



East  
Asian  
History

NUMBER 12 · DECEMBER 1996 THE CONTINUATION OF *Papers on Far Eastern History*

Institute of Advanced Studies  
Australian National University

Editor Geremie R. Barmé  
Assistant Editor Helen Lo  
Editorial Board Mark Elvin (Convenor)  
John Clark  
Andrew Fraser  
Helen Hardacre  
Colin Jeffcott  
W. J. F. Jenner  
Lo Hui-min  
Gavan McCormack  
David Marr  
Tessa Morris-Suzuki  
Michael Underdown

Design and Production Helen Lo  
Business Manager Marion Weeks  
Printed by Goanna Print, Fyshwick, ACT



This is the twelfth issue of *East Asian History*  
in the series previously entitled *Papers on Far Eastern History*.  
The journal is published twice a year.

This issue was printed in July 1998.

The editors wish to thank colleagues Oanh Collins, Dorothy McIntosh  
and Marion Weeks for their generous help in the recovery effort when all  
electronic copies of this edition were lost in a theft of computers from the  
*EAH* editorial office on the eve of its delivery to the printers.

Contributions to The Editor, *East Asian History*  
Division of Pacific and Asian History  
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies  
Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia  
Phone +61 2 6249 3140 Fax +61 2 6249 5525  
email geremie@coombs.anu.edu.au

Subscription Enquiries to Subscriptions, *East Asian History*, at the above address  
Australia A\$45 Overseas US\$45 (for two issues)

## 史 CONTENTS

- 1 Tough Guys, Mateship and Honour: Another Chinese Tradition  
*W. J. F. Jenner*
- 35 Chinese Landscape Painting—The Golden Age  
*Ch'en Chih-mai*
- 51 China in the Eyes of French Intellectuals  
*Jean Chesneaux*
- 65 Lady Murasaki's Erotic Entertainment: The Early Chapters  
of *The Tale of Genji*  
*Royall Tyler*
- 79 The "Autocratic Heritage" and China's Political Future:  
A View from a Qing Specialist  
*Helen Dunstan*
- 105 The Qotong, the Bayad and the Ögeled  
*Čeveng (C. Ž. Žamcarano)*  
—translated by I. de Rachewiltz and J. R. Krueger
- 121 Raw Photographs and Cooked History: Photography's Ambiguous  
Place in the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo  
*Julia Adeney Thomas*
- 135 H. A. Giles *v.* Huang Chengyi: Sino–British Conflict  
over the Mixed Court, 1884–85  
*Motono Eiichi*

Cover calligraphy Yan Zhenqing 顏真卿, Tang calligrapher and statesman

## TOUGH GUYS, MATESHIP AND HONOUR: ANOTHER CHINESE TRADITION

史 W. J. F. Jenner

“For a mate I’ll take a knife in the ribs.” “For a friend I’ll take a knife in the ribs and not even notice the pain.” Such boasts are common enough among the young members of street gangs in China’s cities according to worried officials. They are one of the current manifestations of a Chinese cultural tradition going back many centuries, a tradition that has been neglected but that is still a very powerful set of values.

Let us begin to explore them by going back to around 1920 in Changchun 长春, a rough and tough Manchurian frontier town in a bandit region where executions were no rarity. The condemned man would be paraded through the streets on the back of a cart. A white board inscribed in black with his name and his offence was thrust between his back and his arms that were tied behind it. His name would be marked with the fatal red tick.

The tougher criminals would stand on the cart. When they passed a draper’s they demanded a length of red cloth to drape over themselves, which they called “wearing the crimson cross.” On passing a pub they’d ask for a drink. Some even sang folk songs or *bangzi* opera 梆子腔. Others foamed at the mouth, yelling and cursing ... some even asked the crowds following them to watch the fun:

“I’ve got what it takes to be a real *baoban* 好汉, haven’t I?”

“You’re a real *baoban*!” the spectators would yell back enthusiastically, and this would be followed with a roar of laughter.<sup>1</sup>

The soldiers permitted the condemned men their requests and their chance to go out in style. Such a final performance would, of course, never be permitted today, when the victims are often displayed silent, humiliated, and head bowed in a stadium or on a truck before the bullet in the back of the head. They are not allowed to shout or joke with the crowd. A wire noose

This is an expanded version of the 54th George Ernest Morrison Lecture in Ethnology entitled “A Knife in the Ribs for a Mate. Reflections on another Chinese tradition,” delivered by Professor Jenner of the China and Korea Centre, Australian National University, on 6 October 1993, and first published in an earlier version by the ANU in 1995.

<sup>1</sup> Xiao Jun, “Yi Changchun” [Changchun memories], in *Changchun*, 1979.9: 40.

round the neck held by one of the guards is said to be a very effective way of ensuring compliance. The new mode of execution approved in 1997, the lethal injection, means that the victim need never be seen in public before dying.

Why do today's executioners go to such trouble to deny the victims their last swagger? And why did it matter to the young men on their carts in Changchun that they be considered a *baoban*, a tough guy, a real man? What people choose to say, or what kind of performance they try to put on, when they know that they have only a few minutes in which to live has to be something that really matters to them. And the chances are that they speak not only for their unfortunate selves, but also for many others.

I shall argue that the notion of being a *baoban* or tough guy has been one of central importance to the value systems of most Chinese men and boys in the last thousand years, and that there are living values directly derived from *baoban* ones. My untestable guess is that far more boys would have wanted to be thought a *baoban* than regarded as a good Confucian scholar. If we underestimate the appeal of the *baoban* image and its influence on what people did, our understanding of Chinese pasts will be damaged. Although the concept of being a *baoban* is now an archaic one, awareness of contemporary values descended from *baoban* ones, especially the elusive concept of *yiqi* 义气 or honour, is essential to reading much that happens on the streets of today's China.

Before going on to look at these questionable notions of honour and heroism as seen by those who admire them and those who fear and despise them it is good to have this chance to salute and thank the real heroes and heroines whose generosity made this occasion possible. After all, when you drink from a well, the Chinese proverb reminds us, you should not forget the people who dug it. We owe the lectures of which this is the 54th not to this or any other university, but to the Chinese community of Australia, which endowed them by public subscription. When this series was begun in 1932 it took tenacity and sustained, everyday courage to be Chinese and to be living in this country. I hope that the founders of these lectures would have approved of a subject that touches on such less exalted aspects of Chinese cultures as criminals, hooligans and knives in the ribs.

In looking at such a topic we are going beyond the traditional concerns of Western Sinology, which has generally tended to share the concerns and values of the dominant groups in China who have expressed them endlessly in writing over the last three thousand years. This applies to Confucian traditions, to the sacred texts of Maoism and to the writings of both the apologists and the critics of today's order. Those who study China on paper tend to share the reverence for the written character that is basic to Chinese high culture and to fall into the assumption that books speak for the whole of the societies in which they are produced. Anthropologists and others who take a less text-based approach have not been sufficiently heeded by their colleagues.

I will not subject myself as a Westerner to a ban on questioning the values of Chinese cultures for fear of being labelled Europe-centred,<sup>2</sup> but will discuss one or two aspects of what a recent Chinese writer has called *liumang shi* 流氓史, “the hooligan history of China,” or “the history of Chinese yobbery.”<sup>3</sup> It is not that there is anything so especially awful about Chinese hooliganism, but rather that those of us who make a living out of Chinese studies do not generally talk much about it except when looking over the shoulders of Chinese officials ancient or modern or of writers adopting official values. In the case of Chen Baoliang’s 陈宝良 new history of the subject, the tone is one of almost unrelieved disapproval from beginning to end, as is that of nearly all of the sources on which he draws. Yet the very appearance of the book, coming as it does from the Chinese Social Sciences Publishing House in a new “Vagabond Culture Series,” is a sign of the times. The crumbling of an established order makes the disreputable and disruptive appear at the same time frightening and fascinating. Again, there is nothing especially Chinese about this: for centuries revelations about the lives of the supposed criminal classes have been a staple of the European publishing industry, titillating the respectable reading public with purported inside information on the alarming otherness of those who live outside the rules of polite society.<sup>4</sup>

This exploration of what is seen as alien and threatening by almost all those who write about it presents difficulties that do not arise when looking at the values by which various Chinese ruling groups have marked themselves off from their subjects through the ages. The educated tend to write disparagingly about unrespectable value systems when they are not ignoring them completely. One way in which these inferior, “subaltern” values and those who hold them are put down is by the choice of language.

Today’s admirers of the kinds of courage that the authorities regard as anti-social are liable to be labelled by them as *liumang*. *Liumang*, a word conventionally rendered ‘hooligan’ in English, is in its present usage a fairly recent one of Shanghai origin. Its root meanings go back to wanderers and absconders, rogues and vagabonds who do not stay put or know their place.<sup>5</sup> From the surviving fragments of the Qin code and other legal texts of the third century BC it is clear that even then vagabonds were regarded by the authorities as dangerous threats to the state’s control of its subjects.<sup>6</sup>

“Hooligans” are not docile. The term *liumang* was taken up a few years ago as a way of referring to oneself, as by some young writers and artists who prided themselves on not being respectable.<sup>7</sup> Before then it was strictly a term of disapproval. For almost everyone, including most of those officially classified as *liumang*, it is still, I would guess, a bad thing to be called—hence its value to youngsters who want to be outrageous.

In recent legal thinking mobility was longer a necessary condition of “hooliganism,” though not knowing one’s place in the established order surely was. Section 160 of the 1979 Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, the article that was the most authoritative definition of what the Chinese state meant by hooliganism, reads:

<sup>2</sup> The absurdity of such self-censorship is easily shown by asking if Chinese commentators are to be denied the right to comment on Western cultures and values.

<sup>3</sup> Chen Baoliang, *Zhongguo liumang shi* [The history of Chinese hooliganism] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> In English this tradition runs over four hundred years from the ‘rogue literature’ of Robert Greene and others to the alarming immediacy of the gratuitous violence in Bill Buford’s account of time spent among English football hooligans, *Among the thugs* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> Chen Baoliang’s “Introduction” is a useful survey of this and related terms (*Zhongguo liumang shi*, pp.1-40).

<sup>6</sup> The legal documents found at Shuihudi, Yunmeng County, Hubei, in 1975 in the coffin of a Qin law officer buried in or shortly after 217 BC include several references to those who abscond from the place where the state has them on its books. For examples of measures against absconders who are not identified as people who have been sentenced to state slavery, see Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian Zhengli Xiaozu [Editorial Group for the Bamboo Strips from the Qin Tomb at Shuihudi], ed., *Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian* [Bamboo strips from the Qin Tomb at Shuihudi] (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1978), pp.171 and 210. Translations can be found in A. F. P. Hulswé, *Remnants of Qin law* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp.151 (item D93) and 159 (item D117).

<sup>7</sup> On this fashion, see Geremie Barmé, “Wang Shuo and *liumang* (‘hooligan’) culture,” *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 28 (July 1992): 23–64, and idem, “Exploit, export, expropriate: artful marketing from China,” *China’s new art, post-1989* (Hong Kong: Hanart TZ Gallery, 1993), pp.xlvii–li.

<sup>8</sup> An excellent introduction to contemporary Chinese legal thought and practice on hooliganism is a volume edited by Wang Yunsheng and others for the Supreme People's Procuratorate in the *Xingshi fanzui anli congshu* [Model criminal cases series] entitled *Liumang zuif* [The crime of hooliganism] (Beijing: Zhongguo Jiancha Chubanshe, 1990; reprint ed., 1991). This practical handbook for prosecutors includes a number of authoritative directives on how the rather vague language of Section 160 is to be interpreted when handling cases; an overall exposition of the offence; and 254 model cases. These are chosen to illustrate the distinguishing features of various types of hooligan offences, to show how to draw the boundaries between actions that fall within the Chinese category of crime and those that are merely illegal, and to give guidance on distinguishing between actions that should properly be dealt with as hooliganism and those that constitute other criminal offences.

<sup>9</sup> William B. Simons, ed., *The Soviet codes of law* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1980), pp.132–3.

<sup>10</sup> F. J. M. Feldbrugge, ed., *Encyclopedia of Soviet law* (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1973), vol.1, p.311. The same wording is found in the second revised edition of 1985.

Gathering crowds for brawls, picking quarrels and making trouble, insulting women or carrying out other hooligan activity, and disrupting public order shall, when the circumstances are vicious, be punished with up to seven years of imprisonment, with detention or with being placed under supervision. The ringleaders of hooligan gangs shall be punished with seven years or more of imprisonment.

In September 1983 the maximum penalty for some hooligan offences was raised to death.<sup>8</sup> “Hooliganism” as a criminal category is absent from the 1997 Criminal Law of the PRC, though nearly all the component offences are still covered by the new code that replaced the 1979 one.

It could be argued that the crime of hooliganism in the 1979 Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China was essentially a borrowing from the clauses in Soviet codes about “hooliganism” (*kbuliganstvo*). Article 206 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic that was in force when the Chinese law was drawn up appears at first sight to be very similar to the provisions of the Chinese Section 160. It defines “hooliganism” as “intentional actions violating public order in a coarse manner and expressing a clear disrespect toward society,” and “malicious hooliganism” as “the same actions distinguished by exceptional cynicism or special impudence,” especially when directed against the authorities or their vigilantes.<sup>9</sup> According to Feldbrugge, “the most typical case of hooliganism seems to be offensive behaviour in public by drunks; according to all available statistics drunkenness occurs in more than 90 per cent of all cases of hooliganism.”<sup>10</sup>

Clearly the type of offence covered by the Soviet Russian definition would be included within the scope of Section 160 of the Chinese law. Accounts of hooligan offences in China sometimes tell us that the offenders were drunk at the time, though my impression is that this occurs in considerably fewer than nine cases out of ten. The Chinese concept seems to include rather more than the drunken loutishness against which the Russian article was mainly used. Public drunkenness is, after all, much less apparent on the streets of China's cities than it is on those of Russia.

Section 160 was a curious bundling of offences, and like much other Chinese legislation is worded so as to permit the authorities plenty of flexibility in interpreting it. “Other hooligan activity,” for example, included a range of sexual offences other than those covered under legislation against rape, prostitution and interfering with the marriages of others. Some would be punishable outside China, including various forms of indecent assault from the appalling to the trivial. Others are victimless crimes, including a wide range of sexual activities between consenting adults. This was not a dead letter. Many people were punished through either criminal or administrative procedures under the ‘other hooligan activity’ heading for such offences as having too many sexual partners even though no question of rape or prostitution had arisen or for showing supposedly pornographic videos. In everyday language *shua liumang* 耍流氓, “hooliganing around,” usually refers to sexual behaviour.



It may seem odd at first sight that the same article of the code should cover street brawls and private behaviour in the bedroom. Perhaps, though, there is a connection. What all the activities covered by Section 160 have in common is challenging or disrupting the social order. This section appears to inherit a principle of dynastic law. Although the Qing code did not, I believe, use the term *liumang*, it did include measures specifically aimed at *guanggun* 光棍 “bare sticks,” a term with very similar meaning. And, curiously enough, *guanggun* are singled out for especially harsh treatment in both chapter 26 of the code, which deals with fights and brawls, and chapter 33, covering sexual offences.

The sexual offences that made one liable to be dealt with under the “*guanggun* regulation” (*guanggun li* 光棍例)<sup>11</sup> in the eyes of Qing law are particularly unpleasant ones. (It appears that this regulation called for culprits to be sentenced to immediate decapitation when convicted.)<sup>12</sup> The gang rape of male or female victims, the rape of a boy or girl under twelve leading to their death, or the non-fatal rape of a child of either sex under the age of ten, were crimes that should be punished anywhere. Where we find the language most intriguingly pre-echoed is when the Qing code refers to:

Men of violence who, out of love of fighting and to make trouble, have the temerity to bring their companions together to make trouble when they see others fighting in a brawl that has nothing to do with them.<sup>13</sup>

Such ne'er-do-wells were to be dealt with according to the ‘*guanggun* regulation’. We are looking here at a distinct category of offence in both Qing and very recent law: gratuitous public violence for its own sake, or beating people up not for profit (as in a robbery) or to avenge some serious wrong, but just for the hell of it.

This side of behaviour that in the eyes of the authorities characterises its perpetrator as a *guanggun* or *liumang* is worth dwelling on for a moment. It cannot be explained away as merely instrumental. The cost to the performer, whether in the fight itself or at the hands of the authorities, can be very high. It is the big gesture of someone rejecting all the proper restraints of a highly ordered social system, and as such has much in common with the desperate bravado of the condemned men in Changchun. Until very recently such a brawler would almost certainly have been delighted to be thought a *baoban*. The recklessness of the big destructive gesture is, as we shall see, central to the *baoban* ethic.

If *liumang* and *guanggun* are basically hostile labels (though the latter has been a title that many young men have been glad to be awarded), the term *baoban*, the label to which the condemned men aspired, is most certainly not. Nor is it an official designation. Yet, to be thought to be a *baoban* was evidently desirable to many. When Lu Xun’s Mister Nobody, the peasant Ah Q, is on his way to end his short and pointless life at the execution ground soon after the revolution of 1911, it is one of the last and not the least of his failures that he cannot sing any snatches of opera or even complete the expected defiant shout to the crowd: “In twenty years I’ll be another

<sup>11</sup> I have not yet found a text of the “*guanggun* regulation” to which my attention was drawn on pp.273ff. and 318 of Chen Baoliang’s book, but from references to it in *juan* [chapters] 26 and 33 of the Qing code (see reference to *Da Qing lü li* in n.13), it evidently required especially severe punishment for the offences it covered.

<sup>12</sup> Such is the implication of the discussion of the case of one Wu Qiyuan in 1819 reported in the collection of precedents to guide officials in handling criminal cases, the *Xing an huilan* [Compendium of criminal cases]. See *juan* 52, p.5a, of the undated reprint by the Tushu Jicheng Ju of the edition of the Daoguang period (1821–50).

<sup>13</sup> *Da Qinglü li*, copy of the edition approved for publication in Qianlong 55 (1790) and held in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, *juan* 26, p.3a.

<sup>14</sup> Lu Xun, “A Q zheng zhuan” [The standard biography of Ah Q], in *Lu Xun quanji* [Complete works of Lu Xun] (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1957), vol.1, p.113. Lu Xun gives the saying in full in the essay “Si” [Death] in vol.6, p.493.

<sup>15</sup> *Lin Yutang’s Chinese-English dictionary of modern usage* (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1972), p.1403.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Ruhlmann, “Traditional heroes in Chinese popular fiction,” in Arthur F. Wright, ed., *The Confucian persuasion* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1960), pp. 141–76, esp.166–73; C. T. Hsia, *The classic Chinese novel: a critical introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), ch.3.

<sup>17</sup> *Shi ji* 86 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959, and later reprints).

*baoban*.”<sup>14</sup> It seems most unlikely that anyone went to the beheading ground shouting “In twenty years’ time I’ll be another scholar.”

We cannot ask any of those condemned long ago what they meant when they talked about being a *baoban*. Our questions in any case, would probably have been thought too stupid to be worth answering. Everybody knew what a *baoban* was. The term has long been so familiar to readers of Chinese vernacular fiction that one hardly notices it. It is one of those words whose meaning is so obvious within the culture from which it springs that nobody bothers to define it.

If it catches the eye of foreign readers it may be because of the difficulty of finding an equivalent in our own languages. No dictionary I have ever consulted has come up with something that both fits and sounds right. In English we can try tough guy, good bloke, hero, real man, even “a gallant, a stout-hearted plucky fellow” of Lin Yutang as lexicographer,<sup>15</sup> but no version quite works. As so often happens when a word resists translation, the difficulty is instructive.

Sinology has not ignored the term when looking at printed fiction from before the twentieth century. Both C. T. Hsia and the late and much missed Robert Ruhlmann have written illuminating pages on the *baoban* concept in the *Shui bu* 水浒 (Water Margin) story cycles of the Ming dynasty that deserve to be called seminal.<sup>16</sup> Despite these treatments the concept has yet to be pinned down. Although the meaning of *baoban* tends to wriggle away whenever you think you have it, the effort is worth making. Without some idea of what *baoban* values were, our understanding of late traditional Chinese cultures will be deficient, and we will miss some essential background information on today’s China.

The word does not appear to go back before the Tang dynasty in the meaning that is now familiar. Some have looked at an earlier notion of a man of supposedly honourable violence, the *xia* 侠, *youxia* 游侠, or *xiake* 侠客, the so-called knight-errant. As with the English term knight-errant and its equivalent in other European languages, these words have had little meaning outside the world of fantasy for many hundreds of years. Within the worlds of the imagination they have been more powerful, especially as China has had no Cervantes to hold the myths of chivalry up to appropriate mockery. Indeed, in recent decades they have been given a new lease of life in the endless flow of violence-packed “have at thee, varlet” costume fiction and film produced in Hong Kong for male adolescents of all ages. There is no reason to regard this sort of invention as having any firm basis in real life, though its influence on real life has been, as we shall see, considerable.

If we want to find pre-Tang antecedents of *baoban* values a better place to look would be in the chapter of the universal history *Shi ji* 史记 (Records of the Historian) that deals with political assassins.<sup>17</sup> There are some striking similarities between classic *baoban* big gestures made at high cost to oneself without hope of material gain and those attributed to those legendary killers of Warring States and Qin times.

A good example of *baoban* behaviour before the word had been created is the story of Nie Zheng 聂政, who fled from avenging enemies to Linzi 临淄, the capital of the state of Qi 齐, after he had committed a murder. Nie was working as a dog butcher in the market when a high official from another state, Yan Zhongzi 严仲子, needing a hitman to kill a political enemy, travelled from Puyang 濮阳 to offer Nie a large sum of money with which to buy comforts for his aged mother and expressed admiration for Nie's sense of honour (*yi* 义). Though Nie declined the money on the grounds that he could provide for his own mother himself, he was after her death still sufficiently moved to offer his services as a killer to the fine gentleman who had gone to such lengths to show respect to a mere butcher. That Yan Zhongzi's enemy was the chief minister in the state of Han and surrounded by many armed guards did not matter. Nor did it matter that neither Nie nor any member of his family stood to benefit from his sacrifice. Nie carried out a murder that was bound to be suicidal, killing a number of the guards before meeting his own inevitable death. As he died he cut off his own face and put out his own eyes to make himself unrecognisable and thus save his sister from being punished. His efforts were in vain. She too understood the demands of honour: she travelled to Han to identify her brother's self-mutilated body, proclaim his glory and die on the spot of grief.<sup>18</sup> Nie Zheng's gratuitous and suicidal violence on behalf of a stranger for the sake of honour is pure *baoban* behaviour. His sister too knew how to die by the same code.

It is not only that the word *baoban* is hard to translate. It corresponds or refers to no recognisable social group, no profession or trade. One could not make a living as a *baoban* as one might as a bandit, a soldier or a policeman. But a bandit, soldier or policeman might be called, and would almost certainly want to be called, a *baoban*. You could not properly even claim to be one yourself unless on the way to the execution ground—and even then it was better to have others acclaim you as a *baoban*.

We have to pursue and identify not a social group but a set of values. What those values are or were is something of which almost any adolescent or adult Chinese male in the five hundred years up to the middle of this century would, I believe, have had some notion, however fuzzy. It was precisely because everyone knew what made a *baoban* that the word did not need to be defined. I also believe that these undefined notions held by nearly all Chinese men and boys would have been broadly consistent with each other. If challenged to support the assertion that the word *baoban* was so well understood that it did not need definition I would fall back on significant negative evidence: in some twenty years of looking out for it I have never come across even a paragraph-length outline in any Chinese text of all that it meant to be a *baoban*. There are countless sayings and other allusions that refer very briefly to some aspect of what a *baoban* is or is not. They all appear to assume that their audience already has a reasonably clear idea of what it takes to be a *baoban*.

By contrast, officially approved moralities, and even some unorthodox

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp.2522-5.

<sup>19</sup> Forty years after its first printing, R. G. Irwin's *The evolution of a Chinese novel: Shui-bu-chuan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953) remains a very useful guide to the labyrinthine problems of the various early texts and editions of the *Shui bu*.

<sup>20</sup> The edition of the *Shui bu quan zhuān* (henceforward abbreviated to *SHQZ*) in which the count was done was the published by the Zhonghua Shuju (Beijing and Shanghai, 1962 reprint of 1961 edition). *Shui bu quan zhuān* is regarded by Irwin as containing in chapters 1–82 and 111–20 the original late fourteenth-century work of Shi Nai'an 施耐庵 and Luo Guanzhong 罗贯中. It is notable that the remaining twenty-eight chapters (83–110) contain only ten uses of *baohan* and one of *hao nanzi*. Indeed, in chapters 86–110 *baohan* is found only three times, with the solitary *hao nanzi* to bring the total up to four. This evidence appears to confirm Irwin's judgement that chapters 83–110 are later additions to the *Shui bu* story. (See Irwin, *Evolution of a Chinese novel*, pp.48–9, 75ff., and 114–15.)

ones, are set out in countless treatises that generally assume that the reader needs to be told how to be a filial son, virtuous wife, good Buddhist, true Communist, or adherent of one of the many popular religions of recent centuries. But what about another value system too deeply rooted to need tracts to propagate it, one that despite its mass appeal over many centuries has been treated as marginal?

*Haohan* notions were learned not from the textbook and the schoolroom, to which only the more privileged had access, but from talk. From talk about action, I would imagine, much more than from action itself. From stories, ballads and conversation you could learn what constituted *baohan* behaviour. Books would have played only a minor role.

For us, however, books are almost all we have to go on. One group of books above all is invaluable: the *Shuibu* story cycle that is in its best-known parts a saga of rebellion, violence and banditry that was published in several different related versions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> The books are extremely useful as indicators of popular values not because they themselves reached enormous readerships in Ming and Qing times—they were luxuries too expensive for a mass market—but because their authors edited, modified, recorded and fixed into definitive form a tradition about 'heroic' violence that had been passed on by word of mouth in dramas and in other performances ever since the events early in the twelfth century from which the stories grew. And once the definitive book versions of *Shui bu zhuān* 水浒传 were available they became the set basis of later performance and invention that in turn reached a much wider audience than the books' readerships right through to television adaptations in our own time.

So although there is something inappropriate in using a written text to draw out *baohan* values, it is the best way we have of attempting it. The first 75 chapters of the various versions of the novel are the most useful source of notions about *baohan* behaviour as they are mostly taken up with stories of how the individual heroes (if that is the right word for them) each found themselves forced by circumstances to climb the hill of Liangshan 梁山, protected as it was by its surrounding waters, to join the outlaws who were in the course of events to be led by Song Jiang 宋江. It is also from the earlier chapters that most of the best known stories and incidents about *Shui bu* heroes come. They have thus been the most influential part of the novel in defining and propagating *baohan* values.

The term is certainly used often enough in the novel. At a rough count the word occurs 369 times in the 120-chapter version of the novel now known as *Shui bu quan zhuān* 水浒传全传.<sup>20</sup> The number rises to 383 if the variant form *hao nanzi* 好男子 is included. It is most frequently used in chapters 11–50, with 260 occurrences (271 including *hao nanzi*): this third of the novel contains over two-thirds of the usage of these key terms.

*Haohan* is sometimes used by the narrator but much more often by the characters speaking of or to each other. Other rather grander terms, *yishi* 义士 (gentlemen of honour) and *baojie* 豪杰 (hero, written with a different

character for *hao*) are occasionally used by characters who prefer more formal language.

As the leading characters enter the story, the ones who go on to become the 36 principal leaders and 72 minor leaders of the rebellion, they nearly always have to establish their *haohan* credentials. Whether at any given time they are on the same or opposite sides of the law, are enemies or allies, are known to each other or are total strangers, the bond that unites them once



Where not otherwise attributed the illustrations for this article are woodcuts from the edition of the hundred-chapter *Shui hu zhuan* published by the Rong yu tang in Hangzhou late in Wanli, probably in 1610. Li Zhuowu *xiansheng piping zhong yi Shui hu zhuan* [The loyal and righteous *Water margin* with commentary and assessment by Mr Li Zhuowu].\* The prints were well reproduced from spoiled originals by Peking's Zhonghua Shuju in 1965 in the thread-bound volume *Ming Rong yu tang ke Shui hu zhuan tu* [The illustrations to the *Water margin* cut for the Rong yu tang of the Ming]. The same blocks were less clearly reprinted in the Shanghai Guji Chubanshe's edition *Rong yu tang ben Shui hu zhuan* [The Rong yu tang *Shui hu zhuan*] (Shanghai, 1988).

The value of these pictures is great. They are superbly vigorous yet delicately drawn with an emphasis on physicality and on bodies in action. As visual representations of late Ming *haohan* values and expressions they complement splendidly the words of the story cycle, anticipating many of the features of twentieth-century comic-book art.

\* In his preface to the 1988 edition Zhang Peiheng 章培恒 argues that Li Zhuowu (Li Zhi) did not in fact write the comments and assessments that are attributed to him.

### Figure 1

Chapter three: "Controller Lu beats up the Boss of West of the Passes"

*Lu Da* 鲁达, a military officer and a true *haohan*, uses his fists to sort out *Zheng the Butcher* 郑屠, a prosperous shopkeeper who has used his wealth to mistreat a young woman. Three blows are enough to kill Zheng.

*Lu Da's* actions are gratuitous, in that he owed the young woman nothing and had no sexual interest in her. He is simply punishing Zheng for being a nasty piece of work. For Lu the price of this *haohan* gesture is high: he has to leave the town of Weizhou 渭州 as a fugitive from justice

<sup>21</sup> We can in passing note the use of *yi* in the story of the assassin Nie Zheng referred to above, where the word seems to be used in just the same sense as *yiqi* in *Shui bu* and later texts, and very differently from the ways in which a follower of Confucius would have understood the word.

<sup>22</sup> Hsia, *The classic Chinese novel*, pp.87–8.

<sup>23</sup> The influence of *San guo* [Three Kingdoms] styles of honour and heroism on the *baoban* value system is a subject worth further investigation. My impression is that while there would be agreement on the importance of honour, *San guo* heroes are not as addicted to the gratuitous act as *Shui bu* ones.

they recognise each other as *baoban* can be stronger than any other. To be accepted as a *baoban* by someone else you regard as one can be sufficient grounds for a change of side, or for putting your own family in grave danger from the authorities.

The qualities that the *baoban* in *Shui bu* recognise in each other are essentially two. One is skill in fighting or in the martial arts, or in some closely related field, such as military command. The other is a sense of honour, to use the nearest equivalent I can find to *yi* or *yiqi* as the words are used in *Shui bu* and later. This is not the place to look into the earlier history of the word *yi*, which, like words for moral values in other languages, has carried many different meanings.<sup>21</sup> For practical purposes it is easiest to treat the *Shui bu* words for a sense of honour, *yi* and *yiqi*, without reference to their earlier history.

A recurring scene in the first fifty or sixty chapters of the story has two men fight twenty, thirty or more rounds with various weapons in single combat. Sometimes one wins and treats the other so well that the loser recognises the victor as a *baoban* or man of *yiqi* honour and goes over to the winner's side. At other times the fight drags on inconclusively till a third party who can vouch for the *baoban* status of both combatants and has enough *baoban* credibility himself urges the two to desist and make common cause, whereupon they all become good friends linked by honour and ready to stand together against the world. Some of the protagonists are or have been professionals in the martial arts, generally in the army. Others are amateurs who cultivate these lethal social skills in their spare time. In almost all cases personal prowess in fighting is an essential qualification for being accepted as a *baoban*.

It is not, however, enough. The other quality, *yi* or *yiqi*, honour, is harder to define but well worth pursuing. This is not only in order to understand the values celebrated in *Shui bu* but also because this concept is one that in a modified form is still alive and ferociously kicking among today's disaffected urban youngsters. It is central to mediaeval and modern gang culture. C. T. Hsia in his *Shui bu* essay rendered the term 'friendship' and cites examples of how a *baoban* will go to any lengths to get a friend out of trouble or avenge him.<sup>22</sup> But friendship is not all that *yiqi* means. It can also tell you how to treat a complete stranger.

This is well illustrated in the second chapter of the novel. When one of a trio of minor bandits is captured in an attack on a village his two comrades present themselves on their knees and in tears at his captor's manor-house, saying that as they have sworn to emulate the *yiqi* honour of the three great heroes of the Three Kingdoms stories<sup>23</sup> and live or die together they hope the captor will hand them over together to the authorities and claim his reward. Their captor, the squireen Shi Jin 史进 cannot resist this psychological attack. As he puts it to himself: "What a sense of honour. If I turn them in and claim a reward all the *baoban* in the world will jeer at me for being no hero." Whereupon he insists on returning their comrade to them, all four acknowledge

each other as *baoban* and share a few drinks. As the bandit chiefs tell each other, Shi Jin did it all for the sake of *yiqi*.<sup>24</sup>

It was hardly friendship: till a moment before they had been bitter enemies. Shi Jin was so moved by his enemies' reckless gesture that he made a reckless gesture for the sake of honour himself, putting himself on the slippery slope from respectability to outlawry and rebellion. It is this, the willingness to make the big self-sacrifice that no normal obligation requires of you, that is the essence of *yiqi*. This gratuitousness of sacrifice had been well exemplified by the self-defacing assassin Nie Zheng in antiquity.

Shi Jin was also horrified by the prospect of being thought to be a man who cared more for wealth than for honour. *Yiqi* excludes covetousness in *Shui bu*. If a man of honour was a brigand he could of course rob and steal, but he could not keep the booty for himself. The gesture that a *Shui bu baoban* makes for the sake of *yiqi* can be extremely expensive, costing his life, his family, his job, his property, his respectability. It means abandoning everything, giving and not counting the cost. Hence the need to be indifferent to wealth, so often mentioned in the book as a *baoban* characteristic.

Dependence on honour and indifference to wealth is mentioned so often in the rebellious chapters of the book that the expression becomes a cliché. Not getting these priorities right could be fatal for a would-be *baoban*. Wang Lun 王伦, the original chieftain of the bandit stockade on Liangshan, comes close to failing the test when he shows reluctance to take a recognised *baoban*, Lin Chong 林冲, into the band. Wang shows a poor sense of honour by being jealous of someone with superior martial skills—Lin is a former military arms instructor—and by hesitating to act on the recommendation that Lin brings with him from a patron of *baoban* to whom Wang Lun is under a debt of honour. To make things worse, Wang tries to buy Lin Chong off by giving him fifty ounces of silver as travelling expenses, and when that does not work he subjects Lin to a humiliatingly basic entrance exam, requiring him to bring back the head of a traveller.<sup>25</sup>

When five more real *baoban* come into the stockade a little later, Wang is unwilling to let them stay either. His attempts to buy them off too are more than Lin Chong can bear. He lays into Wang for being a wretched Confucian who has failed the official exams and is too jealous to keep heroes, then kills him. As Lin explains after lopping the head off the corpse, he did it all for the sake of honour. To prove the point he insists that one of the newly arrived *baoban*, Chao Gai 晁盖, a man of honour who is indifferent to wealth and is better known and wiser than he is, should become the new chieftain, and modestly accepts only the fourth-ranking position for himself.<sup>26</sup> In the process he has established beyond doubt his own *baoban* status, being the opposite of Wang Lun, who was a pasty-faced scholar incompetent in the martial arts, short on honour, and caring too much about money. Wang Lun lacked the true *baoban's* willingness to make the big, reckless gesture without counting the cost. The highest expression of the idealised *yiqi* of the *Shui bu* tradition is to give one's all for the sake of honour of family, property,

<sup>24</sup> SHQZ 2, pp.28–9.

<sup>25</sup> SHQZ 11, p.13.

<sup>26</sup> SHQZ 19, pp.224–33.

<sup>27</sup> The best discussion of *Shui bu* violence is in Hsia, *The classic Chinese novel*, esp. pp.94–106.

<sup>28</sup> *SHQZ* 43, p.543.

social status, life itself or without pausing to think about the consequences.

This kind of honour is often closely linked with extreme violence. The violence that is all-pervasive in *Shui bu* is recounted with a graphic and detached vividness of language that is all the more disturbing for the fact that it is only repulsive when you make yourself think about it.<sup>27</sup> It can be read without a sense of sadistic indulgence. The terrible thing is that it is simple childish fun. Li Kui 李逵, the good-hearted country lad who every now and then erupts into a mass murder of innocent bystanders with his pair of axes, is observed going about his berserk slaughters as if they were no more real than bloodbaths in comic books or pre-Peckinpah westerns. Violence is not gut-wrenching for the reader, though plenty of fictional guts are spilled. Even the occasional protracted killing of a special enemy is somehow painless. Indeed, the most painful moment in the whole book is the excruciating agony suffered by a tigress when Li Kui thrusts a dagger right up her back passage.<sup>28</sup> There is not even much exaltation in the butchery, either by narrator or by the *baoban* in the story. (Here one cannot help noting a contrast with the way writers of latter-day Chinese “have at thee, varlet” fiction sometimes draw attention to the pain inflicted by their extremely violent protagonists.)

Though the violence is sometimes “justified” by the demands of vengeance—something of great importance to the *baoban*—or by the dangerous circumstances in which they find themselves, a lot of it is simply for its own sake. Vengeance might explain the killing of an enemy, but it cannot justify the slaughter of whole households, or the destruction of entire villages and everyone in them, or the repeated occasions when mere onlookers are despatched wholesale, casually, simply because the *baoban* are in the mood to carry on bloodletting after the necessary murders of a particular occasion have been carried out.

Some of the killing is required by the demands of *yiqi* or honour, by long-standing obligations to a friend, or by an instant, self-imposed obligation to a stranger who appeals to one’s *baoban* instincts. Some of the slaughter is quite terrifyingly free of compulsion, either external or internal. The *baoban* do not need to be ordered to do it. It is not required by the demands of *yiqi*. Nor do they appear to be driven by inner demons. No great cause is at stake: the last things the novel can be plausibly said to be concerned with are peasant revolt, social banditry, the creation of some new order or the restoration of an old one. An occasional set of killings may be for some intended gain for the group, as with the raid on the Zhu Family Manor 祝家庄 that was expected to yield enough grain to feed Song Jiang’s forces for years. More often, the *baoban* seem to go out of their way to put themselves in positions that commit them to unending violence, or else they simply do it because that, we come to understand, is their nature. Li Kui can no more help the occasional chopping up of a few dozen harmless strangers with whom he has no quarrel but who just happen to be around when the mood is on him than a cat can help killing fledglings.

Like the big gestures required by *yiqi*, which in their purest form are not



the product of any normal social or moral obligations or intended to bring oneself any material benefit, the killing is very often gratuitous. And because the extreme violence is shown as cheerfully attractive, with scarcely a thought being given by the novel's narrator or its characters to the suffering caused, the direct and indirect influence of this classic *baoban* text has been both great and appalling.

One aspect of *baoban* values in *Shui hu* that should be mentioned even in this brief treatment is the attitude to women and sex. The two are linked as the story is told from a man's, or perhaps a boy's, point of view. Women who demand or use sex are bad, and wives are sometimes shown as being more trouble than they are worth. Sexually active men are also shown in a bad light. A real *baoban* does not need sex. Here *baoban* values are not those of machismo, or of the modern *liumang* hooligan culture in a wider sense. This can be seen clearly in the story of Song Jiang, who is destined to become the leader of the Liangshan bandits, and his sexually demanding young bride. The leading *baoban* of *Shui hu*, Song is persuaded to take to wife a seventeen-year-old whore from the capital, sleeps with her for the first few nights, but gradually stops bothering: "Song Jiang was a *baoban* whose only love was practising the spear and quarterstaff, so sex was not very important to him." Because she has sexual appetites and takes a lover she is wholly evil, so that Song Jiang is "forced" to kill her.<sup>29</sup>

Another episode in a later chapter shows a *baoban* using his wits to deal with the sexual advances of a woman. For the sake of the Liangshan band, Yan Qing 燕青 has to call on the famous courtesan Li Shishi 李师师, who is also the emperor's mistress, in the capital to seek her help in arranging the terms for the rebels to switch to the government side. This means he has to be friendly to her—but not too friendly, as he is a *baoban*. She starts trying to flirt with him because that, we are told, is her nature: "Yan Qing, being no fool, couldn't help noticing. But as he had the spirit of a *baoban* and was afraid of ruining things for his elder brother he dared not let himself be led on." They play the flute then sing for each other, which is acceptable by the *baoban* code, but then she asks to see his tattoos. He protests that he cannot strip for her. She insists till Yan Qing finally bares an arm. Horror of horrors, she touches him. He covers his arm at once then thinks of a brilliant solution to a dilemma that he cannot solve in the usual *baoban* way by killing her. He asks her age, finds out that she is two years older than him, and kowtows to her as his elder sister. That puts paid to her evil desires. This episode shows that "his heart was like iron or stone: he truly was a *hao nanzi*."<sup>30</sup>

If sexual women are evil and sexual men are evil, or at any rate weak and ridiculous, women who fight like men can be fully accepted as members of the band, though on terms that are a little less than equal. None of the 36 top leaders are women and only three of the 72 lesser leaders are.

Sun Erniang 孙二娘, a big, muscular woman, enters the story as one of those terrible innkeepers who drug their customers then chop them up to make mincemeat fillings for steamed buns. One customer is the *baoban* Wu

<sup>29</sup> SHQZ 20–1, pp.240–56.

<sup>30</sup> SHQZ 81, pp.1005-8.



**Figure 2**

Chapter forty-eight: "One Zhang of Blue captures Wang the Short Tiger," and "Song Gongming attacks the Zhu family manor for the second time"

Two images of a fighting lady who proves her right to be one of the 108 Liangshan heroes by her prowess in battle as one of the officer class. Hu Sanniang makes her entry into the story (above left) by fighting against the Liangshan forces when they attack her home village, capturing Wang Ying. She lifts him out of his saddle after beating him in single combat. As he is the most lecherous of the Liangshan heroes there is an aptness that she has him on his back and helpless while a henchman holds him by the hair.

In the second illustration (above right) she meets with an honourable defeat when faced with Lin Chong (wielding his spear) and the double axeman Li Kui while Song Jiang watches from the upper left. Shortly after this Lin Chong seizes her. Following her capture she is inducted into the rebel army just as many other hard-fighting enemy officers have been

Song 武松. When he notices a telltale short and curly hair in his bun he does not drink the drugged wine, but only shams unconsciousness. She strips down to her underclothes for the messy work of cutting him up, only to have Wu Song spring up and start wrestling with her. He wins the fight and ends up lying on top of her, both of them half naked. She pleads with him as a *baoban* to spare her. Her husband comes in, apparently sees nothing to make him jealous in the sight of his wife lying on the floor with another man, and explains to each of them who the other is. All is now well. She goes on to become the first woman among the bandit leaders.<sup>31</sup>

She is later joined by Big Sister Gu 顾大嫂, an even beefier innkeeper who shows what a good sort

she is by smuggling knives into a gaol and later contributing to the butchery at the Zhu Family Manor by slaughtering all the women in the household.<sup>32</sup> Big Sister Gu is a very rough customer much given to violence who has, we are told, never held needle and thread in her life. The other leading woman, Hu Sanniang 扈三娘, belongs to the squirearchy. When the Liangshanpo rebels raid the Zhu Family Manor, she fights brilliantly against them until her capture. Though she has apparently switched sides, this does not save her from being awarded as a bride to Wang Ying 王英, the most lecherous of the Liangshanpo *baoban* and her inferior in martial skills—she has previously captured him in single combat. And this comes only just after her first husband has been killed, along with almost everyone else in both her father's and husband's households, by the Liangshanpo *baoban*. But seeing how strong Song Jiang's *yiqi* honour is, she accepts that there is no getting out of it.<sup>33</sup>

Another sign that women's status among the *baoban* is inferior is that there is no feminine equivalent to the strictly masculine term *baoban*. A woman can be almost a *baoban*, but not quite. The highest honour for a woman in this boys' imaginary world is to be accepted as an honorary man.

The *baoban* imagery in *Shuibu* is, I suggest, pure fiction, an escapist world for most readers and for most of those who have down the centuries seen or heard performances based on it. Perhaps that is where a lot of the appeal of the *Shui hu baoban* tradition lies. People living in the real world could not afford the grand reckless gesture with which the *Shui hu baoban* cast off family obligations, forgot about the need to make a living and stopped worrying about the

### Figure 3

*Chapter forty-nine: "Xie Zhen and Xie Bao both escape from jail"*  
Big Sister Gu is a brawnier fighting woman of a lower class than Hu Sanniang. Whereas Hu Sanniang has many conventional ladylike qualities in addition to her surprising fighting skills as a mounted warrior, Gu is big and brawny, and a butcher by trade. We first meet her presiding over an inn where hard men drink and gamble. The contrast between these two quasi-haohan, who are brought into the story in consecutive chapters, is clear: one is an officer and a lady, the other is a hefty bruiser who uses the two knives she carries about her person to despatch several guards in a gaolbreak she organises. We might compare Big Sister Gu and Li Kui, both foot soldiers, with Hu Sanniang and Lin Chong who fight from horseback. In this picture she is sending the prison governor fleeing in terror while the Xie brothers, two haohan under sentence of death, make their escape



<sup>31</sup> SHQZ 27, p.333.

<sup>32</sup> SHQZ 49–50, pp.618–34.

<sup>33</sup> SHQZ 48, pp.607–11; 50, p.638. Song was fulfilling a promise made in chapter 32 to provide Wang Ying with a bride in return for freeing an official's wife (p.397). When Wang Ying captures this woman again later, another *baoban* cuts her in half for being a bad lot (SHQZ 35, p.424).

<sup>34</sup> On tattooing in *Shui bu*, see He Xin, *Shui bu yanjiu* [*Shui bu* studies], rev. ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1985), pp. 278–9. The six tattooed leaders are listed on p.272. Earlier accounts of bad lads covered in tattoos can be found in chapter 264 of the Song collection *Taiping guangji* (pp.2062–3 of the Beijing Zhonghua Shuju edition of 1961 and later reprints).

consequences of their actions. Nor could real people indulge in cathartic slaughter—which no doubt is why they were happy to daydream themselves into having the bloody freedom of *Shui bu*'s imaginary heroes, chopping their enemies and even the ever-present urban crowds into mincemeat.

There has, after all, been plenty of propaganda down the centuries telling people to know their place and stay in it. Few cultures can beat China's in the complexity of their terminology of kinship and in the carefully graded reciprocal obligations one is taught to take on towards those who stand in different places in the kinship structure. From the Confucian texts that were the basis of the education for the upper classes to most of the popular religions whose cheaply printed homilies were circulating while the *Shui bu* story cycle developed from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, people were taught to accept their place in the family and the wider social order. The *Cabbage Root Talks* (*Cai gen tan* 菜根譚), a manual of worldly wisdom roughly contemporary with the earliest surviving versions of *Shui bu* that has had a resurgence in popularity in recent years, teaches caution, modesty, self-denial, harmony, calculation, staying out of the spotlight, avoiding anger and almost everything that is in contrast with the recklessness of the *Shui bu baohan*. The advice on how to handle oneself in life in almost every text from the *Book of Changes* to propaganda of the Deng era hardly ever includes encouragement to stand against society. Some books of advice would counsel withdrawal in some circumstances, but not resistance. Others in recent decades would have urged alignment with some social forces against others. But none would advise you to behave like a *Shui bu baohan*. It is, I think, precisely this contrast between the pressures to accept the constraints of everyday life and the terrible freedom of the *Shui bu baohan* that enables us to make sense of the book's orgies of violence. They would otherwise be meaningless.

The imaginary escape from the careful calculations of ordinary life can also be seen in a secondary characteristic of the *Shui bu* heroes: their consumption of huge amounts of meat and alcohol. Another mark of casting off the normal restraints of respectability is visible and corporeal: the tattooing with which six of the 108 *Shui bu* toughs distinguish themselves from the docile mass of the population.<sup>34</sup>

If *Shui bu* is the classic repository of *baohan* myths, the term was around long before then. An unusually colloquial piece of reported speech in the earlier of the Histories of the Tang (lifted, with the whole story of which it formed part, from a collection of anecdotes compiled at the beginning of the ninth century about leading personalities in Tang public life) has the woman emperor Wu Zetian 武则天 saying to her minister Di Renjie 狄仁杰 about the sort of man she has in mind for a particular post, "We need a *baohan* for the job. Is there one?" She was referring to a senior political appointment, and it does seem that a man with a touch of the thug about him was just what Wu needed. Di asks whether she wants a man with conventional pen-pushing competence. Or does she find scholarly gentlemen revolting? Is she looking

**Figure 4**

Chapter twenty-three: "Wu Song kills a tiger on Jingyang Ridge"

In a display of extraordinary skill in the martial arts when drunk the *haohan* Wu Song kills a man-eating tiger with his bare hands after breaking his staff on a tree. Note the vigorous physicality of the picture, especially of Wu Song himself: the eye is drawn to the bulging muscles of his mighty forearms

for someone with the breadth of talent needed to make a success of the world's affairs? On being told that this is indeed what she wants, Di recommends a man in his seventies. Wu Zetian pays no attention to this advice, but we are not told whether or not this was because he was rather old for being a *haoban*, whatever the word meant in the seventh century. There is a clear sign that it may have carried some at least of its later associations in the implied contrast between *haoban* and weedy Confucian scholars.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> A reference in the encyclopaedic dictionary *Cibai*, 1964 edition, p.2084 (p.2878 of the 1989 edition published in Shanghai by the Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe) leads to *Jiu Tang shu* [The older history of the Tang], 89, "Di Renjie zhuan" [Biography of Di Renjie], pp.2894–5. An earlier and slightly fuller version of the same story is referred to in *Hanyu da cidian* [The great Chinese dictionary] (Shanghai: Hanyu Da Cidian Chubanshe, 1986–94), vol.4, p.292. This is to be found in Liu Su, *Da Tang xin yu* [New anecdotes about the Great Tang] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1984), *juan* 6, pp.94–5.

<sup>36</sup> *Wen yuan ying hua* [The florilegium from the park of literature] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1966), *juan* 697, p.3599. This passage was noticed by D. C. Twitchett in his article "A Confucian's view of the taxation of commerce: Ts'ui Jung's memorial of 703," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36.2 (1973): 429-45. His translation of this passage, from which mine differs at several points, is on p.439.

<sup>37</sup> Zhou Mi, *Guixin za shi xuji, shang* [Continuation of the Guixin street miscellany, chapter one]. I refer to the text included in the *Bai bai congsbu* [Sea of tares collection]. The encomium of the thirty-six heroes by one Gong Shengyu 龚圣与 is included on pp.26b-31b, with the reference to Zhang Heng as a *baoban* on p.28b. This whole passage is quoted in Kong Lingjing, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shiliao* [Material on the history of Chinese fiction] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), pp.11-14.

<sup>38</sup> My impression, not confirmed by a methodical count, is that the two words are used with rather similar frequency in the Yuan texts. After the Yuan period *baonanzi* becomes much less common than *baoban*, as can be seen in the *Shui hu* figures given above.

<sup>39</sup> Gao Wenxiu, *Hei Xuanfeng shuang xiangong zaju* [The Singspiel about how the Black Whirlwind twice presents his services], scene 4 in Zang Mouxun (Zang Jinshu), ed., *Yuan qu xuan* [Selected Yuan libretti] (Beijing: Wenxue Guji Kanxing She, 1955, and later reprints by Zhonghua Shuju), vol.2, p.702.

<sup>40</sup> Kang Jinzhi, *Liangshanpo Li Kui fu jing zaju* [Singspiel about Li Kui of Liangshanpo carrying thorns of penitence], in *Yuan qu xuan*, vol.4, pp.1518-31. This passage is found in scene 1, p.1518. When the two imposters abduct his daughter, the innkeeper repeatedly refers to the men he believes to have done it as *zeiban* 贼汉, 'villainous men', an exact opposite to *baoban*. (For examples, see pp.1521, 1523 and 1528.)

There are other signs that what in later eras we could confidently label *baoban* values were about in the Tang period. A memorial by Cui Rong 崔融 written in 703 refers to:

rich merchants and big traders and the evil youth of great clans. They take death lightly and *yi* (honour) seriously, form gangs and gather in crowds. For a quiet sob they draw their bows; at an angry look they wield their swords.<sup>36</sup>

By the Southern Song period the word *baoban* has undoubtedly acquired something like its *Shui hu* meaning. Indeed, a thirteenth-century collection of anecdotes includes a list of the names and nicknames of thirty-six heroes led by Song Jiang with sixteen characters of comment on each man. This is clearly derived from an early version of the story cycle that was to grow into the various printed versions of *Shui hu* we now have. One of the thirty-six, Zhang Heng 张横, is described as a *baoban*.<sup>37</sup>

The lively and sometimes rough language of the dialogue recorded in the texts of Yuan *zaju* 杂剧 song-and-talk dramas on *Shui hu* themes and characters includes quite frequent use of *baoban* and its synonym *baonanzi*.<sup>38</sup> A runaway wife who has plotted with her boyfriend to put her husband into the death cell and now finds that the heroic psychopath, the Black Whirlwind Li Kui, has a knife to her throat makes a desperate appeal to him: "*Baoban*, spare my life." Li Kui is indeed a *baoban*: he kills her and cuts off her head.<sup>39</sup> In another Yuan play on a *Shuibu* theme, the innkeeper Wang Lin, a good character, says to two men who are pretending to be Song Jiang and his lieutenant Lu Zhishen, "The chiefs on your hill are all *baoban* who carry out the Way on behalf of Heaven."<sup>40</sup> It thus seems very likely that the *baoban* value system we know from *Shui hu* novels was formed by the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

To return to *baoban* values since they were given their definitive mythic form in *Shui hu*, the question that presents itself next is the relationship between the imagined figure of the *baoban* and people living in the everyday world. Here proverbs turn out to offer some clues. In recent times the word *baoban* has been used in many a proverb. Some but not all of them are consistent with *Shui hu* values:

*A baoban* takes responsibility for what he does.

When a *baoban's* teeth are knocked out he swallows them with the blood.

If you want to be a *baoban* be ready to be exterminated.

One proverb comes up more than once in *Shui hu* itself:

It takes the clever to value the clever; it takes a *baoban* to know a *baoban*.

Others, however, suggest a more worldly-wise approach.

*A baoban* won't marry a living man's wife.

*A baoban* lives on his tongue.

*A baoban* doesn't walk straight into disaster.

Another smashes the *Shui hu* notion that caring about money is incompatible with being a true *baoban*:

If you've got money you're a *baoban*.<sup>41</sup>

This sequence of proverbs is a bridge from the fantasy of *Shui hu* to the real world, where in normal times the orgies of pointless slaughter and destruction it celebrates are not really on offer. The word *baoban* could thus sometimes be used without all the implications of reckless ferocity it has at its worst. Thus, in the nineteenth-century novel-length sequence of stories in prose and verse about the judicial official Liu Yong that was written around the year 1800, his assistant Chen Dayong, an army man, is described as a *baoban* so often that it becomes almost a stock epithet. Though Chen is a tough guy he is not a *Shui hu* type: he accepts his place in respectable society and does not indulge in violence for its own sake.<sup>42</sup>

We find in a book of anecdotes about the city of Yangzhou around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the story of the Nanjing woman Cao Sanniang, the amply endowed “Fleshly Vajrapani,” who went in for body-building. A young officer cadet who prided himself on his fast punch was sitting opposite her on a couch when he said, “I’d like to hit you.” “If you’re a *baoban*, go ahead,” she replied, and when he reached out for her breasts one blow from her hand was enough to send him tumbling on the floor.<sup>43</sup>

We can also find examples of *baoban* being used in a rather loose way as a term of approval. In his set of comments on historical figures, Li Zhi 李贽 (1527–1602) refers to a number of them as *baoban* in ways that show he has in mind qualities that are not quite the same as those of *Shui hu* heroes. Li seems to be using the word to praise people of courage and determination rather than expert fighters.<sup>44</sup> It is evident that for Li Zhi the essential *baoban* quality is not incompatible with being an official or a scholar.

I have argued that the world of *Shui hu* is

<sup>42</sup> Yan Qi, ed., *Cbewangfu quben Liu Gong an* [Mr Liu’s cases in the performing script edition from Prince Che’s mansion] (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1992).

<sup>43</sup> Li Dou, *Yangzhou buafang lu* [The decorated boats of Yangzhou] (Yangzhou: Yangzhou Guji Shudian, 1984), *juan* 9, p.200.

<sup>44</sup> Among those who attract the title are Shang Yang 商鞅 and Shen Buhai 申不害, the bold and ruthless political reformers of the fourth century BC; Gong Sheng 龚胜 and other Han officials who refused to hold office under the usurper Wang Mang 王莽; Li Gu 李固, who studied diligently at the Eastern Han imperial university and did not let his fellow students realise how well-connected he was; and Li Shimin 李世民, the founder of the Tang dynasty. Li Zhi, *Shi gang ping yao* [Summary evaluations of the outline of history] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), pp.57, 235–6, 297 and 465.

<sup>41</sup> These and other similar proverbs are to be found in many collections, among them Arthur H. Smith, *Proverbs and common sayings from the Chinese* (1914; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1965), pp.18, 74, 292, 293, 348; Wang Yugang, *Su yu dian* [Dictionary of slang] (Taipei, 1976), p.155; and Joseph van Oost, *Dictons et proverbes des Chinois habitant la Mongolie Sud-ouest* (Zi-ka-wei, Shanghai: Imprimerie de l’Orphelinat de T’ou-sé-wé, 1918), pp.173, 175, 283, 331, 340. I owe the van Oost references to a 1978 letter from Dr Craig Clunas.

### Figure 5

Three of Dong Fuxiang’s 董福祥 Gansu soldiers who served in Peking during the Boxer crisis of 1900. The one on the right looks like a man who would have been glad to have been taken for a *haohan* (from Zhang Haipeng, ed., *Jianming Zhongguo jindaishi tu ji* [Collection of illustrations to the history of modern China] [Beijing: Changchun Chubanshe, 1984], p.102)



<sup>45</sup> A collection of stories that is rich in *baoban* references is Anhui Sheng Fuyang Zhuanqu Wenxue Yishu Gongzuozhe Lianhehui [The Association of Literature and Art Workers of Fuyang Prefecture, Anhui Province], ed., *Nianjun gushiji* [Collected stories about the Nian army] (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1962). Although this volume has evidently been heavily edited, it is unlikely that *baoban* references would have been put in. Many folk poems on the Nian can be found in *Nianjun geyao* [Nian folksongs], edited by Li Dongshan and others (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1960). *Baoban* references can be found on pp.41, 54 (twice) and 123.

<sup>46</sup> On popular traditions about Song Jingshi's rebellion gathered in the early 1950s, see Chen Baichen, ed., *Song Jingshi lishi diaocha ji* [Investigations into the history of Song Jingshi] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1957).

<sup>47</sup> A collection of folk traditions about the Boxers that includes a number of references to them as *baobanis Yibetuan gushiji* [Stories about Boxers], ed. Hebeisheng Minjian Wenxue Yanjiuhui (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1960). Among the pages on which the word is used of Boxers are 26, 70, 93ff. and 166.

<sup>48</sup> In 146 pages of the collection *Taiping tianguo geyao* [Folksongs about the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom], ed. Taiping Tianguo Lishi Bowuguan (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1962), the word *baoban* is not found once. This striking regional difference in the use of the word *baoban* between texts collected, edited and published from similar political motives at about the same seems to eliminate the possibility that *baoban* references have been slipped into some of them but not others for reasons connected with the politics of the 1950s and 1960s.

<sup>49</sup> Hebei Wenshi Ziliao Bianjibu, ed., *Jindai Zhongguo tufei shilu* [Records of bandits in recent China], 3 vols (Beijing: Qunzhong Chubanshe, 1992), abbreviated to *JZTS* below, is a rich collection of stories that appear to be more reliable as evidence of attitudes than as accounts of what actually happened. It includes a number of references to values and actions of the *Shuibu baoban* type in the northern half of China.

Wang Tianzong 王天纵 of west Henan, who died in 1920, is given a glowing write-

essentially one of fantasy, and that being a *baoban* was an ideal rather than a way of life. This is not to maintain that *baoban* values did not influence the behaviour of real people. There are plenty of indications that they did. In troubled times *baoban* values could lead men into serious conflict.

Stories and songs about the Nian 捻 rebels of the third quarter of the nineteenth century gathered among their descendants in northern Jiangsu in recent times often refer to the Nian as *baoban*. The Nian were evidently motivated to perform amazing feats of violence. Peasants from northern Anhui who turned themselves into cavalry good enough to defeat Mongol horsemen in battle and kill their commander Prince Senggelinqin 僧格林沁 were warriors of some distinction. It seems likely that one of the motives for their deeds of daring was to be thought of as *baoban* by their fellows.<sup>45</sup>

Oral traditions about a Shandong rebellion of the same period led by Song Jingshi 宋景诗 frequently refer to the rebels as *baoban*, especially when talking about their first deed, a raid on a local prison. Song Jingshi himself was repeatedly described by village people as a man who cared about honour (*jiang yiqi* 讲义气).<sup>46</sup> Both these risings took place not far from the Liangshanpo centre of *Shuibu* traditions. Nor was the Shandong home of the late nineteenth-century Boxer movement so very far from this area. Boxers too were celebrated as *baoban* in many accounts and folk songs collected fifty or sixty years later.<sup>47</sup>

Without suggesting that the values of *baoban* and its kind of *yiqi* are the main source of rebel ideologies in late traditional north China I would argue that they are a more important component in them than has generally been recognised. They help to explain why people—teenage boys and young men for the most part—took part in risings that had a very small chance of success. Those values do seem to be rather stronger in north and northeast China than in the south. By contrast with the frequency with which it occurs in folk material gathered in the north, we find very little *baoban* language in traditions about the Taiping from the area where they first appeared in the far south.<sup>48</sup>

Though real bandits in this century could hardly afford to take wealth lightly or expect to have such vast windfalls of money and grain as their

up in Zhang Fang, “Zhong zhou da xia Wang Tianzong” [Wang Tianzong, the great knight of the central region], *JZTS*, vol.3, pp.223–39. Wang is said to have compared his being driven into banditry with the way the Liangshan *baoban* were all forced into rebellion, and appealed to people's sense of *yiqi* when calling on them to join him (p.225). “Although he did not fly the banner ‘Carry out the Way on behalf of Heaven; Kill the rich and aid the poor’ ... in reality he did try to win praise as a *baoban* of the greenwood tree who behaved

/like a knight (*xia*) and relied on honour, which is why he was known at the time as the ‘great knight of the Central Region’” (p.228).

Two stories in the collection tell of Communist officials appealing to *baoban* values when trying to win Manchurian bandits over during the 1940s. In one reminiscence Zhang Ruilin tells us about working out his approach to one band: “From what I had learned already I knew that bandits who roam around the rivers and lakes value honour among mates (*gemeng yiqi* 哥门儿义气 on which more



fictionalised predecessors in *Shui hu*, the large literature on banditry that has been published in China in the last two or three years does not lack references to those bandits who did have a sense of *yiqi*. A 1992 three-volume collection of anecdotes about bandits in the first half of the twentieth century includes references to 'good' bandits who go in for *haoban* behaviour.<sup>49</sup> Cai Shaoqing's history of banditry in Republican China tells of one Manchurian who showed his *yiqi* by first killing his own uncle for raping a village girl, then giving him a slap-up funeral. Another bandit did such good deeds as rescuing the victims kidnapped by other bands. If that was conventional morality, his response to a request for help from another band he had not met before when it was out of ammunition after a defeat could have come straight from the pages of *Shui hu*. He gave them ammunition and escorted them along their way, taking heavy casualties in the process. This was pure *yiqi*.<sup>50</sup> It was not, however, normal bandit behaviour.

The three-volume collection of bandit stories includes some tales about women bandits who appear to be in the female line of the *haoban* tradition. A woman "Boss of Seven Provinces," Gaiqisheng 盖七省, on the northern grasslands surrounded herself with twenty beautiful female bodyguards.<sup>51</sup> One woman was so remarkable that a variety of contradictory stories about her circulated. Widow Zhang 长寡妇 of western Henan specialized in kidnapping unmarried girls and looking after them with such concern for propriety that they were still marriageable after they were ransomed. After a long criminal career in which she more than once sent thousands of her men off to join government armies she was eventually captured and executed in Luoyang in 1933, going to her death calm, smiling and boasting of her achievements. Although she could not make the claim that in twenty years she would be another *haoban* she does, according to one version, say, "I'm fifty-three now, and in another fifty-three years I'll be as stout and tall again as I am now." She was strong on honour and, when captured, quoted the saying, "A *haoban* takes responsibility for what he's done," and admitted her crimes.<sup>52</sup>

Another woman, Zhang Shuzhen 张淑珍 or Suzhen 素贞, moved between banditry and prostitution in the Changchun region and died in proper Changchun style in 1925 at the age of twenty-four. To those who saw her being driven on a cart to her execution she was as elegant and beautiful as an aristocratic lady on the stage. As she passed a draper's shop she demanded the traditional length of red satin to drape over herself; and on being given a bowl of liquor she had asked for she drained it at a draught. Although she too could not make the promise to be reborn as a *haoban* she did shout just before she was shot, "I'm not afraid of dying."<sup>53</sup>

Arthur H. Smith has some wonderful pages on 'bullies' in his 1899 *Village Life in China* that catch the essentials of a nineteenth-century version of a kind of archetypal *liumang* or *guanggun*. They also give a most valuable picture of what happened when the fantasies of *Shui hu* were brought down to rustic earth. They thus provide a link between the imaginary world of fictional *haoban* and bored teenagers in today's China. After dividing

(below) above all else. At this vital moment ... I proposed swearing blood brotherhood as a way of gaining a firm foothold among them." He goes on to appeal to them by calling them men who care about *yiqi* and becoming sworn brother number six. See p.305 of his "Shenru feichaogaiban 'Zhuang-jian' feidui" [Going deep into the bandit lair to reorganise the 'farmers' bandit gang], *JZTS*, vol.1, pp.300-14.

An even more *Shui hu* story is told about a remarkable woman Communist Party county secretary, Li Ran 李然 (also called Shen Yang 沈洋), who needs to obtain some information that has fallen into the hands of a bandit chief known as Nine-headed Bird 九头鸟. With only a single bodyguard she ensures that she and he will be captured and taken to the bandit chief. Her response to his threat to kill them is to say, "If you bump us off like that you're no *haoban*." She challenges him to a shooting match and wins. Whereupon "Nine-headed Bird thoroughly admires this '*haoban*' and invites her into his hut to meet his mother. They then swear brotherhood and sisterhood." Cao Baoming, "Dongbeituifei" [Bandits in the northeast], *JZTS*, vol.1, pp.1-76.

<sup>50</sup> Cai Shaoqing, *Minguo shiqi de tufei* [Bandits in the Republican era] (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, 1993), pp.97, 102. Some of these acts of *yiqi*, as they are described, were earlier to be found on pp.26-7 of Cao Baoming's article cited in the previous note.

<sup>51</sup> Guo Fu, "Bashan tufei" [Bandits of the high plains], *JZTS*, vol.2, p.84.

<sup>52</sup> Miao Peimeng, "Qing mo Min chu de Luoning lulin renwu" [Greenwood personalities in Luoning in the late Qing and early Republic], *JZTS*, vol.3, pp.213-14; Wang Shoumei, "Chiming Yuxi de Zhang Guafu" [Widow Zhang who was famous throughout west Henan], *ibid.*, pp.245-53. This latter version makes her into a somewhat improper wager of class struggle.

<sup>53</sup> Guan Shijie, "Xian hua jiu shehui tufei" [Casual remarks on bandits in the old society], *JZTS*, vol.1, pp.125-7; Tao Zhongxiao and Liu Shan, "Nüfei Tuolong yu bing da Luanshishan" [The woman bandit 'Tuolong' fighting the army at Luanshishan], *ibid.*, pp.284-7.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur H. Smith, *Village life in China: a study in sociology* (New York: F. H. Revell, 1899), pp.212–13.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.219–20,

<sup>56</sup> During the civil war that resulted in the Communist seizure of power there was a song sung by the soldiers of Lin Biao's 林彪 Fourth Field Army that included the couplet, "We are Lin Biao's warriors/We are *haoban* who kill the enemy." Gan Jun, *Lin Biao bei zheng neimu* [The inside story of how Lin Biao was crushed] (Taipei: Limin Wenhua Shiye Gongsi, 1972), p.11. There was also a slogan used in Lin Biao's territory, the Northeast, at about the same time, 1947–48, to encourage peasants who had benefited from Communist Party land redistribution to enlist:

Do not be ungrateful for your new start;  
A *haoban* will go for a soldier.

See Zhang Zhenglong, *Xue bai xue hong* [White snow, red blood] (Taipei: Fengyun Shidai Chuban Youxian Gongsi, 1991), vol.1, p.201.

It is tempting to attribute to Lin personally a wish to be associated with *haoban* qualities, especially as he was physically weedy, and to confirm this by referring to the rumour that during the so-called Cultural Revolution he promoted the slogan "If dad was a hero the son's a *haoban*"—tempting, but not overwhelmingly convincing on the strength of such weak evidence. Lin was however associated with another piece of doggerel used in the Cultural Revolution by militant factions that expresses pure *haoban* values:

Sometimes one must face sacrifice;  
One must even sacrifice one's life!  
If I get finished off, I'm finished.  
When the shooting stars on the battlefield.  
I make a resolution:  
"Today lao-tze dies in this place."

See William Hinton, *Hundred day war* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), p.146. The use of the word *lao-tze* 老子 (*laozi* in the *pinyin* romanisation) is the real giveaway here. The word means 'old man' in the sense of father. For a man to refer to himself as *laozi* in talking to someone else can imply that he has fathered them on their mother, and thus be highly insulting.

*Haoban* can also occasionally be found in some other Communist songs of this same period, as in the collection edited and published by the Shanghai Wenyi Chuban-

villagers into the *laosbi* 老实 (well-behaved) and the not-*laosbi*, Smith goes on to deal with the latter:

In his simplest form, a Chinese bully is a man of more or less violent temper and strong passions, who is resolved never to "eat loss," and under all circumstances to give as good (or as bad) as he gets . . . . In order to secure the reputation of being not "lao-shih" a shrewd villager will sometimes adopt the expedient, not unknown to other lands, of wearing his clothes in a loose and rowdy fashion, talking in a boisterous tone, and resenting contradiction . . . . His cap is worn studiously awry; his outer garment, instead of being decorously fastened, is left purposely unlooped; his abundant hair is braided in a loose cue apparently as thick as his arm, the plaiting beginning several inches away from the head; the end of the cue is generally coiled about his neck or over his head (a gross breach of Chinese etiquette), as if to show that he thirsts for a fight. His outer leggings are not improbably so tied as to display a lining which is more expensive than the outside; and his shoes are invariably worn down at the heel, perhaps to make an ostentatious display of a silk embroidered heel to the cotton stocking—a touch of splendor adopted to strike awe into the rustic beholder . . . . He will succeed in diffusing the impression that he is a dangerous man to interfere with, and will in consequence be left severely alone.<sup>54</sup>

Though the actual clothes and hairstyles change with fashion, the same messages have been put across down to our own times. You dress differently to mark yourself off from the docile.

The village bully of a century ago was also a thug:

One of the qualifications which is very convenient for the village bully, though not absolutely indispensable, is physical strength . . . . A high degree of skill in wrestling, and the ability, as alleged, to deliver such a blow with the fist as shall knock out a brick from a wall a foot thick, are in many circumstances valuable accomplishments.

Had Smith better remembered *Shui hu* and other traditions about violent women he might not have been so surprised at the "female bully":

Her traits are, *mutatis mutandis*, the same as those of the individuals already mentioned, but her mere existence is so great a departure from our ordinary conceptions of Chinese social life, that it needs a word of explanation. She is simply an evolution of her surroundings. Skill in speech, physical violence in act, and an executive talent are her endowments, and her usefulness to the perennially hungry "wolves and tigers" of the yamen is such that she is called their draught-horse to draw victims.<sup>55</sup>

This rather squalid reality is a long way from the fictional world of the *Shui hu* heroes and heroines. Were the violence in *Shui hu* for real it would be far more damaging than the generally petty thuggery of the village bully-boys and bully-girls. Seen through Smith's eyes these village troublemakers are not the larger than life *haoban* and their female equivalents. Nor are they legendary and heroic bandits of the Robin Hood type. They are small-time gang members, nasty enough if they take against you, but hardly likely to indulge in either the

multiple slaughter or the grand gestures of self-sacrifice so common in the pages of the novel. Nor would we expect the rustic petty criminals to be as indifferent to sex and money as were the invented characters.

It would be a mistake to see only the differences between fiction and the behaviour of living people while missing the ways in which fictional creations can influence real action. Though we have to assume that many aspects of the *baoban* ethic as portrayed in *Shui hu* have rarely been put into practice there are enough similarities between the values of fiction such as *Shui hu* and other more recent celebrations of gratuitous violence and honour, on the one hand, and those put into practice by some groups in society, on the other, to make the subject worth looking into further. Concepts of *yiqi* are still a powerful enough influence on some to be identified as one of the principal causes of youth crime. The word *baoban*, like all that it stands for both in myth and in practice, remained a dangerous one to be handled very carefully until recent decades.

As a party that was once the organiser of violent rebellion and at the same time depended on a strictly enforced discipline to gain and hold power, the Communists have always been acutely sensitive to the threat of disruption and anarchy implicit in *baoban* values. Someone obeying the demands of *yiqi* cannot be depended on to observe the principles of absolute obedience and loyalty to the organisation on which party power was based. That is why they have been so aware of the appeal and the dangers of *baoban* values, *jianghu yiqi* 江湖义气, the “*yiqi* of the rivers and lakes,” as well as of their living descendant, “mates’ honour,” or *gemengr yiqi* 哥们儿义气. What follow are only a few brief remarks on a subject that is worth a much more extended treatment.

In official Communist literature it is unusual (though not unknown) to find *baoban* being used by them to describe their own people, especially before 1949.<sup>56</sup> The word since then has almost always been a taboo one in referring to people on their side.<sup>57</sup> To fill the gap they gave the word *yingxiong* 英雄 (hero), once used almost as a synonym for *baoban*, a distinct and different meaning, to express heroic qualities approved of by the Party organisation.

In the crude but vigorous novel about Communist-led peasant militia fighting the Japanese and their collaborators, *Lüliang yingxiong zhuan* 吕梁英雄传 (Heroes of the Lüliang Mountains), these two words are very carefully distinguished. Only bad characters or people on the wrong side talk about *baoban*. The villainous landlord known as Hualingba (Boss of Birch Ridge) says, on hearing of the anti-Japanese militia’s plan to cut some woods down to prevent the Japanese from getting the timber to use as railway sleepers, that they are “playing *baoban* in the King of Hell’s palace” and that he is going to get every one of them. The only other use of *baoban* in the novel is in a conversation between two militiamen in the Japanese puppet forces.<sup>58</sup> By contrast, the word *yingxiong* is used quite often by and about the Communist-led militia.<sup>59</sup>

/she, *Jiefang zhangzheng shiqi geyao* [Songs of the liberation war period] (Shanghai, 1961), where it occurs twice, on pp.73 and 88. Mao Zedong’s use of the term is very occasional, as in the line “If we don’t reach the Great Wall we’re not *baoban*” in the poem “Liupanshan,” supposedly written in 1935. “Qing ping le: Liupushan,” in *Mao Zhubi shici* [The poetry of Chairman Mao] (Beijing Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1976), p.21. In his 1940 “Lun xin minzhuzhuyi” [On the new democracy], *Mao Zedong xuanji* (one-volume edition) (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1967, and later reprints), p.642, he says that in the international situation of the day all the *yingxiong baoban* of the colonies and semi-colonies had to join the anti-imperialist front. In neither case was he using the word in a formal message to the Party and the masses it controlled, the former being a poem not originally intended for publication, and the second being an appeal to the values of people who were then outside the revolutionary movement.

<sup>57</sup> When we do occasionally find the word used as a positive one in texts of the Communist Party era it tends to be in informal language. In a story set in the late 1970s a factory gatekeeper says of a colleague, “He’s a real *baoban* for hitting the son of a factory manager who tried to force his way through the gates with an unauthorised sheet of glass and then arguing with the manager” (Chen Guokai, “Ta diaobulai wode xin” [He won’t win me over], *Zuopin*, 1981.1: 49. A collection of supposed folksongs from the Great Leap Forward years includes such lines as “There are lots of Chinese and lots of *baoban*” and even “Oil rigs and oil drills are *baoban*.” Guo Moruo and Zhou Yang, eds, *Hongqi geyao* [Red flag folk ballads] (Beijing: Zuojia Chubanshe, 1960), pp.290, 304.

<sup>58</sup> Ma Feng and Xi Rong, *Lüliang yingxiong zhuan* (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1965), pp.95 and 309,

<sup>59</sup> As on pp.111–12, 179 and 222.

**Figure 6**

*Chapter twenty-seven: “The mother demon sells human flesh in Mengzhou Circuit” and “Commandant Wu meets Zhang Qing at Shizi Slope”*

*In the first illustration to this chapter (this page) the demonic innkeeper Sun Erniang, using no feminine tricks, assures Wu Song that the filling in his steamed bun is beef, not the human flesh it actually is.*

*In the second (facing page) Wu Song, having pretended to drink drugged liquor, has sprung to life when the mother demon tried to butcher him, rolling on the ground half-naked with her as he wrestles her to submission. Once her husband Zhang Qing 长青 (to the right) explains who they both are all misunderstandings are ended, and Sun Erniang’s honorary haohan status is established.*

*Later in this episode Wu Song shows what a fine haohan he is by insisting that the two guards who are escorting him to gaol and have really been drugged should be spared despite Zhang Qing’s kind offer to kill them so that he can escape*



<sup>60</sup> “Ronglu lian jingang,” in *Li Runjie kuai-banshu xuan* [Selected *kuaiban* scripts by Li Runjie], ed. Tianjinshi Quyituan (Tianjin, 1963), pp.152–66.

There is a *kuaiban* 快板 ballad treatment of the encounter in prison between the Communist Wang Ruofei 王若飞, and a bandit chief called Zhang 张 who has been sent into the captured revolutionary’s cell by the gaolers in order to break him. In the struggle of will and wits between the two of them much is made of the contrast between the values of a disciplined revolutionary and those of an individualistic and self-proclaimed *haohan*.<sup>60</sup> The bandit is hairy-chested, fiery-tempered, tough, proud, wild—a hard case.



If he does not like what anybody says, he will hit them, pull out a knife or gun, then kill them.

He made himself head of the self-proclaimed heroes; Among the *baohan* he was king.

While the bandit boasts of being a *baohan* who'll break before he'll bend and sets out his credentials as what Hobsbawm might call a social bandit who

<sup>61</sup> Yang Shilin and Qiao Mingfu, *Wang Ruofei zai yuzhong* [Wang Ruofei in gaol] (Hong Kong: Sanlian Shudian, 1961), pp.84–7.

<sup>62</sup> In the July 1970 performance edition of the opera published in volume form in Peking one of the hangers-on of the bandit chief describes Yang Zirong in his bandit disguise as a *baobanzi* 好汉 on hearing his tale about how he got hold of a vital communication map (scene 6, p.43). But when Yang's own commander receives a message from him he refers to him as a *yingxiong* (scene 9, p.64). The wording is almost identical in the 1968 Peking edition from the Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe. The equivalent scene in the bandits' lair in Qu Bo's novel *Lin hai xue yuan* [Tracks in the snowy forest] (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1977 edition), from which the opera was derived, has the bandits slapping their thighs and calling Yang a *baoban* (p.220). For an account of the historical Yang Zirong, see Wen Ye, "Zhencha yingxiong Yang Zirong jiaofei jishi" [A record of how the heroic scout Yang Zirong exterminated bandits], *JTZS*, vol.1, pp.334–58.

<sup>63</sup> *Beijing wanbao* [Peking Evening News], 2 April 1964, as translated in *Survey of the China mainland press (Supplement)*, 123, 21 August 1964, pp.18–19.

kills the rich to help the poor and fights injustice, Wang stresses correct thinking, urging Zhang to be the right sort of hero, a *yingxiong ban* 英雄汉. As Zhang starts to be won over he says to Wang, "You're a *yingxiong*, I'm a *baoban*; you're a man of honour, I'm tough." When Zhang is finally won over by the Communist's arguments that only the party can bring about justice for all, he submits, admitting that he cannot compare himself with such real *yingxiong* heroes. Curiously enough, a prose memoir purporting to describe the actual episode on which the ballad was based does not use the word *baoban* once.<sup>61</sup> The ballad sets against Wang Ruofei's party orthodoxy not so much alternative social practice as a rival myth. A rival myth that could influence social practice, even if it did not portray it.

The images of heroes created by Communist propaganda are of disciplined, modest people who even when sacrificing themselves for the cause do so without the flamboyance and the big gestures of the *baoban*. Consider the images of heroes from Dong Cunrui 董存瑞 (who deliberately blew himself up with an enemy pillbox) to the ineffable Lei Feng 雷锋 and his ilk. They are all calculatedly boring. There is nothing flash about them, no style, no panache. Instead of showing off their individuality they submit to the organisation and its discipline. For the swaggering self-assertion of the *baoban* style of talking they substitute the self-effacing language of the political study meeting. They have none of the glamour of the *Shui hu* killers.

One of the reasons why the Communists succeeded in conquering China against enormous odds was their ability to impose their kind of revolutionary values on a culture that was much more used to other images of heroism and struggle. The tension can be seen in the best-known scenes of the novel *Lin hai xue yuan* 林海雪原 (Tracks in the Snowy Forest) and the Peking opera based on it, *Zhiqu Weibushan* 智取威虎山 (Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy) that both tell the story of how during the civil war of the late 1940s a unit of the People's Liberation Army brings about the destruction of a group of Nationalist troops in a Manchurian mountain stronghold. The Nationalists are shown as behaving just like bandits. At a crucial stage in the story, Yang Zirong 杨子荣, a PLA scout, has to disguise himself as a bandit in order to enter the lair and act like a bandit in order to convince the enemy that he belongs to their milieu while not letting readers or audience forget that he is not one of them. He does this almost impossible job so well that the bandits praise him as a *baoban*, while when his own commander receives a message from him, he calls Yang a *yingxiong* (hero).<sup>62</sup> The danger to Communist propaganda is that in such scenes the bandits will be too attractive: hence the complaint in the *Beijing Evening News* in 1964 that the bandit language of the novel was having a bad influence on children.<sup>63</sup> However hard Communist propagandists tried, sometimes they were unable to defeat the appeal of *baoban* values. Jiang Qing 江青 complained during the 1960s that in some films:

you don't see the Party's leadership, Party policies, the strength of political

work or the support of the masses. Instead they propagate individual heroism, heroes of the bush, *baohan* of the greenwood tree, the *yiqi* of the rivers and lakes, and all that is low.<sup>64</sup>

The Party's fear of the big gesture so characteristic of *baohan* models of behaviour also explains its refusal to allow execution victims to go out in style.

Lacking in constructive features though the whole *baohan* value system always was both in fiction and in practice, it looks quite good when set against what those values have turned to in recent decades. The culture and language of the world of prisons and camps has made deep incursions into the dominant culture of bureaucrats and other more or less educated people who would once have marked themselves off as clearly as possible from the language and style of the criminal. In the first volume of his memoirs of prison life in the late 1950s and early 1960s the writer Cong Weixi 从维熙 shows himself as horrified by the common criminals whom he was forced as a convicted rightist to live.<sup>65</sup> The criminals he describes were not at all eager to imitate *chishifenzi* 吃屎分子 (shit-eaters), as they called *zhishifenzi* 知识分子 (intellectuals). They had their own sub-culture and attitude to the world, and even in the 1950s marked themselves off linguistically from respectable Communist Party society.

Among themselves they were not comrades, they were mates—*gemenr* 哥们儿. *Gemenr* or *gemen* 哥们 are mates who are outside (or posing as being outside) respectable morality. If you are accepted as one of the *gemenr* you have to be ready to earn it by breaking the rules. Being in gaol, or being an ex-con, clearly qualify, provided you are inside for the right sort of crime.

The term for “mate” is *gemenr* in the local Peking dialect today, where it originally also meant “brothers,” to be distinguished, according to some authorities, from *germen* 哥儿们, only meaning “brothers.”<sup>66</sup> In written texts representing Peking speech the usage of the two terms is often confused; and in texts both from there and from other parts of the northern half of China we sometimes find that the character *er* (elided into the *r* in the middle of *germen* and at the end of *gemenr*) is dropped in writing the word, so that it is written *gemen* and we do not know whether or where the *er* sound would occur when the word was spoken.<sup>67</sup> It can also happen that *germen* is written where in standard Peking we would expect *gemenr*.<sup>68</sup> Occasionally one comes across a female equivalent of *gemenr* in *jiemenr* 姐们儿, a word that seems to be a recent invention and to carry the same affectation of disreputability. The linguistic inequality that denied women and girls an equivalent to *baohan* seems at last to have been put right.

I am no dialectologist, but my impression is that neither *gemenr* nor *germen* is much used south of the Yangtse. Youth cultures in the south use other words in place of *gemenr*, but the general meaning is the same.<sup>69</sup> The difficulty one has in grasping these nuances of language when trying to approach living popular cultures through printed sources is in itself an

<sup>64</sup> “Jiang Qing tongzhi tan guanyu dianying wenti” [Comrade Jiang Qing talks about film problems] in the collection *Jiang Qing tongzhi lun wenyi* [Comrade Jiang Qing on art and literature] (no place of publication given, May 1968), p.83.

<sup>65</sup> Cong Weixi, *Zou xiang hunzhuo* [Into the filth] (Hong Kong: Tiandi Tushu Youxian Gongs, 1990).

<sup>66</sup> Xi Shirong, *Beijingtuyucidian* [Dictionary of Peking argot] (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 1990). The writer Wang Shuo 王朔, who shows a most acute awareness of current Peking language use, always writes *gemenr* when it means mate. He evidently feels the word to be essentially singular: hence his use of the curious plural *gemenrmen* 哥儿们 on p.139 of the satirical novel *Qian wan bie ba wo dang ren* [Don't treat me as human, whatever you do] (Changsha: Hunan Wenyi Chubanshe, 1993).

<sup>67</sup> Omission of a spoken *er* when writing a word is of course common.

<sup>68</sup> As, for example, on p.99 of Liu Binyan's article “Ren yao zhi jian” [People or monsters?] in the September 1979 issue of *Renmin wenxue*. I am only moderately confident that I am following correct Peking usage in making the distinction between *gemenr* and *germen*, and am glad to acknowledge the guidance I have been given by Geremie Barmé, whose perceptions of the eddies and flows of the living language of the young are so acute. What makes the distinction harder to detect in speech than on paper is that in the slurred articulation affected by those who like to be taken as real Pekingers the two words do not necessarily sound very different from each other.

<sup>69</sup> Such is the impression gathered from reading a number of collections of reports on juvenile crime in different parts of China during the 1970s and 1980s. *Gemenr* and its variants occurs far more often in articles discussing youth attitudes in the north than in the south.

<sup>70</sup> Discussed briefly in chapter 11 of my *The tyranny of history: the roots of China's crisis* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1992, and Penguin Books, 1994).

**Figure 7**

*Chapter twenty-eight: "Wu Song overawes Anping Stockade"*

*Having spared his escorts, Wu Song is taken to be imprisoned in Anping Stockade, where he is astonishingly well-treated by his gaoler, Shi En 施恩. After hints that a favour may be expected in return Wu Song is eager to demonstrate his almost superhuman strength. This he does by picking up the stone base for a temple's paper flags. Although it weighs several hundred jin he tosses it effortlessly into the air.*

*The picture is one of vigour and physicality that are unusual in Ming graphic art. Wu Song's ample and muscular body exudes energy: even the hair in his armpits bristles with strength*



instructive pointer towards the limitations of written Chinese, but that is another issue.<sup>70</sup>

The re-emergence of modified but in some ways rather traditional values derived from *baohan* values since the 1970s has a lot to do with the Maoist rejection of much of the Chinese Communist Party's own ethos in the chaotic years from 1966 onwards. After decades of indoctrination and propaganda about subjecting oneself to the discipline of the hierarchical organisation and the collective interest, nearly all restraints were thrown away. What had been almost taboo—"playing the 'individual her'"—was now acceptable. Accounts of fighting in the Cultural Revolution are full of incidents in which individuals go in for reckless heroism or brutality. Men fight bare-chested, take on bandit-style nicknames, glory in sacrifice and slaughter.<sup>71</sup> When the time came for this kind of action to be discredited by official propaganda, *baohan* could be used to refer in a derogatory way to Maoist bully-boys.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Plenty of illustrations can be found in fiction and reminiscences describing fighting between factions during the most violent years of the Cultural Revolution. For a foreign account based on interviews that describes the fighting at Peking's Qinghua University, see Hinton, *Hundred day war*. From Hinton's evidence it is clear that the style of some of the student combatants on the campus was heavily influenced by *Shui hu* and Qing-era models of how a tough guy ought to act in order to win respect, such as fighting bare-chested and going in for acts of reckless daring. I have already cited in an earlier footnote a piece of tough-guy verse that was used in Qinghua at the time.

<sup>72</sup> A description published in 1979 of the Shanghai militia when, under the control of Jiang Qing's associates, they were used in 1976 to repress demonstrations in favour of Zhou Enlai refers to them as *baohanmen* [好汉们]. This plural form of *baohan* is somehow contemptuous. Yang Kuangman and Guo Baochen, "Mingyun" [Fate], in *Dangdai*, 1979.2, p.19.



Once the countless local civil wars were over and the revolution had been revealed as the fraud it was, all sorts of value systems rushed into the ideological vacuum left by the implosion of Maoism. Among them were those of *gemenr yiqi* and its equivalents in many local cultures. “Honour among mates” is one way we could translate the term, which belongs to today’s world and is distinguished from the more traditional *jiangbu yiqi*, or “honour of the rivers and lakes,” the value system of many bandits, soldiers and others up till the middle of the twentieth century. If precision is possible in such matters we might distinguish between the fictional *baohan* values of *Shui bu* that have been continued in *wuxia* 武侠 (martial knights) fiction and related films in our own time and the sense of honour that may or may not have been felt by some bandits, soldiers and the like in recent times. There is quite a lot of overlap. *Gemenr yiqi* belongs to the present and to cities; *jiangbu yiqi* to the recent past and, to a large extent, to the countryside.

*Gemenr* values—*gemenr yiqi*—are closely related to, and directly descended from, *baohan* ones through the *jiangbu yiqi* of the bandit tradition. Indeed, some of the links between *gemenr yiqi* and *jiangbu yiqi* are so close that writers on youth crime sometimes refer to the one and sometimes to the other as a value system that holds youth gangs together.<sup>73</sup> The connections between them seem to be primarily through the popular arts: fiction, films and television.<sup>74</sup> It makes loyalty to your mates a higher priority than virtually any other obligation. For *gemenr yiqi* today’s tearaways will forget about the demands of the family and the state (including the Party) in order to stand by a mate in trouble, even if it means risking very serious trouble. For *yiqi* you must be ready to fight, to be beaten up, to be arrested, or even to die with a knife between your ribs. What you can never do is sell your mates out, inform on them or leave them in the lurch. *Yiqi* also requires the settling of scores.

Today’s *gemenr yiqi*, like the earlier sort, involves big gestures and no compromise with respectable society. But you are no longer expected to be casual about money—as long as you share it with your mates—or to be afraid of female sexuality. Young women can belong to the gangs held together by *gemenr yiqi* and will win respect if they sleep with several boys in the gang. Sex with outsiders is, however, disapproved of.<sup>75</sup> Female gang members in Shanghai will pride themselves on finding girlfriends for the boys in the mob.<sup>76</sup>

Honour among mates was identified as a powerful and dangerous concept in a 1977 short story by Liu Xinwu 刘心武 set in a class of Peking middle-school students. It sets two kinds of spiritual emptiness against each other: the shallow hypocrisy of late Maoist ideology as personified by the class monitor, and the *liumang* values held by a young, working-class gang member who admires *germen yiqi* (so written) and is rejected by the correct-thinking students.<sup>77</sup>

Another view of the revival of *gemenr yiqi* during the Cultural Revolution can be found in one of the less attractive autobiographical novels of recent years, Lao Gui’s 老鬼 *Xuese huanghun* 血色黄昏 (Bloody Dusk).<sup>78</sup> This

<sup>73</sup> Among those who have written of *jiangbu yiqi* in connection with youth crime are Yan Zhen’an, “Shilun jiaqiang qingshaonian fazui de yufang” [A tentative discussion on strengthening the prevention of youth crime], in *Zhongguo qingshaonian fazui yanjiu nianjian, 1987* [China yearbook of juvenile criminology, 1987] (Beijing: Chunqiu Chubanshe, 1988), vol.1, p.650. This volume is referred to below as *ZQFYN*. See also Ma Jingmiao, “Shilun qingshaonian fazui de yufang” [A tentative discussion on the prevention of youth crime], in *ZQFYN*, p.656, where it is listed as the third of eight motives for youth crime. Chen Huiyu, “Shanghaishi Xuhuiqu nüqingnian weifa fazui qingkuang diaocha (1979)” [An investigation of illegality and crime among female youth in Xuhui District, Shanghai, 1979], *ZQFYN*, p.195, maintains that many young female prisoners in forced labour teams commit additional crimes for the sake of *jiangbu yiqi*; *yiqi* matters more to them than questions of right and wrong.

<sup>74</sup> See, in addition to passages quoted in the main text below: Wang Mei, “Nei Menggu zizhiqu qingshaonian fazui wenti” [The problem of youth crime in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region], *ZQFYN*, p.108. According to Wang, who worked for the Inner Mongolian Political and Legal Committee, young criminals in Inner Mongolia were forming gangs on the model of ‘martial knights fiction’ and similar films. See also Dai Yanting (of the Shandong Public Security Office), “‘Yanda’ yilai Shandong qingshaonian fazui de qushi” [Trends in youth crime in Shandong since the ‘Hit them hard’ campaign], *ZQFYN*, p.114, who writes of more and more gangs taking their names from martial knights fiction.

<sup>75</sup> Guo Xiang and Ma Jingmiao, “Lun qingshaonian tuanhuo fazui” [On youth gang crime], *ZQFYN*, p.195.

<sup>76</sup> Chen Huiyu, “Shanghaishi Xuhuiqu nüqingnian weifa fazui qingkuang diaocha (1979),” p.195.

<sup>77</sup> Liu Xinwu, “Ban zhuren” [Class teacher], *Renmin wenxue*, 1977.11.

<sup>78</sup> Published by Gongren Chubanshe, Peking, in 1987.

<sup>79</sup> This is the form normally used in the novel.

<sup>80</sup> *Xuese huanghun*, pp.35–6.

<sup>81</sup> Examples of *baoban* being used in a consciously archaic way can be found on pp.3 and 4 of the edition published in Changsha by the Hunan Wenyi Chubanshe in 1993, for instance. Curiously, it is used on p.99 to refer to Bai Du, a very strong contemporary female character. As in much of Wang Shuo's other fiction, *gemenn* is used too frequently for its occurrences to be worth noting individually.

<sup>82</sup> A general term for organised crime.

<sup>83</sup> ZhonghuaRenminGongheguoGonganbu [Ministry of Public Security of the PRC], "Woguo qingshaonian fazui de qushi he yufang" [Youth crime in China: trends and preventive measures], *ZQFYN*, pp.43–4.

<sup>84</sup> Guo Xiang and Ma Jingmiao, "Lun woguo qingshaonian fazui gaofengqi" [The peak period for crime among young people in China], *ZQFYN*, p.263.

619-page book is full of the language of the urban youngsters who went to the military farms in Inner Mongolia in the late 1960s. In its first 507 pages *germen*<sup>79</sup> comes in at least 23 times, and *baoban* only some 5 times, and always in contexts that make it seem archaic, as in proverbs or a quote from Lin Biao 林彪. *Yiqi* and variants were noted at least 20 times, and nearly always in ways that carry emotional weight.

In the mental world of the hero, who may or may not have been the author when young, violence, toughness, standing by your mates, and winning respect are obsessions. It shows a longing for *yiqi* although there is no solidarity among fellow sufferers, and an obsession with revenge and settling scores. Mateship lets you down when you most need it. Your supposed mate won't take a knife in the ribs for you. Quite the opposite. As the I character of the novel reflects in a bad moment, "Why did you have to be so vicious, you bastard? You really know how to put the boot in. When it came to the crunch you knifed your mate in the back."<sup>80</sup> On the other hand, when he does find what seems to be a real *germen* with a sense of *yiqi* his heart is warmed (p.112). In due course his mate denounces him, and he is told off by a cadre for having been "ruined by *germen yiqi*" (p.178). It is a book terrifying for its negativity, and it reveals much about the violent emptiness of Mao's revolution.

That *baoban* is a word not much found in a novel describing the youth culture of the late 1960s is not surprising. By then it was an archaic concept—a dead or at best a dying one. Signs of the death of the *baoban* can be found in other post-Mao fiction too. To take but one example, Wang Shuo's grim and fantastical satire set in the corrupt Peking of the 1980s, *Qian wan bie ba wo dang ren* 千万别把我当人 (Don't Treat Me as Human, Whatever You Do), includes among its characters one Tang Guotao, the last of the Boxers, still implausibly vigorous over eighty years after the rising. This living fossil uses the word *baoban* quite often, especially when talking about his fellow Boxers. The other characters hardly ever do. *Gemenn*, by contrast, is much more commonly said.<sup>81</sup>

In the China that has followed the death of Mao and the end of revolutionary values and solidarity there has been a rebirth of gang culture in the cities. In the words of the Ministry of Public Security:

It is worth noting that in the last few years quite a few criminal gangs have appeared that are composed of middle-school students and strongly bear the coloration of feudal gangs [*hangbang* 行帮] and black society<sup>82</sup> organisations. These youngsters imitate the actions of feudal gangs in knight-errant [*wuxia*] fiction, films and television. They kowtow, take blood oaths, swear brotherhood and sisterhood, place each other in order of precedence, print signs, make gang rules, fight, brawl, stir up trouble, insult women, lord it over shopping areas, act the local bully, and seriously affect social order.<sup>83</sup>

In the 1980s this was seen as something new and alarming.

Before the 'Cultural Revolution' gang crime among the young was very rare—and gang crime for which *gemen yiqi* (honour among mates) was the spiritual prop was even rarer.<sup>84</sup>

*Gemen(r) yiqi*—the value system which requires you to be ready to take a knife in the ribs for a mate—is the cement that holds gangs together. That is why its danger is so well appreciated by the Communist authorities, always jealous of loyalties and organisational structures not under their control. We know that it is regarded as a serious problem by the frequency with which it is referred to as a threat to the socialist order. It is common in writing on juvenile crime to find references to the continuing appeal of *gemenr yiqi* to teenage boys.



**Figure 8**

*Chapter twenty-nine: "A drunken Wu Song fights Door God Jiang"*

*The favour Wu Song's benefactor, Shi En, asks of Wu is to rid him of a newly-arrived rival in Happy Wood, a market some fifty li outside the eastern gate of Mengzhou 孟州. Shi En has been using his own martial arts prowess and eighty or ninety desperado prisoners to run a protection racket that raised 200–300 ounces of silver a month from the inns, gambling dens and prostitutes catering to business travellers in Happy Wood. The newcomer, Door God Jiang, a better fighter than Shi who can also call on the troops of the local garrison, has taken over Shi's rackets.*

*Wu Song cannot resist the challenge to his prowess. After getting himself thoroughly plastered in all the pubs along the way he goes into Door God Jiang's inn and behaves like a drunken lout, throwing Jiang's new concubine into a vat of unfiltered wine (at the top of the picture) before going out to lay into Jiang with fist and foot. Jiang is rapidly subdued and forced to quit Happy Wood, leaving Shi running the rackets again.*

*It is characteristically haohan of Wu Song not to concern himself with the rights and wrongs of Shi En's situation. A mate is in trouble: that is enough to send him into action. The gratuitous drunkenness is an extra touch. Once again, the graphic art is supremely physical*

武松醉打蔣門神

A 1980 survey of young offenders and a straight control group in Shen-yang 沈阳, each of nearly 500 members, found that 47.8 per cent of the young offenders approved of the notion that you should be willing to take a knife in the ribs for a friend (compared with 13.1 per cent of the straights); 48.3 per cent thought you should never betray a friend; and 28.3 per cent felt that to be the boss of your territory through violence was to be a *baoban*.

**Figure 9**

*Chapter forty-three: "A false Li Kui robs lone travellers on the road"*

*In this chapter the most lovable and most psychopathically violent of the Shui hu haohan, Li Kui, is on his way home to fetch his aged mother and bring her to the stockade on Liangshan. In a wood he is jumped on by an imposter, Li Gui, who disguises himself as Li Kui to make himself more terrifying to the travellers he robs. In this scene the real Li Kui has overpowered Li Gui, seized one of the axes the imposter has been using, and is about to kill him. The imposter is spared because he appeals to Li Kui's better nature with another falsehood: that he is only robbing in order to support his old mother who would otherwise starve*



(The word may be dying, but it is not quite dead yet.) The more friends they could get to help them in a fight, the more prestige they would have; and to help others in a fight was “being a real mate” (*gemenrgou,yisi* 哥们儿够意思), true friend-ship, and *yiqi*. “Being a real mate” also could mean passing on a girlfriend to a pal.

When a friend’s in trouble you’ve got to help if you’re asked. You can’t stand aside, even if it’s going to mean fighting or murder. In their world anyone who abandons a mate or doesn’t give help when asked is disgraced for ever.

The writers stress how hard it is to break away from such a gang culture.<sup>85</sup> Another youngster became a murderer at the age of seventeen when he knifed a stranger who had told a mate to shut up in a cinema.<sup>86</sup> In that case the knife was in someone else’s ribs.

A 1986 textbook on juvenile law, written at a time of official alarm about youth crime, draws our attention to the traditional element in such value systems. It identifies as one of the main subjective causes of juvenile lawbreaking that the young people “have come under feudal ideological influence. They care about honour among mates [*gemen yiqi*], and will take a knife in the ribs and sacrifice everything for a mate.”<sup>87</sup>

The same author describes Peking gangs of boys of fourteen to sixteen holding initiation ceremonies in which they swear to share weal or woe, and hope to die on the same day. To him it is evident that “*gemen yiqi* of the feudal gang type is the highest belief of these gangs.”<sup>88</sup> All this is very clearly part of a tradition passed on, if not actually invented, by literature and other cultural media. Another writer refers to *gemenr yiqi* as an ideological sub-culture strengthening undesirable and potentially criminal circles of friendship, identifying it with feudal “*yiqi* of the rivers and lakes” and calling it one of the spiritual props of gangs.<sup>89</sup> Other references to *gemenr yiqi* (in its variant spellings) as a “spiritual prop” occur in writing on youth crime.<sup>90</sup>

The connections between the values of *gemenr yiqi* and the world of prisons and labour camps remain strong. There is a report that when a formerly penitent young thug left labour camp his old mates dragged him back into crime by giving him banquets and setting off fireworks to congratulate him on the glory of having been inside.<sup>91</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

We started this exploration with a rather stirring piece of street theatre as a prelude to an execution. Now, as we have seen, everything possible is done to ensure that the victim goes out without style. Even the right to a last, defiant letter to one’s loved ones is denied by regulations that require the authorities to hold back anything that might be seen as challenging or subversive. However, even this can be counteracted by those reckless enough to defy the state.

In May 1982 a certain Xu was shot for murder, robbery and other offences. His family and over a dozen of his associates gave his ashes a very conspicu-

<sup>85</sup> Gao Shuqiao and Cao Junye, “Shenyangshi qingshaonian weifa fanzui shehui jiyin diaocha” [An investigation into the basic social causes of juvenile law-breaking and crime in the city of Shenyang], in Luo Dahua and others, eds, *Fanzui xinlixue jiaoxue cankao ziliao* [Reference materials for the study of criminal psychology] (Beijing: Qunzhong Chubanshe, 1987), vol. 1, pp.78–111.

<sup>86</sup> Kang Shuhua, *Qingshaonian faxue* [Juvenile jurisprudence] (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1986), p.107.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

<sup>89</sup> Jin Qigao, *Shehui zhan xue* [On the maintenance of social order] (Beijing: Zhongguo Zhengfa Daxue Chubanshe, 1992), pp. 48, 27.

<sup>90</sup> See, for example, Guo Xiang and Ma Jingmiao, “Lun qingshaonian tuanhuo fanzui” [On youth gang crime], *ZQFYN*, p.379; or Wei Wenming, “Guanyu woguo qingshaonian weifa fanzui wenti” [The problem of illegality and crime among China’s youth], *ZQFYN*, p.86. Zhang Zhongjiang and Huang Wenjun write of the blind worship of *gemen yiqi* by young people in “Leifan, guanfan zai qingshaonian fanzui tuanhuo zhong de zuoyong” [The role of repeat offenders and habitual offenders in criminal youth gangs], *ZQFYN*, p.177.

<sup>91</sup> Kang Shuhua, *Qingshaonian faxue*, p.68.

<sup>92</sup> *Xingshi fanzui anli congshu: liumangzui*, pp.375–7.

*W. J. F. Jenner*

China and Korea Centre  
Faculty of Asian Studies  
Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 0200  
bill.jenner@anu.edu.au

ous funeral procession through the centre of the city, then held the regular ceremonies for him at seven-day intervals at a local Buddhist temple. They even burned paper models of the officials and judges involved in handling his case carrying a sedan chair with a model of the dead man in it. A year later other ceremonies were held on the anniversary of the execution.<sup>92</sup> This was not a safe gesture. When the law came down on his family and friends the only question was whether they should be charged with the serious offence of hooliganism or the even more serious one of counter-revolution. Eleven of them were convicted.

As it is with all the youngsters who will do anything for a mate, even take a knife in the ribs, this was pure *yiqi*. For good or ill the tradition lives on.