CONTENTS

1–2  Guest Editor’s Preface
Shih-Wen Sue Chen

3–14  ‘Aspiring to Enlightenment’: Buddhism and Atheism in 1980s China
Scott Pacey

15–24  Activist Practitioners in the Qigong Boom of the 1980s
Utiraruto Otehode and Benjamin Penny

25–40  Displaced Fantasy: Pulp Science Fiction in the Early Reform Era of the People’s Republic of China
Rui Kunze 王瑞

41–48  The Emergence of Independent Minds in the 1980s
Liu Qing 刘擎

49–56  1984: What’s Been Lost and What’s Been Gained
Sang Ye 桑晔

57–71  Intellectual Men and Women in the 1980s Fiction of Huang Beijia 黄蓓佳
Li Meng 李萌

online only  Chinese Magazines of the 1980s: An Online Exhibition
Curated by Shih-Wen Sue Chen
Print PDFs based on an original design by Maureen MacKenzie-Taylor

This is the forty-first issue of East Asian History, the fourth published in electronic form, June 2017. It continues the series previously entitled Papers on Far Eastern History.

To cite this journal, use page numbers from PDF versions

Copyright for the intellectual content of each paper is retained by its author.

Reasonable effort has been made to identify the rightful copyright owners of images and audiovisual elements appearing in this publication. The editors welcome correspondence seeking to correct the record.

Contact eastasianhistory@anu.edu.au

Banner calligraphy Huai Su 懐素 (737–799), Tang calligrapher and Buddhist monk

Published by
The Australian National University
The death of Mao Zedong in 1976 and the rise of Deng Xiaoping in 1978 with his policy of Reform and Opening Up led to a series of major changes in Chinese society in the decade that followed. The 1980s has been characterised as a decade of transition, of various ‘fevers’ (热 in Chinese), of discos, karaoke, pop music, fashion, Flying Pigeon bikes, radios, and wristwatches. This period has been frequently overlooked by researchers who focus either on the Cultural Revolution or the rise of commercialisation and commodity culture in the 1990s and beyond. The few English-language studies conducted on the 1980s have concentrated on topics such as intellectual culture, high politics, or reform economics, and have mostly viewed this period through the lens of the June Fourth Incident at Tiananmen Square. Publications focusing on the 1980s, such as Returning to the 1980s (Chongfan bashi niandai 重返八十年代), 1980s and I (Wo he bashi niandai 我和八十年代), and The Eighties: Interviews (Bashi Niandai Fangtanlu 八十年代访谈录), reflect a sense of nostalgia for the decade which has been characterised as ‘full of potential and freedom’, ‘an age of innocence, idealism, and enthusiasm’, and an era where the cultural aspirations of the Chinese people were widened as a result of the ‘open door’ policy.

Deng’s new economic policies and guidelines provided people with more access to material goods and services, more opportunities to acquire knowledge of the outside world, and more leisure time. It is worth reconsidering this early reform period by focusing on the everyday and examining how the lives of ordinary people were transformed during this time. The many aspects of changes to everyday life and how they influenced the outlooks and experiences of people living in the 1980s have largely been ignored because daily life is often dismissed as mundane, trivial, repetitive, or depoliticised. However, as Henri Lefebvre and others have argued, the political cannot be divorced from the everyday and the political is often hidden in the everyday. Ben Highmore, interpreting Lefebvre, states, 'the singularity of the everyday event (a woman

buying sugar, for example) reverberates with social and psychic desire as well as with the structures of national and global exchange.\(^2\)

The papers in this issue illuminate the plurality of relationships and networks of new voices that emerged in this decade. Focusing on a changing religious landscape, Scott Pacey discusses the re-emergence of Buddhism and its relationship with atheism in 1980s China, examining articles published in the Chinese Buddhist Association’s journal *Voice of Dharma* (*Fayin* 傳播法音), Li Ping’s novel *When the Sunset Clouds Disappear* (*Wanxia xiaoshi de shihou* 晚霞消失的时候), and other examples from popular culture to delineate how they aspired to enlightenment. Utiraruto Otehode and Benjamin Penny examine the role of activist practitioners in the Qigong boom of the 1980s, focusing on the case of Soaring Crane Qigong (*Hexiangzhuang Qigong* 鹤翔庄气功) activists in Luoyang municipality. Turning to literature, Rui Kunze analyses pulp science fiction published in the early reform era, using sociocultural and psychoanalytical approaches to dissect the texts. She argues that these stories reflect concerns about the national project of modernisation, the control of the Chinese Communist Party, and the reading publics’ anxieties and desires as they engage with a new economy.

The two invited papers present recollections of the authors’ personal experiences of 1980s China. Liu Qing 刘擎, who was hailed as a model student by the Shanghai-based newspaper *Wenhui Daily* (*Wenhui bao* 文汇报) in 1983 while studying for a masters degree in chemical engineering, reflects on the new campus culture that emerged in this period. He characterises the various activities happening across campuses as an ‘independent cultural movement’ and places them in the historical context of 1980s China, pointing out how they challenged and questioned the dominant official ideology. Sang Ye 桑晔 writes on what was lost and gained in the 1980s, using diverse examples such as the ‘Four Gentlemen’ of the 1980s (Weng Yongxi 翁永曦, Huang Jiangnan 黄江南, Zhu Jiaming 朱嘉明, and Wang Qishan 王岐山), the changes to public toilets, and the 1984 survey of a county in Heilongjiang province to illustrate the changes that occurred in this decade.

The seemingly singular or fragmented nature of the ‘snapshots’ of everyday life described can be combined to provide a multifaceted portrait of how people lived and dealt with transitions in society as a result of Reform and Opening Up.