brainless simplicity' (Humphrey 2005: 41). However, in 2012, Lei Feng became the 'celebrity face' of a two-year-long government communication campaign encouraging China's citizens to adopt 'good' civic behaviours.

<Figure 3.1: Comrade Lei Feng Reading Mao Zedong's Selected Works>

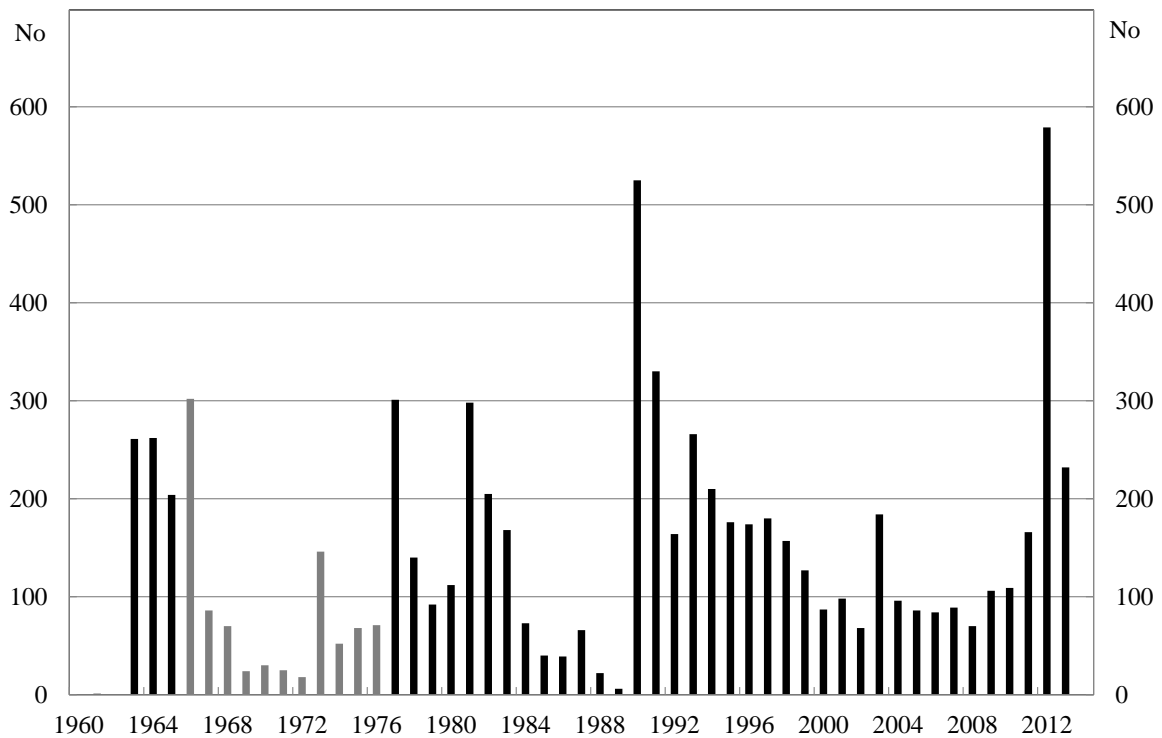
Source: Photograph by Elaine Jeffreys, Hunan Lei Feng Memorial Hall, 2013.

Lei Feng's official media presence in 2012 was greater than at any other point in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC), based on the number of occurrences of the keyword 'Lei Feng' in the online database for the media voice of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) – the *People's Daily* – between 1960 and 2013 (Renmin Ribao Dianziban 1946–present). As Figure 3.2 shows, Lei Feng became a major focus of national media attention in 1963 (around 260 hits). Apart from commemorative publicity each decade since then, media publicity about Lei Feng increased in 1966, 1977 and 1981 (around 300 hits respectively), temporarily peaked in 1990 (525 hits), climaxing in 2012 (579 hits). These dates correlate with specific government campaigns: (1) Mao's 1963 call to 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng'; (2) the 'official' start of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966; (3) the 1977 campaign to 'smash the Gang of Four' after Mao's death in 1976 – the 'Gang' (Jiang Qing, Wang Hongwen, Yao Wenyuan and Zhang Chunqiao) were officially blamed for the '10-year-disaster' of the Cultural Revolution; (4) the trial of the Gang for 'crimes against the people' in 1981; (5) the launch in 1990 of youth education campaigns after the 1989 crackdown on protesters in Tiananmen Square; and (6) the 2012–2013 campaign to promote civic

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behaviours and volunteering, which also commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Lei’s death and Mao’s call to ‘Learn from Lei Feng’.

<Figure 3.2: Number of Hits for ‘Lei Feng’ in the *People’s Daily* (1960–2013)>



Source: Renmin Ribao Dianshan (1946–present) OriProbe Information Services, Windsor, Canada.

Foreign correspondents dismissed the government-led revival of Lei Feng as anachronistic. A report by Andrew Jacobs (2012) in the *New York Times* describes it as ‘old school propaganda’ by a ‘ruling party that is struggling to cultivate a sense of legitimacy’, but lacks comprehension of contemporary values. According to Jacobs, Lei Feng is a ‘joke’ because he only ‘follows marching orders’. In a report for the *New Yorker*, Evan Osnos (2013) similarly calls Lei Feng his favourite ‘Chinese anachronism’. Noting that government-sponsored films

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about Lei Feng had bombed at the box office, he concludes that 'Chinese people, today, have learned that getting ahead requires relentless self-definition', unlike the collectivist-minded 'late, great icon of Socialist dedication' (Osnos 2013).

Such criticisms present Lei Feng as frozen in time, rather than acknowledging the evolving nature and political uses of his fame in both the Maoist and reform era. Portrayals of Lei Feng do indeed exhibit a sense of continuity through history. But that continuity resides less in his identification with Mao-era ideals of unrelenting hard work and self-sacrifice in pursuit of revolutionary goals, than in his embodiment of the less grandiose ethical imperative of displaying kindness to others. Criticisms of Lei Feng as a 'brainless' anachronism have little to offer in the way of explanation either for the CCP's continued (and intensive) use of Lei Feng, or for the changing ways in which his persona has been utilized and represented.

An alternative way of making sense of Lei Feng's contemporary presence is to consider him as a postsocialist celebrity. Arif Dirlik (2005: 229–50) coined the term 'postsocialism' to highlight the hybridity of reform-era China as being a reaction and response to revolutionary Maoism *and* global capitalism, and therefore as both 'postsocialist' and 'postcapitalist' by adopting market mechanisms to correct the entrenched poverty of Mao-era socialism, and inserting a self-proclaimed socialist country into global capitalism. It may seem unusual to characterize Lei Feng as a 'celebrity', since on face value a dead socialist role model shares little in common with a contemporary film or pop star. But on a conceptual level, celebrity can be understood as an industry-coordinated 'media process' and 'the celebrity' may be theorized as a commodity, text or sign, that is 'productively consumed by audiences and fans' (Turner 2004: 20). As we demonstrate below, Lei Feng can be conceptualized as a

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postsocialist celebrity in the sense that he is presented through contemporary commercial and media processes as being both a 'dead famous' but 'obsolete' creation of Mao-era propaganda, *and* a 'living text' imprinted with different, and changing, visions (both official and popular) of what past, present and future Chinese citizenship signifies.

We use Michel Foucault's definition of government as 'the conduct of conduct' to demonstrate Lei Feng's significance as the historical and contemporary face of government efforts to guide citizen behaviours, a referent for 'counter-conduct' or resistances to such efforts, and a means by which individuals may debate the conduct of others and modify their own conduct (Foucault 2007: 191–226). First, we outline the history of Lei Feng and his creation, via state-controlled media, as a socialist role model. Second, we trace how Lei Feng was dislodged from his original Mao-era incarnation as a new proletarian citizen in the wake of the PRC's post-1978 rejection of radical socialism and adoption of market-based economic reforms. Third, we explore the reform-era commercialization of Lei Feng and his infiltration, via satire, parody and advertising, into the world of contemporary popular culture. Fourth, we examine the recent revived and modified use of Lei Feng by the PRC Government to promote civic behaviours. Finally, we consider two domains in which this revived use of Lei Feng has been prominent: the endorsement of philanthropic activities by entrepreneurs through the ascription or appropriation of the title 'living Lei Feng'; and, the perception of Lei Feng-linked volunteering and charitable activities by Chinese students. In the latter case, we present the results of an online multiple-choice survey of Chinese university students, conducted in late 2013, to shed light on how Lei Feng is conceptualized by contemporary youth in a period of revived use by government. We conclude that 1960s socialist imagery and values have been recast by Party-state organs, through an interplay with the media and

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popular culture, to promote new understandings of state-society relations, while attempting to keep alive the notion that the PRC's revolutionary history and the CCP matters.

Proletarian role model

The original Lei Feng was linked to technologies for governing the conduct of others and the self that were based on three fundamental principles of Maoist politics. The first was the 'friend-enemy' opposition of class struggle (Dutton 2005). The second was a mass-line asceticism that aimed to incentivize people living in a poor nation forged after decades of war to work hard collectively with minimal resources to create a modern, socialist China. The third was the revolutionary creed of 'serving the people' (see also Dutton and Hindess, in this book).

The friend-enemy opposition framed daily life in Mao-era China (1949–1976) and was embedded in life-stories presented for public emulation in the state-controlled media, such as that of Lei Feng. Lei Feng became a focus of national media attention on 5 May 1961, when the *People's Daily* featured an origin story about him titled 'A Suffering Child Becomes An Outstanding People's Soldier' (Jun Fen 1961).¹ The page-four article tells of a poor peasant boy being saved by the CCP and becoming an active socialist citizen. It claims that Lei Feng was born in Hunan Province around 1940 and was orphaned at the age of six. His father died after being tortured by the invading Japanese Army, subsequent reports say he was previously beaten by members of the Nationalist Party Army (Zhang Huixin 2009: 5–8). The CCP defeated these armies to establish the PRC. Lei's mother committed suicide after she was raped by the son of a local landowner (Jun Fen 1961). His older brother died slowly

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following a machinery accident and his younger brother starved to death. The family-less Lei Feng roamed the countryside foraging for food until his village was liberated by the PLA. After participating in a class-struggle session, where the landlord responsible for his mother's death and other crimes was executed, Lei Feng was placed under the care of local Party organizations and went to school. This narrative presents the CCP by implication as a 'friend' in the struggle of Lei Feng and the Chinese people against their enemies and to realize a better life.

The article concludes that Lei Feng, and by extension other citizen-friends of 'New China', naturally wanted to follow in the footsteps of those who had sacrificed their lives fighting to establish the PRC by contributing to nation construction (Jun Fen 1961). After graduating from secondary school, Lei Feng responded to Party calls for volunteers to accelerate agricultural production, being honoured as a 'labour model' for his outstanding service. In 1958, he learnt to drive a tractor and later participated in projects to dam a river in Hunan Province, and accelerate mining and steel production in Liaoning Province. In 1960, he joined the PLA and then the CCP. As a peace-time soldier, Lei Feng committed his life to alleviating the hardships experienced by the Chinese people. Anecdotes about him indicate that he worked hard, lived frugally and, apart from buying and reading Mao's publications, gave his earnings to local Party projects and helped people in need. In the words attributed to Lei Feng: 'The Party is my family, the people are my family' (Jun Fen 1961).

Following a second article on 25 January 1963, which stated that Lei Feng had died in an accident on 15 August 1962, aged 22 ('Guofangbu pizhuan' 1963), Lei Feng became the feature of a six-page-long edition of the *People's Daily* on 7 February 1963. The front-page

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editorial enjoins its readers to 'Be Clear About What to Love and What to Hate' by joining a movement to commemorate Lei Feng, which was gathering pace in military areas of Liaoning by people who knew him or had heard about him ('Ai zeng fenming' 1963). Other reports add that Lei Feng's revolutionary spirit, as exemplified by many small acts of kindness to others, will live forever in people's hearts. They encourage readers to be like Lei Feng – 'a restless screw' devoted to serving the people and the socialist cause, and constantly heightening one's proletarian class consciousness through the diligent study of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism ('Weida de putong yi bing' 1963).

Diary excerpts attributed to Lei Feng state that: 'After studying the four volumes of *Mao Zedong's Selected Works*, I now truly understand what kind of a man I should be and what I am living for: I live to improve the lives of others'. Another entry says: 'I live to serve the people wholeheartedly, that is, to struggle for the liberation of humankind/communism' (Zhen, Tong and Lei 1963: 2). Yet another famous entry highlights the dual nature of Lei Feng as a model of how to behave towards friends and enemies. It enjoins people to 'treat comrades like the breeze in spring, treat work with enthusiasm like hot summer sunshine, treat individualism like the autumn breeze sweeping away withered leaves, and treat the enemy as ruthlessly as the cold winter' (Liaoning ribao 1963).

The next front-page article about Lei Feng in the *People's Daily* is dated 5 March 1963 – 5 March is now known in China as Lei Feng Day, with 1963 being cited retrospectively as the first year of a more than 50 year-long tradition ('Zhongguo qingnian chuban' 1963). It notes that the *China Youth Magazine* had issued an album on learning from Lei Feng, containing calligraphic inscriptions about Lei Feng by Chairman Mao and other CCP leaders, and an

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excerpted *Diary of Lei Feng*. The article concluded that Mao's inscription, 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng', would undoubtedly attract an enthusiastic response.

Mao's call to 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng' became what the *CPC Encyclopedia* (1995–2014) describes as 'an atomic bomb in everyone's brain', as PRC citizens were mobilized to participate in a nationwide campaign to become 'living Lei Feng's'. On 8 March 1963, the China Federation of Trade Unions issued a notice calling for workplaces to implement activities for workers and their families to learn from Lei Feng how to behave towards others ('Quanguo zonggonghui' 1963). The PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House published a document to assist with this process in April called *The Diary of Lei Feng 1959–1962* (*Lei Feng Riji 1959–1962* 1963). Lei Feng was the subject of two songs composed in 1963: 'Learn From Lei Feng, the Good Role Model' and 'Take Up Lei Feng's Gun' (Ren and Ren 1990; 'Jieguo Lei Feng de qiang' 2009). The August First Film Studio released a feature film, *Lei Feng*, in March 1965 (dir. Dong Zhaoqi 1964). Commemorative Lei Feng Memorial Halls were built in Liaoning Province in 1964 and Hunan Province in 1968 (Lei Feng Memorial Hall of Hunan China n.d.; 'Shenyang junqu' 2009).

Thus, by the start of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Lei Feng had been presented via mass media and mobilization activities as the epitome of socialist personhood – altruistic, diligent, thrifty, self-effacing and motivated by love of the CCP, the PRC and the Chinese people, as demonstrated by his thoughts and deeds as represented in his diary. Lei's self-enforced austerity and willingness to help others is illustrated in diary entries recording how he gave money and food to a fellow soldier when he heard that his colleague's mother was ill, but he had no money to return home or to buy her food (Qi and Xu 2006: 115), and in entries

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recording his willingness to darn his colleagues' socks and tattered clothing. An entry dated 15 October 1961 presents this 'selfless' revolutionary ethos as heroic:

Sunday today. I didn't go out; instead I washed 5 mattresses for the comrades in my squad, repaired Gao Kuiyun's bedcover, assisted the cooks to wash more than 600 catties of cabbage, swept inside and outside the room, and other things. ... In all, I've done what I should have done. I'm tired but happy. ... It's glorious to be a nameless hero. (Qi and Xu 2006: 150)

This representation of Lei Feng was altered by the Cultural Revolution and subsequently by the CCP's negation of revolutionary Maoism in 1981.

From revolutionary to civic-minded citizen

In 1966, Lei Feng symbolized devotion to Mao Zedong and continuous revolution, an obvious contrast with early depictions of him as a model of revolutionary class unity and more recent depictions of him as simply a civic-minded citizen. A front-page article in the *People's Daily* dated 5 December describes how 2.5 million Red Guards had come to Beijing to see Chairman Mao ('Jiefangjun zhanshi' 1966). The Red Guards refer to a youth paramilitary social movement formed after Mao called on Chinese youth in mid-1966 to take the revolution to a new stage, by opposing those persons within the Party in positions of bureaucratic authority who were compromising the revolution by taking 'the capitalist road', or 'enemies' masquerading as 'friends'. The article provides stories about the Red Guards' acts of public service and praises them as reliable revolutionary successors, citing their familiarity with Mao Zedong's ideas and Lei Feng's deeds, and love of everything associated with the word 'public' (proletarian) (公), and opposition to the word 'private' (capitalism)

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(私) ('Jiefangjun zhanshi' 1966). Front-page stories in the *People's Daily* on 5 March in 1970 and 1973 similarly call on young people in urban workplaces and agricultural collectives to learn from Lei Feng how to distinguish between the correct (Maoist) class line of continuous revolution and the revisionist line of capitalist restoration ('Ba Maozhuxi' 1970; 'Relie xiangying weida' 1973).

Publicity about Lei Feng then diminished until after Mao's death, when Lei Feng became a part of the 1977 campaign to promote the PRC's new leader, Hua Guofeng, and to condemn the main proponents of continuous revolution – the Gang of Four – as counter-revolutionaries. A front-page article in the *People's Daily* on 5 March presents a calligraphic inscription by Hua Guofeng urging Chinese youth to 'Learn from Lei Feng', adding that his spirit of modest altruism offered a powerful critique of the publicity-grabbing and power-hungry Gang (Renmin Ribao, Hongqi Zazhi 1977). Another article dated 12 November accuses the Gang of 'killing' Lei Feng (Liaoningsheng junqu zhengzhi pipanzu 1977). It explains that Deng Xiaoping (PRC leader after Hua Guofeng) had overheard an old man declaring that Lei was dead, when he saw soldiers sitting on a public bus while women and children were standing. The article attributes this lack of civility to the Gang's control over the media and promotion of antagonistic class struggle to obtain power. It also accuses the Gang of falsely denouncing veteran leaders and slandering them as Lei Feng-style 'empty-headed screws'. It concludes that after the Gang's arrest, people had seen new examples of 'living Lei Fengs' on the streets and were joyfully declaring that 'Uncle Lei Feng is back!' Lei Feng is used in this context to epitomize friendship and civility against the enmity generated by the Gang of Four.

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Lei Feng's image was therefore revived along with the CCP's negation of the Cultural Revolution, which was associated with the Gang of Four, and dissociated (to some extent) from Mao, in an attempt to reclaim some of the CCP's earlier standing as *the* vanguard party. Maoist concepts of continuous revolution and capitalist roaders directly undermined the Party's legitimacy by challenging understandings of the vanguard party as automatically taking the revolution forward towards socialism and serving the interests of the people. The practical indeterminacy of these concepts also meant that the Cultural Revolution quickly descended into factional-fighting. As 'citizen-friends' sought to identify their 'enemies', amorphously defined as people without a correct proletarian class consciousness, the allocation of class identity became a matter of political and social rivalries (Blecher 1986: 143). A large proportion of Party members were accused of following the capitalist road at one stage or another; many people were accused of being capitalist roaders because other people wanted their jobs or state-allocated homes; and even the Red Guards fought each other to prove that one group or another had a better understanding of Mao Zedong Thought. In short, the praxis of the Cultural Revolution exposed the unstable nature of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist concepts of class as a definitional category and basis for collective social action.

Lei Feng was further dissociated from radical Maoism along with the PRC's post-1978 adoption of market-based economic reforms, also known as 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' (Deng Xiaoping 1983). In February 1981, shortly after the Gang were sentenced to life-imprisonment, the *People's Daily* ran a front-page article stating that the Communist Youth League was encouraging widespread publicity of Lei Feng activities to promote 'socialist spiritual civilization' ('Changdao gongchan zhuyi' 1981). This concept, first articulated by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, refers to the goal of upholding core socialist

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values, while developing a market economy, and is associated with government efforts to promote political stability and ethical-cultural development in the context of rapid social change (Deng Xiaoping 1979; see also Cartier, in this book).

The penultimate peak in official Lei Feng publicity occurred in 1990, following the suppression of student-worker protests in China, and the collapse of the Berlin Wall (and ultimately the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe), in mid-to-late 1989. On 5 March 1990, the *People's Daily* ran a front-page article calling on the nation to learn from Lei Feng how to build socialism with Chinese characteristics ('Zhongyang haozhao' 1990). This was preceded by a January 'Notice' from the Communist Youth League calling on Party and youth organizations to promote a nationwide campaign for young people to learn from Lei Feng, persist with the socialist road and combat 'bourgeois liberalization/spiritual pollution' ('Gongqingtuanzhongyang' 1990). The latter terms referred to combatting the perceived negative consequences of China's initial opening up to the rest of the world, including new social problems such as crime and calls for political democratization.

On 5 March 1993, the *People's Daily* ran another front-page article about Lei Feng stating that Hu Jintao (then president of the CCP Central Party School, subsequently PRC President 2003–2013) had given a speech commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of Mao's call to 'Learn from Comrade Lei Feng' ('Zai jinian Mao Zedong' 1993). Hu declared that every citizen who wished to contribute to China's rejuvenation could do so by learning from Lei Feng – an ordinary yet extraordinary 'anybody'. He added that a supportive public environment and incentive mechanisms (awards) were required to foster a new generation of

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Lei Fengs –people with the patriotic socialist habits of austerity, hard work and ardent 'rustless-screw-style' innovation.

Hu's invocation of the first Lei Feng Day gestured towards historical continuity, while highlighting a more delimited use of Lei Feng as a civic-minded citizen that retained a connection with the Maoist past in terms of generic core values, but was dissociated from revolutionary class politics. 'Learning from Lei Feng' was no longer about helping others to demonstrate and forge class solidarity. Rather, it had been remoulded as a means of cultivating people with the civic virtues required to modernize new 'New China'. These virtues – patriotism, altruism, frugality, hard work and innovation – derive from the Mao-era experimental (mass line) mode of government policy and practice that mobilized the Chinese people to transform the state of things, while using the least possible material resources. However, both the substance of those virtues and who embodies them have been transformed in the reform period.

Commercialization and entry into popular culture

Along with the PRC's development of a consumer society, Lei Feng entered the realm of popular culture, a transition initially shepherded by reform-era Party publicity machinery focused on historical-patriotic education. The *Diary of Lei Feng* has been reprinted in more than 200 editions, many of which are collector's items (Zhang Jun 2007). The Lei Feng Memorial Halls are now revolutionary tourism sites. To mark the PRC's sixtieth anniversary in 2009, the 1960s *Lei Feng* film was rereleased as a DVD and repackaged as part of a collection of 'red cinema classics' ('Lei Feng (DVD)' n.d.). An animation series, called '*The*

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Story of Lei Feng, went to air on 1 June 2009 on China's Network Television to coincide with International Children's Day ('Lei Feng de gushi' n.d.). A television series called *Lei Feng* also aired in 2009, casting Olympic diver Tian Liang as Lei Feng. This casting choice attracted controversy, with many people, including some of Lei Feng's 'former military colleagues' reportedly considering Tian an inappropriate stand-in for the 'real' Lei Feng because he is a 'womanizing big spender' ('70 wei Lei Feng zhanyou' 2009; 'Jilü cha feiwen' 2009). Such debate highlights the continued investment of the Party-state and/or certain sectors of the Chinese populace in authorizing public understandings of an authentic Lei Feng.

Lei Feng is the subject of an official Lei Feng website (www.chinaleifeng.com/), which went live in May 2012 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his death. The website provides up-to-date 'news' about Lei Feng and Lei Feng activities, and has interactive forums such as blogs, telephone hotlines and bulletin boards. Lei Feng has even been reinvented by Party publicists as an award-winning cartoon superhero, 'Lei Feng Knight', who helps others and gives out Christmas presents (Pan and Qu 2014; see Figure 3.3).

<Figure 3.3: Lei Feng Knight as Father Christmas>

Source: Photograph by Su Xuezhong, Hunan Lei Feng Memorial Hall, 2013.

Today, Lei Feng hats, t-shirts, bags, badges and posters, can be bought at markets and tourist sites across China, and through multiple online stores; many of these products display Mao-era political slogans that have ongoing relevance in the present, whether celebratory or satirical. Such items often display an image of Lei Feng above a slogan in red Chinese characters which says: 'Serve the People'. That slogan was used during the Mao era to

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underscore the goal of the revolution and was used by President Hu Jintao to describe one of the 'eight rules of conduct' of contemporary Party officials. The other rules reiterate the Lei Feng-Maoist ethos – love China, be diligent, be honest, live plainly and help others, although 'follow Mao' has been replaced with 'be law-abiding' and 'follow science' ('New moral yardstick' 2006).

One enterprising Chinese condom manufacturer has used Lei Feng iconography to sell packs of condoms (Mitchell 2006). The boxed sets contain a classic image of Lei Feng and the textual injunction to 'Learn from Lei Feng'. When asked about the logic of using Lei Feng's visage to sell condoms, the manufacturer replied:

Lei Feng would have supported safe sexual conduct and responsible family planning, I believe. And his condoms are stronger than his socks. He would not need to repair them. (cited in Mitchell 2006).

Multiple versions of Lei Feng are celebrated and parodied in other commercial forms. Singer Xue Cun (2013) became famous briefly in the early 2000s for a folk-pop song circulated online with humorous animation called 'All North-Eastern Chinese are Living Lei Fengs'. Designer Zhang Liang has created a commercially successful series of cuddly 'red dolls' comprised of a 'little Lei Feng' and his fictitious 'family members' (Li MUYANG 2012). Artist Dai Xiang (2012) has created a microblog called the 'New Story of Lei Feng', which contains photoshopped pictures of a doll of Lei Feng in contemporary settings: removing graffiti, reading Mao's works in McDonald's, and appearing in commercial advertisements. In interview, Dai stated that his creation of a 'living Lei Feng' aimed to encourage people to reflect on what Lei Feng meant to them personally. In his words: 'Most people know about

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Lei from political propaganda. However, independent thinking allows us to decide what Lei means to us now' (Dai Xiang 2012).

Such independent thinking has included making Lei Feng a part of China's 'spoof' culture – a largely youth-based subculture of user-generated media production, which typically involves the remixing and parodying of established works, especially photoshopping and circulating comical images. One such poster satirizes the reform-era slogan 'Let Some People Get Rich First' by photoshopping a 1960s image of Lei Feng washing an army truck, removing the truck and substituting a Ferrari ('Dangdai Lei Feng de biao zhun' n.d.). The Chinese words beneath the image translate as: 'Today's Lei Feng: The Most Glorious Thing in the World is to be Rich and the Most Glorious People are Rich People'. The use of Lei Feng's image here can be read ambiguously as supporting or criticizing the 'affluent materialism' of contemporary Chinese consumers, when compared to Lei Feng's famed frugality and the egalitarian poverty of the Mao era.

In 2012, Hu Xijin, the editor of the *Global Times*, reposted a spoof image on his Twitter-like Weibo microblog of two contemporary political icons photoshopped into Lei Feng images – the artist Ai Weiwei, known for his criticisms of the PRC Government's stance on democracy and human rights, and academic Kong Qingdong, known for his anti-western, anti-capitalist and anti-economic reform views. While claiming to be saddened by the use of Lei Feng iconography in this context, Hu concluded that: 'The louder the volume of the government campaign to study Lei Feng, the more such spoofs will be enthusiastically circulated online' (cited in Goldkorn 2012).

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The popularity of such spoofs contradicts the internet witticism that: 'Early generations of PRC citizens learnt from Lei Feng, subsequent generations (1989ers) revolted against him, and people born in and after the 1990s have forgotten him' (see Mattis 2012). China's Internet users – the largest online population in the world – are predominantly young and educated (China Internet Network Information Center 2014). While netizens sometimes present their spoofs as active acts of resistance to the Party-state, many are simply having 'fun'. Irrespective of whether they are intended as critique or entertainment, Lei Feng spoofs contribute to the flow of mutating imagery and narratives about Lei Feng, amplifying the repetitive force of associated government advertising aimed at generating support for generic nation-unifying tasks (developing the economy, promoting national pride through commemorative and celebratory events, and building community and civic behaviours).

In short, the images and life-stories associated with the figure of Lei Feng have become part of contemporary popular and consumer culture, whereby texts from multiple media collectively create a public profile of a 'living Lei Feng' that is no longer under the exclusive control of any individual or institution, including the PRC Government. Although Lei Feng came to fame through the Party-state propaganda machinery, commercial media processes have turned him into a celebrity by providing the means to recreate and circulate multiple new stories about him. As Lei Feng gradually became objectified and imprinted with new interpretations, it also became possible for the Party-state publicity machinery to adapt him to serve new social functions. The flexible nature of Lei Feng's postsocialist celebrity is underscored by the recent government use of Lei Feng as the 'face' of a national campaign to promote contemporary civic behaviours, especially volunteering.

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Philanthropy 'poster-boy'

Lei Feng's revival as the celebrity face of a government campaign to promote volunteering in 2012–2013 aimed to draw large groups of young people into planning for the PRC's future, while commemorating its history. Volunteering – defined by the PRC Government as the not-for-profit giving of time, intellect, strength and skills, to support public benefit activities and promote social harmony – has been a growing focus of Chinese public policy since the late 1980s ('Ministry of Civil Affairs of the PRC' 2013). In 1987, the Ministry of Civil Affairs advocated organizing community-based volunteer services for disadvantaged urban residents (Li Maoping 2012: 28). In 1994, the national China Young Volunteers Association was established under the Chinese Communist Youth League's leadership to promote volunteering and provide services for people in need. The PRC's Ninth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development (1996–2000) and Summary of the 2010 Long-term Objectives proposed expanding community-based volunteering ('Zhonghua renmin gongheguo' 1996). By 2013, China had an estimated 40 million registered volunteers, mobilized in part as a result of natural disasters and mega-events such as the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake and Beijing Olympics ('Yao Ming huo guoji zhiyuanzhe' 2014; see also Cartier and Hoffman, in this book).

The newfound importance ascribed by the government to volunteering is confirmed by the 'China Social Services Volunteer Team Building Guidelines for 2013–2020', which advocate that registered volunteers should comprise 10 per cent of China's population by 2020 ('Ministry of Civil Affairs of the PRC' 2013). Registered volunteer organizations are organized and mobilized by government departments and Communist Party committees,

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including the Communist Youth League Committees and Young Volunteer Associations, through coordination with community, non-profit and business organizations (United Nations Development Programme 2011). The expansion of volunteering in the PRC thus aims to incentivize individuals and community and non-profit organizations to work with the state, rather than independently of it, to develop a regulated philanthropic sector that will complement government-provided welfare services by 2020 (Guowuyuan 2014).

Lei Feng was first enlisted in a high-profile fashion as the face of government efforts to promote a philanthropic culture in 2000, when the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League and the Young Volunteers Association renamed Lei Feng Day 'China Youth Volunteer Service Day' ('Zhongguo qingnian zhiyuan fuwuri' 2012). This action linked Lei to the UN International Volunteer Day and Millennium development goals, which include eradicating extreme poverty, combatting AIDS and Malaria, and ensuring environmental sustainability. Thus, it connected Lei Feng to new programs of domestic and international governance.

In March 2012, the CCP Central Committee Office released a document called 'Suggestions on Enhancing Efforts to Learn from Lei Feng', stating that local communities and residents should be encouraged to provide volunteer services following Lei Feng's example of helping others, reflecting 'traditional Chinese virtues' and based on love of the CCP, China, socialism, and the Chinese people ('Zhonggong zhongyang bangongting yinfa' 2012). The document urged Party organizations and local and provincial-level governments to organize diverse Lei Feng activities using multiple media forms. Examples included: biannual awards to recognize outstanding community service; prizes for volunteer-themed student essays, theatre and

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exhibitions; promoting the Lei Feng Memorial Halls; using art, film, television, literature, the internet and mobile phones, to spread the 'Lei Feng Spirit'; and promoting Lei Feng activities in workplaces, shopping malls and transport hubs, etc. As a result, images of Lei Feng and endorsements to 'Learn from Lei Feng' could be observed through the PRC in 2012–2013.

Government advertising for the campaign drew on Lei Feng iconography and symbolism, but also encouraged China's citizens to express universal love and empower themselves as 'global' self-governing individuals, rather than to demonstrate revolutionary solidarity through individual sacrifice. For example, the PRC's Publicity and Information Department, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, and the General Administration of Press and Publication, issued a series of 12 poster-style public service advertisements (PSAs) titled 'Be Civic-Minded and Create a New Trend' (*jiangwenming shuxinfeng* 讲文明树新风). The first poster celebrates the 50 years since Lei Feng's death with the slogan 'Lei Feng Will Always Be With Us (1962–2012)', ascribing a ubiquitous aspect to the Lei Feng spirit (*Lei Feng yizhi zai women shenbian* 雷锋一直在我们身边 1962–2012). It juxtaposes a classic 1960s image of Lei Feng with images of contemporary doctors and nurses giving elderly people free health checks at Community Lei Feng Service Sites ('Renmin ribao kandeng de' 2012).

Other posters in the series link Lei Feng to environmental concerns and concepts of compassion presented as a Chinese and universal human attribute. One poster displays an image of university-student volunteers against a leafy backdrop conducting water quality tests and planting a tree. A slogan emblazoned in large characters at the top of the poster says: 'Caring for Nature Requires Everyone's Help'. Beneath this message, in smaller characters,

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is the slogan 'Learn from Lei Feng, Contribute to the Lives of Others, Improve Yourself' (*Xuexi Lei Feng: Fengxian taren tisheng ziji* 学习雷锋 奉献他人 提升自己). Yet another poster shows an image of two hands holding a heart-shaped photograph of contemporary volunteers – a visual symbol of compassion and philanthropy – against a blue and green backdrop signifying an environmentally clean and beautiful China. The slogan 'Learn from Lei Feng: Contribute to the Lives of Others; Improve Yourself' is placed beneath the image. Other posters produced by local governments used similar slogans and used modern, stylized representations of Lei Feng, or evoked him by name and through visual metonymy, such as in brightly-coloured prints of young, happy people wearing Lei Feng hats ('Guangzhou xuyao qianwan ge Lei Feng' 2013).

The posters reveal an effort to reshape and update the figure of Lei Feng to encourage Chinese citizens to volunteer to meet new social imperatives. While appealing to Mao-era traditions of altruistic public service, they introduce a focus on self-improvement and self-fulfilment that differs from the socialist ethos of the original Lei Feng campaign. The message of the original campaign was about working selflessly for the good of society and even abolishing the self from civil acts. When the diary version of Lei Feng revels in the glory of being a 'nameless hero', he does so in the spirit of a hard-nosed form of socialism in which the individual is literally irrelevant – only the good of society matters. In contrast, the message of the new publicity materials is that one can help others and help oneself at the same time. The materials encourage people to contribute voluntarily to public welfare in the context of a more open and complex society, one where the Party-state has reduced capacity to compel individuals to pursue its goals through mass mobilization activities, and consequently has to use new governing strategies to encourage responsible citizenship.

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The 'carrot' for volunteering is self-enhancement in the sense of 'feeling good' about helping others, and in the practical sense of 'self-entrepreneurialism' – that is, acquiring experiences and skills that may enhance one's career opportunities in a competitive job market ('Daxuesheng wei qiuzhi er zuo zhiyuanzhe' 2013). These inducements reiterate the standard rationales for youth volunteering in western societies, which is to meet people, have fun and improve their career prospects (Case Foundation 2006: 6). While arguably introducing neoliberal forms of governance, the government-led promotion of such rationales also turns on the general impetus of reform-era education, which is for young people to become 'good (socialist) citizens' by improving their personal capacities or qualities (*suzhi* 素质) (see Woronov and Yu, in this book).

Figure 3.4 shows one of series of posters posted on residential noticeboards in Chaoyang District, Beijing, urging young people to 'improve themselves' during the summer holidays by following Lei Feng's example *and* promoting the 'Beijing Spirit', that is, by practising 'traditional-socialist' Chinese virtues (helping others) and fostering patriotic, innovative, inclusive and ethical 'new' trends (civic behaviours and volunteerism) ('Guanyu shujia qijian kaizhan' 2012). One of two images portrays a girl helping to maintain a clean and ecologically-friendly urban living environment; she is described as a 'Youth Environmental Protection Guard'. In the other image, the same girl is portrayed standing at the entrance of a block of residential apartments; she is described as a '[Residential] Community Building Doorkeeper', meaning she is watching the neighbourhood and ready to provide assistance when needed. A slogan below the images urges young people to 'Be Ethical People and Learn from Lei Feng; Be a Young Emissary for Community Civilization'. To the right of the

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slogan is a badge-like circle which displays an image of Lei Feng shining like a rising sun above two children to guide them. Local schools were encouraged to submit stories about exceptional 'Emissaries' to the District Spiritual Civilization Office for awards ('Guanyu shujia qijian kaizhan' 2012).

Figure 3.4: Be an Ethical Person; Learn from Lei Feng How to be a Young Emissary for Community Civilization

Source: Photograph by Elaine Jeffreys, Chaoyang District, Beijing, 2012.

As the preceding discussion suggests, Lei Feng's image and persona has been released from the burdens of political-ideological consistency with Maoist tenets, turning him into a heterogeneous symbol of social action. The use of Lei Feng in the 2012–2013 government communication campaign legitimizes efforts to promote philanthropy by linking volunteerism to a historical tradition unique to the PRC and the CCP, when charity was once viewed in Marxist terms as means by which the propertied classes attempted to placate the labouring classes (Zhou and Zeng 2006: 368). The government advertising also appeals to diverse Chinese cultural forms (traditional, socialist and reform-era concepts of *suzhi*) and elements of 'neoliberal' governing discourses (civic pride, self-empowerment and autonomous, participatory citizenship). This coupling of 'socialist' and 'neoliberal' rationales for volunteering is not necessarily experienced by targeted audiences as incongruous because volunteerism and 'doing good' involve people and affect. They refer to heterogeneous spaces for social action and self-making, rather than self-evident actions (see also Hoffman, in this book).

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The use of Lei Feng in this context therefore denotes a sense of cultural continuity with forms of citizenship that are claimed to already exist but which in fact are actually being created.

Two examples that illustrate this point are: the new links forged between Lei Feng and entrepreneurs; and, university students' reflections on Lei Feng-related volunteering activities and the contemporary value and use of Lei Feng.

Entrepreneurs and philanthropy

The heterogeneous spaces for social action and self-making brought into play by the revived governmental use of Lei Feng are underscored by the new links forged between Lei Feng and entrepreneurs. The title of a 'living Lei Feng' was first used in 1963 to refer to PLA soldiers who assisted with agricultural production ('Jiefangjun dali zhiyuan' 1963). It was subsequently used as a positive appellation to refer to members of the revolutionary classes – workers, cadres, peasants and soldiers – who worked to help each other as 'citizen-friends' of socialist China.

The title of a 'living Lei Feng' was not associated with entrepreneurs historically because private wealth was a target of active political hostility in the PRC until Deng Xiaoping's advocacy of the slogan 'Let One Segment of the Population Get Rich First and Guide Others Along the Way', and Jiang Zemin's advocacy of the 'Three Represents' theory, which welcomes entrepreneurs into the ranks of the CCP. According to Jiang Zemin (PRC President 1993–2003), the Three Represents is about 'blazing new trails for the development of Marxist theory': it means uniting with the innovative, advanced productive forces to make China strong and the Chinese people rich (Jiang Zemin 2002). Members of this group include: free-

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lance professionals, private entrepreneurs, managerial and technical staff employed by non-public and overseas-funded enterprises, and CEOs of state-owned enterprises. Jiang concluded that 'the people' should unite with entrepreneurs because 'it is improper to judge whether people are politically progressive or backward simply by whether they own property or how much property they own'. Instead of equating personal wealth with political incorrectness, Jiang (2002) suggested that the Chinese public should judge the newly rich based on how their work contributes to the goal of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The official endorsement of entrepreneurship has been followed by a more recent equation of philanthropy with socialist construction, demonstrated by the creation of Lei Feng titles and awards to CEOs to recognize their public service. On 27 February 2013, a ceremony attended by senior government and military officials was held in Beijing to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Mao's call to 'Learn from Lei Feng', and acknowledge the outstanding public service of 50 people, by presenting them with the PRC's first national 'Lei Feng Awards' (Li Haixiu 2013). The ceremony was part of a symposium on 'Normalizing Learning from Lei Feng Activities', launched through collaborations between government- and corporate-funded foundations, and supported by state-run media.

President Xi Jinping described Lei Feng and two award winners (Luo Yang and Guo Mingyi) as 'the backbone of China' during one of his incoming speeches to the National People's Congress in 2013, stating that more 'Lei Fengs' were needed to achieve the 'China Dream' of rejuvenating China and achieving ever-higher living standards ('Xi Jinping: Lei Feng' 2013). Luo Yang, CEO of the state-run Shenyang Aircraft Corporation Logistics Equipment

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Company, received a posthumous award for innovating military aviation technology. Guo Mingyi, a miner, was awarded for a history of starting work early, donating blood and donating to good causes despite his low income (Li Haixiu 2013).

While these awardees belong to the 'friend' tradition of good cadres and workers, Cao Dewang, a rags-to-riches private entrepreneur and philanthropist, also received a national Lei Feng award. Chief Executive of Fuyao Glass, Cao Dewang has an estimated net worth of USD 1.2 billion (Zeveloff 2012). He has received numerous awards for donating USD 800 million to philanthropic causes since 1983, including 'China's Best Corporate Citizen' in 2005 and China's 'Top Philanthropist' in 2011 ('Cao Dewang jianli' n.d.). He has also been called a 'new-era living Lei Feng' by China's media (Tian 2011).

Other members of China's newly rich elite have claimed the aura of a 'living Lei Feng' for themselves. Real estate magnate and philanthropist, Pan Shiyi (2012) describes China's first generation of super-rich entrepreneurs as 'living Lei Fengs' for working hard to drive the Chinese economy and providing everybody with the opportunity for private wealth creation. In 2012, billionaire-philanthropist Chen Guangbiao attracted controversy for posting photographs of himself dressed as Lei Feng on his microblog ('Chen Guangbiao toudai' 2012). These representations of CEOs as 'living Lei Fengs' arguably embody the neoliberal imperative that individual competition for wealth and influence, rather than collective class struggle and selfless devotion to others, is the key to improving oneself and the commonweal.

However, public discussions of Chen Guangbiao's 'Lei Feng photo-shoot' demonstrate that contemporary presentations of Lei Feng provide opportunities for individuals to debate the

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conduct of others and to modify their own conduct. Chen told reporters that when he agreed to do a photo-shoot with artist Shu Yong, he had no idea that Shu wished him to pose as Lei Feng; he had agreed to the request because he admired and tried to practice Lei's spirit of dedication to the Chinese people ('Chen Guangbiao toudai' 2012). Shu Yong claimed that the photographs aimed to parody neither Chen nor Lei, but rather to promote public discussions of contemporary understandings of the 'spirit of Lei Feng'. In responses to the photographs, which were widely circulated on the Chinese internet precisely because they were viewed as 'funny', some netizens described Chen Guangbiao as a 'living Lei Feng'. Others condemned him as 'a rich show-off'. Yet others argued that Chen Guangbiao is a publicity-seeking narcissist, but one whose activities may nevertheless help to counter the perceived 'uncaring' individualism of contemporary China by encouraging other people to help other people ('Chen Guangbiao "Lei Feng zhao"' 2012; Lei Juanli 2012).

In short, Party and government organizations have proved keen to raise the public profile of entrepreneurs as 'friends of the people', and some CEOs have proved equally keen to label themselves as 'living Lei Fengs', whether to promote their philanthropy or justify their right to be rich first. Such actions aim to counter the legacy of Mao-era class politics, which linger on in counter-claims that CEOs cannot be 'living Lei Fengs', because their wealth is derived from corruption rather than hard work (Wu Zhifeng 2012). However, such claims are unlikely to be translated into calls for collective class action because of the perceived 'failure' of Maoist politics and growing acceptance of new ideas about how to promote the common good, as demonstrated by student survey responses.

Student reflections on volunteering and Lei Feng

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In late 2013, we conducted an online multiple-choice survey of Chinese university students with a view to understanding the extent of student participation in Lei Feng-related volunteering activities and to shed light on the function and public reception of Lei Feng.²

The survey was not undertaken with the aim of providing a definitive or scientific account of Lei Feng's audience reception. The 415 respondents to the survey came from three Chinese universities: a top-tier university in Beijing; and technology and teacher-training universities in Hebei and Yunnan Province. Students majored in a range of subjects: 60 per cent in Science or Engineering; 25 per cent in humanities (mainly languages); 12 per cent in administration or commerce. Nearly 96 per cent were under 30 years of age and hence in the age group that might be expected to have 'forgotten Lei Feng'.

The survey responses indicate that volunteering is a common experience for young people in China, largely in the context of Lei Feng activities organized by schools and universities. Most respondents (86 per cent) had participated in volunteering activities, with most of these activities being linked to Lei Feng. Moreover, nearly 80 per cent of respondents said that their volunteering experiences had been organized by a school or university.

However, it appears that volunteering around Lei Feng Day is not compulsory, even for school children. Around a quarter of the total sample had not engaged in Lei Feng activities. While around one-fifth of survey respondents indicated that they regularly participated in Lei Feng Day activities, two-thirds said they rarely participated in Lei Feng activities. Only 2 per cent indicated that they had never participated in Lei Feng Day activities, but only 4 per cent

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stated that they engaged in Lei Feng Day activities because they had no choice other than to participate.

The survey results provide insight into how respondents conceive of Lei Feng and view the utility of volunteering and philanthropy. They suggest that educated young people do not associate Lei Feng with revolutionary politics; nor do they believe that exclusive government-sponsored welfare is a viable option in China today.

Unsurprisingly, given government communication, the responses indicate that young educated people have a basic knowledge of the Lei Feng narrative, and at least one aspect of Lei's persona – his legendary willingness to help others – has remained stable. Students were asked to identify the year of Lei Feng's death, with options ranging from 1920 to 1990. The majority of respondents (68 per cent) correctly knew that Lei Feng died in 1962. The main facts of his life were well known: 96 per cent selected the option that he died in an accident and 83 per cent thought he was a member of the PLA. Around 10 per cent thought that Lei was a factory worker, but no one thought that he was a poet or a free thinker. Most respondents reported that Lei Feng's key characteristic was a willingness to help others (90 per cent) followed by a love of socialism (just over 7 per cent).

More than half of the survey respondents did not see Lei Feng as having a class identity, while another 10 per cent saw class as irrelevant. Only 15 per cent thought they shared a class identity with Lei Feng for a reason other than that they were Chinese, while 38 per cent thought they shared no such identity in any sense, did not know, or thought that the idea was irrelevant.

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Nearly three-quarters of respondents chose to answer the question 'Lei Feng is ...' by picking the option that Lei Feng is a role model for people today. Only 13 per cent chose to answer that Lei Feng was a role model for people in the past; and less than 5 per cent thought that he was either a fictional character or an invention of Party propaganda. None of the survey respondents selected the option that Lei Feng was 'nothing special' or 'not relevant to today's China'. When asked how they would describe a 'living Lei Feng', the majority of students answered that a living Lei Feng is someone who helps others (72 per cent) or who works voluntarily for the Chinese people (24 per cent).

Despite a poor track record of active volunteering, most of the respondents (89 per cent) indicated that there should be more philanthropy in China; only 2 per cent thought that philanthropy is unnecessary because the government should be responsible for providing social welfare. While 31 per cent thought that helping others and strangers should be voluntary, 57 per cent again thought that helping others helped themselves. Putting the figures together, the majority of the respondents (98 per cent) believe that helping others is either a form of self-help, or a voluntary and natural activity.

The survey results suggest that the government use of Lei Feng to promote civic behaviours and volunteering has been effective in some respects. Respondents were familiar with the life-story of Lei Feng, who they largely appear to view as a good role model for contemporary civic engagement. Consistent with the redrafted official narrative, Lei Feng no longer appears to be tied by respondents to the Maoist revolutionary politics of class struggle and egalitarianism; he is tied to ideas which suggest that people should help each other and

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look after each other, and that helping others helps oneself. As a result, Lei Feng's image and persona can be associated with seemingly neoliberal conceptions of a reduced role for government in the provision of social welfare, and an enhanced role for individual citizens, without any inherent incongruence in the eyes of the respondents to this particular survey, at least.

Conclusions

Lei Feng epitomizes the changing and hybrid nature of rationalities for governing the conduct of others and the self in contemporary China. Lei Feng originally was a symbol of revolutionary class unity, being promoted by the Party-state as a 'friend' of the people, whose life and deeds demonstrated love of the CCP, the PRC, socialism and the Chinese people, and opposition to a common, albeit vanquished, group of 'enemies' – the exploitative propertied classes. At the start of the Cultural Revolution, he symbolized devotion to Maoism and continuous revolution; by the end, he symbolized opposition to the incitement of class struggle within the internal ranks of the people and the Party. Lei Feng has since become a retro-revolutionary kitsch commodity *and* a postsocialist celebrity who can be promoted and reconfigured by the PRC Government, and supporters and critics of that regime alike. In his latest official incarnation, Lei Feng has been employed in the service of a conception of government that almost evokes neoliberal ideas of 'small government' and an individualist notion of citizenship. This shift is underscored by his various uses as an incentive device for corporate philanthropists and the 'face' of a national campaign to promote volunteering.

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The breadth and flexibility of contemporary government and popular uses of Lei Feng undermines claims by foreign correspondents that the state-led promotion of Lei Feng to encourage philanthropy represents a return to the use of a rigid 'old-school propaganda' that is destined to fail in the more open, fluid and individualistic environment of the reform period. Lei Feng is currently used popularly to ambiguously satirize the unequal 'richness' and individualistic materialism of contemporary China. He has been deployed by the non-state sector to provide a simultaneous critique of Mao-era egalitarian poverty and reform-era inequalities of wealth, while also being used in state-sponsored volunteering campaigns aimed at addressing the insufficiencies of China's current socio-economic system, and creating a 'better' future.

Repackaging Lei Feng enables the CCP to emphasize a core continuity of the socialist modernization project in the form of ethical citizen behaviours, even as understandings of modernizing China and Chinese citizenship have changed. While a symbol of revolutionary continuity, Lei Feng is now used officially to naturalize or domesticate inequality through philanthropy, rather than reinvoking the conditions that the revolution set out to overcome. Such dual communication seeks to legitimize one-Party rule by keeping alive the notion that the PRC's history and the CCP matters. But it does so by metonymically linking Lei Feng with the less antagonistic, and hence potentially more persuasive, conceptions of state-society relations that are embedded in government advertising promoting national pride and civic behaviours. The irony of Lei Feng's celebrity is that the original Lei Feng supposedly desired nothing more than to help others and be erased from history.

Notes

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1 Excerpts from a diary by an individual called Lei Feng were first published between 30 August 1959 and 15 November 1960 in a Shenyang military newspaper, for internal use only (Ji Xiaoli 2004).

2 The survey methodology and questions are available from Elaine.jeffreys@uts.edu.au

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